

**EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOUR  
AND  
THE ROLE OF CULTURE:  
THE CASE OF THAI AIRWAYS**

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## **Abstract**

This research explores the interactions of people across cultures. It looks into how cultural distinctiveness and cultural characteristics may serve as a strategic resource for organisations. The research investigates whether the sustained success of South East Asian Airlines in achieving high levels of customer satisfaction is influenced by the application of distinctive cultural traditions and values in the delivery of customer service. Given that this service is delivered by a predominantly female workforce, the research explores cabin crew behaviours and values in relation to assumptions about gender roles that are found within the airline industry generally and South-East Asian cultures specifically.

The research is based on a case study of one company, Thai Airways. A triangulated methodology was applied, using a mixture of company documentation, observations and semi-structured interviews. The research aims to inform our understanding of the service interface in a cross-cultural airline environment. Of particular emphasis in this study is the connection between spiritual, cultural values and traditional gender roles within Thai society, which has an impact on the relationship between passengers and cabin crew. The thesis illustrates how the understanding of the relationship between national cultures and individual characteristics can be refined through the use of a conceptual framework.

The findings imply that traditional Thai cultural values underpinned by Buddhist spirituality play a part in shaping the way cabin crew think about their work. These influences help them to respond positively to company policy, which in turn can help to achieve Thai Airways' corporate goals. This synergy between company policy, national culture and spirituality may shape the quality of the service and help to create customer satisfaction.

The findings demonstrate that there is a relationship between the satisfaction of basic Thai female needs and work-life balance. Thai cabin crews who work in a female environment tend to balance their career, finances and family so that these needs are met.

**Keywords:** Airlines, Culture-Interactive, Cross-Cultural Management, National Culture, Gender

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## List of Abbreviations

### Abbreviations

C/A

PNVC

### Explanations

Cabin Attendant

Positive non-verbal communication

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

#### **Introduction**

Investigations into the field of cultural studies and cross-cultural management have been given notable attention in recent years (Van de Vijver et al., 2011). In everyday life, first impressions are important. For those in service occupations, the interaction between service receiver and service provider is the essence of the job. Learning work-appropriate behaviour will often hinge upon a capacity to seize and hold the initiative in the service relationship. In the airline industry, the role of the individual interacting with customers is the main focus of the work. Whether cabin crew go about their job consciously or unconsciously, they tend to create an impression for passengers (Goffman, 1971) by employing a personal approach linked to a service concept the company wishes to impart.

This brief introduction outlines the structure of the thesis. The focus of this research encompasses more than just persons' interactions with others in a particular environment and a specific industrial sector; the organisation, as represented by the company policy and national culture, is also implicated. This research attempts to capture all these aspects. To do so, it uses a grounded theory approach. A triangulated methodology has been employed, with inputs from relevant persons as well as information obtained from the company researched (policy and procedures). It is assumed that national culture is a moderating variable.

The study is guided by a number of propositions stemming from the literature. These are:

- The airlines industry functions in an environment of diversity.
- Airlines, as carriers of people all over the world, offer opportunities to learn how to adapt to a multicultural environment.
- A propensity to adaptability on the part of the individual working in the airline environment can help to resolve difficult situations on the job.

- It is important to learn how to adapt, especially in a world of increased globalisation.

### **Background to the research questions**

It is important to understand the background of my career and why I am interested in the airline industry. I have ten years experience in the field of airlines as a passenger service officer and cabin crew supervisor. I dealt with passengers and had many job functions in the airline industry. Before I changed my role to the academic world, I worked with three different airlines with three different cultures. This brought my attention to the organisational culture. The first airline was United which was an American national airline where it was task oriented. Then the researcher moved to Japan Airlines, a Japanese national airline and the key point was team working, punctuality, responsibility. The next work experience was Servisair (UK) which was concern with health & safety such as having a risk assessment within the organisation. There is no need to do any overtime or extra hours unlike Japanese airlines where you cannot refuse the request of the superior. Those ten years experiences motivated me to conduct the research and it was an interesting and fascinating environment to look into. Theory such as South West Airlines illustrates that it is one of the best place to work in the airline industry. They have a concept of fun and play. Each airline has their own strategic management. The airlines and work environment are related to the theory of Bamber et. al (2009), Heracleous et. al, (2006).

From practical to theoretical, from work experiences through to the academic point of view, the airlines' literature, gender and culture from different countries gave me the implication of a few issues. When I looked deep into cross-cultural issues, I could not find anyone who mentioned about female characteristics in cross-cultural research although one of the pioneer in cross-cultural field was a women, Margaret Mead who did a case study with three cultures. This also includes the development of cross-cultural management and universal characteristics. Spiritual issues are now being considered starting from Schwartz (2006), Markus and Kitayama (2010). The connection between gender, values and cross-cultural management can then be used as the basis for cross-cultural development by looking into female characteristics and their strength, and internalization because if you look into internalisation, it can be adapted into both genders anywhere in the world. Therefore this recognition can be a

fundamental cross-cultural development and necessitates a new standpoint-based epistemology.

As mentioned earlier why I would like to do this research, part of it is based on my own work experience in the airline industry for the last ten years where the environment is diversified and multi-cultural. The belief is based on the universal characteristics which came from the belief and values and the traditional gender role if we assume that there is a universal characteristic. The principle of considering women's soft-side characteristics and cross-cultural development can take time but the internalisation is not based on the gender. Therefore this will enable us to understand both how and why women can be a subject to a cross-cultural management.

### ***The world's best cabin staff***

Asian and particularly South-East Asian carriers have been regularly voted best airlines by customers. This is a consistent finding in Skytrax research over the years (e.g. Skytrax, 2009; 2010; 2011). *Global Traveler* magazine (USA) also voted Cathay Pacific Airways the best airline for first class, and Singapore Airlines the best airline in the world, in 2010 (Global Traveler, 2010). In 2009, Malaysia Airlines was nominated for World's Best Cabin Staff for the sixth time. In 2010, Best Airline awards were made to Asiana Airlines, Singapore Airlines, Qatar Airways, Cathay Pacific Airways and Air New Zealand (Skytrax, 2010).

In 2011 Thai Airways, the site for this study, was voted Best Airline Economy Class On-Board Catering and Best Airline Economy Class Seat (Skytrax, 2011). Thai Airways came fifth overall, after Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines, Asiana and Cathay Pacific. In 2014, Thai Airways was nominated number one for Best Cabin Staff in Asia. This survey polled 18.8 million passengers of 100 different nationalities.

One of the most important factors in the popularity of any airline is its cabin crew, and this is widely recognised in marketing (Heracleous et al., 2006). Each airline has its own marketing strategy, as customer service is seen as the main platform of competition in the region (Chan, 2000a). Asian charm and hospitality are increasingly

looked upon as natural competitive resources. Japan Airlines and Cathay Pacific capitalise on the popularity of 'Asian charm' (Chan, 2000b). For example, Japan Airlines recruit other nationalities such as young Thai women aged under 26 (on five-year contracts). Cathay Pacific has a similar policy.

A service failure can cause a lot of reputational damage, and can lead to negative future repurchasing intentions. Cabin crew need the skill to cope with such eventualities and to reverse a negative situation into a pleasant one.

To put the importance of cabin crew into context, passengers' repurchase motivations (Chang & Yang, 2008) suggest three criteria for using a specific airline again: firstly, settings such as the lounge or boarding gate area, including cleanliness; secondly, the friendliness of staff, including their uniforms and appearance, problem-solving and demonstrated commitment to passengers; thirdly, the airline's flight safety image, punctuality (departure and arrival times), food, frequent flyer special offers, and the smoothness of the service. In collectivist cultures repurchase motivations will not be evident in direct complaints, as they would in the West, but customers' dissatisfaction will spread by word of mouth.

The intriguing question that arises is the following: what is it that makes South-East Asian airlines gain top rankings year after year for service quality, as judged by the travelling public? They have been the top airlines in all categories over the past 10 years, according to Skytrax. The Skytrax survey is based upon asking passengers to nominate their favourite airlines according to the following service criteria (Table 1.1):

**Table 1.1: Service quality criteria (Skytrax, 2010)**

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assistance during boarding</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Welcoming passengers</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applying safety procedures</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Food &amp; beverage service efficiency</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Answering call bell</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff language skills</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Problem-solving ability</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discipline among staff</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enthusiasm of staff</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sincerity of staff service</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff friendliness</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Courtesy of staff service</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consistency of quality among staff</li></ul>

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The survey includes over 190,000 passengers, with data collected from various sources such as online surveys and telephone interviews (Skytrax, 2010). It is considered the most authoritative independent evaluation of airline customer service, and attracts wide attention in the industry and among the travelling public at large. The aim of my research is to address this question by providing an in-depth portrayal of how a particular service culture is embedded in and flows from the triangulation of a sector's conventions, the gendering of an occupation and the mores of a national culture. This will be studied within a specific company. A triangulation of this kind in

the context of the airline industry is – to the best of my knowledge – novel and unique. The positioning, data gathering and findings of the research are therefore this study's contribution to knowledge.

### **Research rationale**

The purpose of the thesis is to understand social interaction in a cross-cultural environment, in this case the airline industry. I wish to pay particular attention to the experiences, attitudes and opinions of cabin crews from a particular culture, including studying the aspects of company policy which directly concern the behaviour and conduct of these crews. This research is of practical interest as it relates to real experiences of cabin crews, and hopefully it can contribute to finding effective resolutions for the difficulties this kind of work encounters. This research is also of theoretical interest as it investigates the relevance of national culture to the performance of a routine service, and the intersection of national culture with gendered roles.

Specifically, the issue I wish to explore here is whether the customer service provided by cabin crews on Thai Airways is related to Thai cultural values, as Thai Airways aims to portray. Is it indeed 'A (Thai) smile from the heart', as their public relations publicity maintains? In other words, I wish to investigate Thai national culture as it relates to Thai organisational and individual behaviour at work. I will attempt to address these issues by employing a qualitative methodology that will explore the cognition and behaviour of female cabin attendants on Thai Airways. The thesis is structured in the following way. I first review the literature on Thailand and its culture. I then describe the research methodology, and then present and discuss my findings.

***Research aim (operationalised)***

To demonstrate the relevance of Thai national culture to the conduct of Thai Airways cabin crews' operational service by reference to the sector's operational procedures and the gendering of the service.

**Research objectives**

As a national culture has a number of facets, a comprehensive understanding requires a multifaceted approach. This informs the choice of methodology.

The following aims are put forward:

1. To investigate how company policy posits employees' behaviour in order to achieve Thai Airways' positive performance outcomes.

This research question places an emphasis on behaviour and conduct-based company policy, which will be examined through the content analysis of relevant documents (Chapter Seven) as well as through semi-structured interviews with Thai cabin crew and relevant observations (Chapter Eight).

2. To investigate traditional Thai cultural values and gender characteristics to establish the extent to which Thai cabin crews' work appears to be influenced by them.

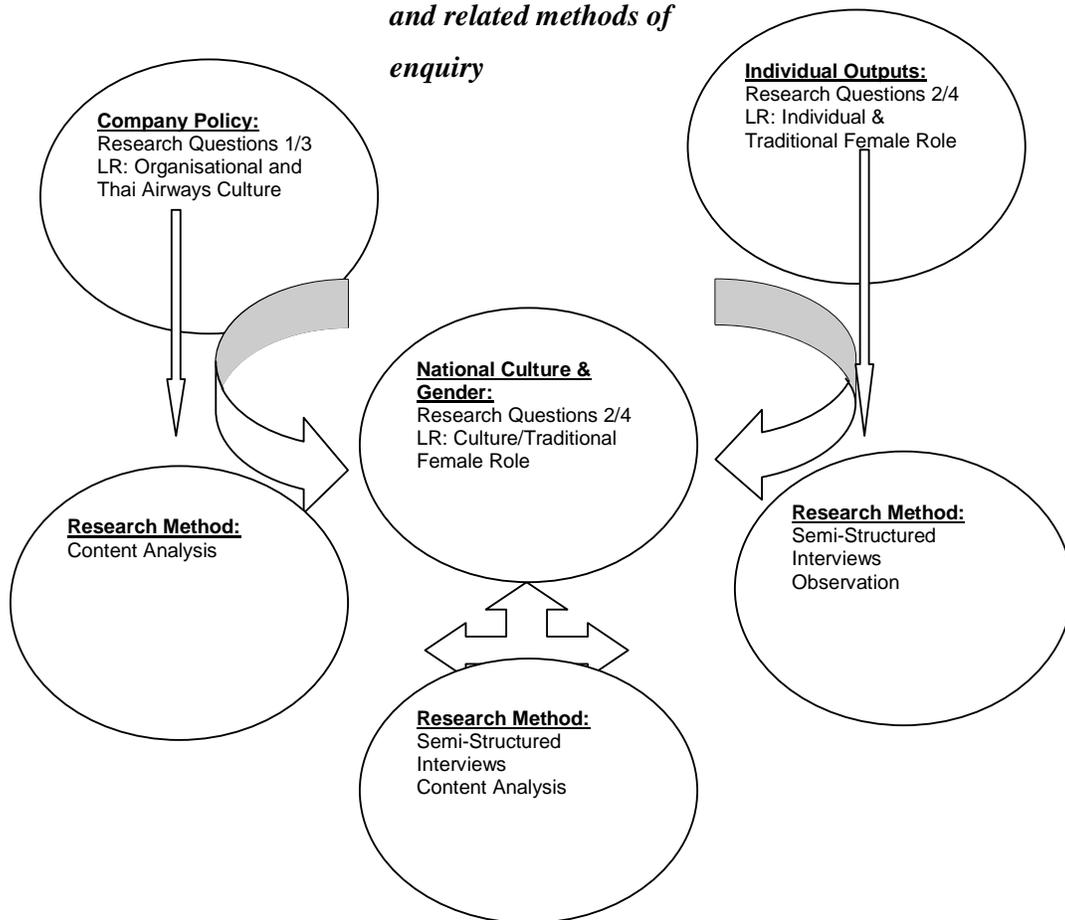
This means investigating the relationship between individual output and performance outcome. The cultural review in Chapters Two and Three will provide a general background on Thai cultural values and gender. The semi-structured interviews mentioned above will investigate whether individual attitudes and employee conduct fit with cultural values and expected gendered behaviours.

3. To investigate the extent to which traditional Thai culture impacts upon organisational culture as expressed in expectations of individual and collective conduct as manifested in company policy.

The culture review in Chapter Two will cover the wider aspects of Thai culture. This research question will also be investigated in the semi-structured interviews, as well as through observations of cabin crew behaviour, in particular in interactions with passengers during flight.

These research questions will be further elaborated and given a rationale in later chapters of the thesis. A triangulated approach is used in this research in order to achieve both depth and extensiveness of conceptual understanding (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.1 Concept mapping of research questions and related methods of enquiry**



Heracleous et al. (2006) state that, in terms of managing uncontrollable factors, the airline industry faces several factors that are beyond its control, such as the safety of passengers, and political and other unforeseeable events such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks or the volcanic eruptions in Iceland. They state that front-line staff such as cabin crew are critical in this competitive industry because:

- They are a core part of the product. Cabin crews are the most visible element of the service, and service is an intangible product.
- They are a core part of the brand, so the aspects of recruitment, selection and motivation of staff are very important.

Because this research is concerned with airline and national culture, it is relevant to know why I chose a national-culture study. The following section will provide a better understanding of this aspect of the study.

### ***National-culture study***

This study about Thai Airlines explores why the company applies ideas emanating from Thai national culture in its service philosophy, and how in turn their implementation fosters these values. Specifically, the association of the service style with particular models/versions of femininity that are linked to traditional Thai values will be explored. Therefore I am studying in particular the intersection of gender with culture as expressed in service work at a company that employs its national culture to market and sell its product – the flight experience.

The idea that lies behind this study is that national culture may play a decisive role in shaping and enacting organisational behaviour at both the organisational and the individual levels. Within national culture, traditional or normative female gender characteristics add further weight to this role. Inter alia, the aircrew environment is gendered: a predominantly female environment where characteristics of caring and serving are considered to be important.

Following Guerrier and Adib (2003), who stated the advantages for cross-cultural research of focusing in depth on one specific country, this study focuses on one national culture as a vertical study. The following part of this chapter outlines the contributions this study hopes to make.

### **Contribution to the field of culture, gender and organisational practice**

#### ***Contribution to theory***

I am working at the intersection of organisational culture (organisational behaviour), cultural values and service provision in a highly competitive service sector (airlines). I

believe that the way the thesis is structured and the way I treat the data –the triangulation of culture, gender and service (sectorial) conventions to contextualise cabin crew behaviour – make a contribution to the fields of gender and organisations, gender and (self-) management, cultural values and organisational culture. Thailand is not a highly researched country in the management literature, and the potentiality of this study is to widen our understanding of Thai culture and society.

### ***Contribution to practice***

Thai Airways is a national institution in Thailand. This study adds to our understanding of this important institution, and also makes a contribution to the current history of the company. In addition, this study has gathered, analysed and commented on data about the day-to-day conduct, attitudes and beliefs of cabin crews.

There are correlations between these three issues where gender, beliefs and values are the norm according to the culture. This research has raised the dominant character of national culture as a topic for consideration. For management purposes this can be applied and adapted to the cross-cultural environment. To date various methods have been developed and introduced to measure cross-cultural dimensions. From the perspective of the individual, the area of individual belief has been investigated. The concepts of culture, individual belief and gender imply not only shared manifestations of societal factors but also organisational cultural conduct, where an emphasis on company-based conduct can improve individual performance outcomes. In theoretical terms, a literature review has identified the correlation and background of these three key issues in order to help better understand culture, gender and individual belief. To enable us to see both individual and organisational behaviour, it is important to understand both perspectives. This research investigates interpersonal interactions and with a focus on an Eastern psychological framework. A correlation between collectivism and high power distance also needed to be investigated in this research. In terms of the future of cross-cultural social psychology, the introduction of non-Western constructs and theories, such as the interdependent self and relational harmony, will increase and bring with it a focus on research concerning interpersonal interactions and relationships. One view from the Taoist perspective is that two seeming opposites can become complementary parts of a whole that is incomplete without both (Singelis & Brown, 2006). Singelis and Brown also forecast a second

theme, the infusion of constructs and theories whose sources lie outside the traditional Western framework for psychology will lead to research focusing on interpersonal interactions and relationships. At the same time, a greater acceptance of qualitative methods in psychology has given voice to a social constructivist viewpoint that is especially useful in understanding cultural meanings (Singelis & Brown, 2006). Prior to commencing the study, the basic key of organisational behaviour needed to be considered and included in this research, as it generates an idea of management style and hierarchy in the organisation. In addition, job and personal characteristics needed to be considered because they reflect the distinctiveness between the two. For this study, qualitative methods were used to explore the relationship between the individual and organisational context. As a result of qualitative methods used in psychology, a relationship between the reality of the world and the research is explored.

A methodological challenge was posed by this research. Data was gathered from multiple sources at various time points, and a qualitative approach was chosen, since this is considered to be better suited to understanding culture and behaviour. In relation to real-world research, Robson (2011) suggests that the qualitative approach is a natural enquiry that is non-manipulative, non-controlling, and emerges from incidents and from the perceptions of others. Consequently, the methodological approach of this research represented both the practical and theoretical terms of conduct by using semi-structured interviews to investigate individuals' and cabin crews' perceptions. With regard to content analysis, theory was observed in order to apply it to the airline's company policy. With the results of these two emphases, an investigation was made to observe how these traits are presented or manifested to passengers. These outcomes appear to have resulted in the airline winning World's Best Cabin Service annually from 2006 until 2015 (Skytrax, 2006–2015). The combination of the individual self and the company conduct-based policy, which is the norm in the national culture, is observed. Another significant part is the research analysis and its findings. The following section will illustrate the contribution of the

analysis and why its findings (i.e. organisational culture, job and personal characteristics, motivation and ego goals) should be taken into account.

### ***Contribution to research design: triangulation of methods***

The research analysis and findings will be grouped by research method in order to provide a clearer picture of each method's findings. The relationship between the three methods will then be explained. Firstly, aircrew organisational culture needs to be clarified. Realising the nature of organisational culture will help to give a better understanding of the cross-cultural environment of the airline industry. This will lead to implications for other organisations operating in similar environments.

### **Thesis structure**

#### ***Chapter One: Introduction***

The aim is to introduce the problem, state the research objectives, and locate the study in the fields of national culture, organisational culture, gender and organisational practice.

#### ***Chapter Two: Constructing Culture: A Theoretical Perspective***

The aim of this chapter is to give an overview of the meaning of culture, then move on to the development of culture in management – the theoretical foundations and literature review relevant to the research objectives and research questions. This chapter examines cultural theory and key theorists in the field of culture.

#### ***Chapter Three: National Culture and Individual Values***

The aim of this chapter is to investigate Thai national culture and individual values. It also provides a background on Thailand in terms of the characteristic of the Thai people, such as values and traditions, family, authority, seniority and respect. This chapter contributes to the understanding of collectivist-culture characteristics.

#### ***Chapter Four: Culture and Gender Roles in the Cabin Crew Industry***

The aim of this chapter is to provide a background on Thai women by investigating the family, social and employment structures which are relevant to this research. The chapter then discusses gender and social theories, including theories of aesthetic

labour and emotional labour, women and work-family balance, and conflict. The chapter concludes with the topic of women in the airline industries.

#### ***Chapter Five: Airlines' Organisational Culture in a Context of Diversity***

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the airlines' organisational culture, and to elaborate on Thai Airways' culture and organisational structure.

#### ***Chapter Six: Methodology***

The aim of this chapter is to provide an outline of the methodology used to answer the research questions in the study. The general methodology will be discussed as well as the limitations of this study and its difficulties. To explain how each method is related: interviews highlight employees' perceptions, individually and organisationally, whereas airline-based secondary data further the understanding of the organisational behaviour and national culture that are adapted into practice, while observation draws attention to the manifestations and emotional expressions of cabin crews.

#### ***Chapter Seven: Research Findings – Secondary Documents***

The aim of this chapter is to provide an analysis of secondary documents to reflect an organisational perspective that is the norm according to national culture. The analysis is separated into three key themes: general principles, duties and responsibilities, and rules and regulations. The chapter ends by outlining the key factors in the relationship between employees and company policy: social and cultural values, power and authoritarian management style, female gender roles and the nature of the job.

#### ***Chapter Eight: Research Findings – Semi-Structured Interviews and Observations***

This chapter provides details of the sample and how the data was analysed, and provides an analysis of observations at a superficial level. It also provides an analysis of organisational behaviour and job characteristics from the individual perspective, and comments on cabin crew skills.

#### ***Chapter Nine: Discussion***

The aim is to provide an analysis of the overall findings. The relationships among the methods employed are discussed.

### ***Chapter Ten: Conclusion***

The aim is to bring all the research strands together. The discussion also examines the study's implications for management and policy development in human resource management in terms of behaviour and conduct. The contribution of the study is assessed, and proposals for further research outlined.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Constructing Culture: A Theoretical Perspective**

#### **Overview: the meaning of culture**

Culture is a joint and dynamic venture, according to the accepted description advanced by Shweder et al. (2002, p. 25):

Cultural psychology is the study of the way cultural traditions and social practices regulate, express, transform, and permute the human psyche, resulting less in psychic unity for humankind than in ethnic divergences in mind, self, and emotion. Cultural psychology is the study of the ways subject and object, self and other, psyche and culture, person and context, figure and ground, practitioner and practice live together, require each other, and dynamically, dialectically, and jointly make each other up.

The purpose of this chapter is to obtain a more intimate understanding of the literature on cultural constructions and of the importance of a cross-cultural perspective. The first section starts with a discussion of the groundwork on culture and its relevance laid down by classic theories such as Hofstede (2015), Hall (1990) and Schwartz (2006). Culture is a big part of everyday life. Both people and organisational behaviour are influenced by culture, and this has consequences at an organisational and a national level. In particular, I will focus on how national culture can influence employees' behaviour, and hence also influence organisational culture and behaviour.

First of all, it is important to understand the concept of culture. What does it mean, and what are its implications for behaviour in any given society? French (2015) defines culture as values, attitudes and meanings that are learnt and shared by members of the community and that influence their way of life. He pointed out that culture can be viewed on both an individual and an organisational level. He views culture as a concept comprising global, national, regional, community and personal layers. All of these derive from behaviour, attitudes, beliefs and values (French, 2015).

In contrast, the work of Browaeys and Price (2011, p. 25) separates culture into three layers. They maintain that the first (outer) layer is the behavioural level which is

immediately apparent when you are residing in a different culture, such as new sights and new environments. The second layer contains norms and values, and forms the national culture. The third and inner layer consists of the core of any given culture and contains assumptions and beliefs.

Culture can be analysed using two main approaches, the emic and the etic. The use of these two approaches has been broadened in order to define more aspects of human behaviour under the aegis of culture. The etic approach brings an outsider's point of view to cultural concepts. It is related to quantitative approaches. 'Etic constructs are accounts, descriptions and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the community of scientific observers' (Lett, 1990, p.190). In the study of cultures, the etic approach has continued to be more prevalent than the emic approach (French, 2010).

The emic approach draws on an insider's perception of culture, and tends to be a qualitative approach. It focuses on the need for understanding social systems from the inside, and attempts to analyse the distinctive essence of individual cultures (French, 2007). The emic approach 'attempts to analyze the internal coherences of single examples' (Koen, 2005, p. 55). It can be seen as an important contributor to the individual's evaluation of a culture as well as a great guide for people doing business in that culture, as it can provide a richer picture of it (French, 2010).

I will start with an account of culture generally, i.e. how it is understood, before going on to examine how culture applies to both nations and organisations, which will lead me to an overview of the main models of national culture that are applied in management and organisations. I will go through cultural attributes, i.e. values and beliefs, how the cross-cultural field is developing, and culture and bias in perception. Then I will go through key theorists in the field of culture and offer a critique of these models. This will lead to a concluding paragraph which will prepare the reader for the next chapter, in which I explore in depth the relevant features of Thai national culture, as well as reflecting on the logic of the way I have organised my materials in order to add value.

### **Cultural attributes: values and beliefs**

Culture consists of values and beliefs which can influence both individual and national levels. Values summarise a person's beliefs and lead to behaviours, outcomes and the creation of national characteristics. Values and beliefs are reflected in personal judgements such as good or bad, right or wrong. Values comprise social norms; norms are related to what the national culture finds acceptable or unacceptable, and they are judged or punished by the social structure in question, starting with families, communities, the legal system, and rules and regulations at both individual and organisational levels.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on cross-cultural management research. These studies are about the transition from the individual to the national level. Numerous studies have attempted to explain this transition in terms of individuals' measurement of values. The second step is to validate the relationship between the individual and national level. Both values and beliefs can be measured through behaviour and context (Minkov et al., 2012).

According to Schwartz's theory, some individual values reflect those on the national level, such as affective autonomy, hedonism and stimulation. There is a large volume of published studies describing the role and concept of national culture, particularly by Hofstede. (Minkov et al., 2012) decided to analyse South-East Asian countries together because they share common characteristics, such as agricultural communities, which can have effects on national cultures due to the society's dependence on such economic activity (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). They found that Malaysians, Thais, Chinese and Vietnamese people are in the same group. The study of national culture also includes an examination of the influence of language, religion, politics, economic development, climate and so forth.

Recent evidence suggests that theories of culture have attained even more prominence within management studies and cross-cultural management research due to the recognition of the role and impact of culture on social structures and organisational behaviour as a result of the international business. Several studies have revealed that not only is it useful to understand national culture in order to better understand cross-cultural management, but that subcultures within nations also have a role to play,

harking back to Shweder's remarks about 'ethnic divergences in the mind' (Shweder et al., 2002, p.25). Apart from values, culture is also related to people's normative and cognitive mechanisms.

This chapter will next outline how the cross-cultural field is developing, then discuss how cultural differences can be used as strategic and/or discursive resources. This is followed by an examination of culture and bias in perception and the relevance of cultural theories to management studies.

### **How the cross-cultural field is developing**

Cross-cultural anthropology as a field of research began in the 1920s. Until then anthropological studies had focused on human development in different parts of the world, under different cultural conditions, in order to understand the internal dynamics within that society. Anthropologists viewed people's attitudes as dependent on their social environment and authority structures as much as on their norms and beliefs.

Malinowski was an early proponent of the method of fieldwork entailing total immersion in the culture of another society. Malinowski emphasised the importance of understanding in detail the lives of those living in other cultures and that one could only do so by living in that culture oneself. He lived with a group of Trobriand Island villagers in the Pacific and tried to understand their everyday lives in depth (Malinowski, 1922). One of the original works of cross-cultural field research was Mead's (1928) study of adolescence and sex in Samoa. Mead learnt how to live with the Samoan people in their daily lives.

This led to further research which attempted to outline what became known as patterns of culture. Ruth Benedict was influential in setting this research agenda, seeking to demonstrate that there was some form of psychological coherence within the individual personality, identical to the psychological coherence of the culture in which the individual was embedded (Benedict, 1934). This theme was taken up and further elaborated by subsequent researchers, most notably in the work of Inkeles and Levinson (1969), who conducted research on national character. The rationale of their study was to develop a theory of modal personalities and sociocultural systems.

Inkeles and Levinson (1969) stated that national character is equivalent to a modal personality structure within society, and that the study of national character may help to answer two questions: what is distinctive in single nations, and what is relatively universal in human society? In order to study a national culture and find out about the modal personality, it is important to learn about the normative patterning of beliefs, values, institutional practices, interpersonal relationships, religion, ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes), career structures and relationships to authority, because these are related to aspects such as behavioural adaptation to authority and subordination.

From initial anthropological field research, the cross-cultural field has developed over the years into a perspective which emphasises the importance of psychological constructs, relating to attitudes and values, in conjunction with the role and influence of national patterns of culture. Such an approach now underlies much of contemporary international organisational studies.

One key theory of organisational change within a value-attitude systems approach was set out by Rokeach (1968). His work refers to the goals of individual persons, which are desirable end-states of existence. His instrumental values are: cheerfulness, ambition, love, cleanliness, self-control, capability and courage. His theory stresses the importance of the value concept over and above the attitude concept because value is more dynamic, although they are both assumed to be determinants of social behaviour. From the study of attitudes and values, the fundamental assumptions in cross-cultural management have evolved further.

Child (1981) was one of the scholars who studied culture, contingency and capitalism in the cross-national study of organisations. Hofstede was also one of the scholars at that time, and his work has become particularly influential and will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter. Since Hofstede's work came onto the scene, cross-cultural management theory has become more widely known through a number of international studies such as the Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) project, which is related to the development and validation of the GLOBE culture and leadership scales.

Culture is a sensitive subject; behaviour in one culture cannot be justified in terms of another. It depends on many circumstances, including ecological and individual correlations. However, people have to be aware of ethnocentrism when studying other cultures. This means avoiding the tendency to think that one's own specific culture or race is superior to another or is the only yardstick available against which all other cultures must be measured (Drever, 1952, p.86). As mentioned earlier, the theory of cross-cultural management started from field research in one single isolated culture (Malinowski, 1922), then evolved with the comparison between one culture and another (Mead, 1928), and then moved towards the study of nations, cultures and individuals (Child, 1981; Hofstede, 2001). Since then, scholars such as Peter Smith (2004) and McCrae et al. (1996) have done research at a national level using the 'Big Five' personality factors, as these can provide a link from the individual to the national level and then to universal level.

Having discussed some aspects of work influenced by national culture, another major notion is that it can be captured by a set of cultural dimensions. It could be argued that, in spite of globalisation, cultural differences can influence work culture and behaviour, and hence management practice is required to fit in with the local culture.

Moreover, under certain circumstances, from a managerial point of view, cultural context may have relational conditions and attitudinal effects. Thus, employee attitudes to the organisation in different contexts and different countries can effect organisational behaviour and the style of management decisions.

On the one hand, one could argue that similarities in organisational behaviour across different countries might reduce the impact of local cultures and so assist the implementation of universal management philosophies and practices. Moreover, at a practical level, the scope of prevailing shared cultural assumptions within national cultures might make country-based managerial recommendations too general or inaccurate in some situations.

The question stemming from cross-cultural psychologists focused on whether attention should be paid to characterising nations, rather than individuals. The consensus seems to be that the importance, relevance and impact of beliefs and values

need to be considered both at the individual and at the national level (Minkov et. al., 2012).

There is some debate as to the relationship between culture and psychology. Some would suggest that culture deals with thoughts and meanings that are generally excluded from the area of academic psychology (Kashima & Gelfand, 2012). Other researchers, such as Oishi et. al (2011) mention that culture should be conceptually differentiated from society, because the internal structure of a society refers to a social system, and is distinguished from its culture. It refers to a long-term pattern of interpersonal, inter-group and individual group relationships, which are observable through similarities and differences, compatibility and incompatibility, in resource, technology, power and status (Oishi et. al, 2011). They believe that culture should be regarded as an external factor of human nature.

The opposite argument is that there are some inter-related principles between culture and society which could be affected by social interaction. Something of the sweep of this debate is well caught by many theorists, such as shown in Mead's social behaviourism. She stated that interpersonal behaviour is the symbolic representation of the social mind and comes from internalization. Her argument is important, because it reflects the way individuals think and believe. However, the question of whether culture is an essential part of human nature has to be considered (Thomas & Peterson, 2015).

Although the above arguments are based on social theory, it must be said that the theory itself has its critics. It is argued that at the individual level, cultural transmission can be separated into work and non-work socialisation. People are socialised into modes of thinking and acting. This creates the development of social identities that generate in-groups whose characteristic attributes tend to be imitated throughout life.

Having discussed these aspects of work, under culture and personal concept, the question of the possibility of a conceptualised individual thinking system, emerging from cultural dynamics, has been raised (Kashima et. al, 2009). Culture may contain

not only adaptive elements but also non-adaptive, including those irrelevant to adaptation in idea and practice.

This indicates a theory of cultural evolution, in which cultural ideas and practices develop and evolve through an interactive process linking patterns of organisation and the generation of self-structures (Kashima et al., 2009). This links closely to the approach I will be taking in my research. This current study investigates traditional Thai cultural values and gender characteristics that can influence organisational and employees' behaviour. Moreover, it explores the extent to which spirituality (and Buddhist practice in particular) and traditional Thai culture interact with organizational culture and to what extent behaviour and conduct based policy is related to spirituality and traditional Thai values. How do such beliefs and practices help to generate self-maintenance techniques. The next section will discuss cultural bias in perception.

### **Culture and bias in perception**

Cultural bias may be perceived in cross-cultural environments, especially in multinational companies. Therefore the literature regarding this might provide insights into how reactions and communications affect cultural bias related to research. Value effects are one of the major concerns in producing attributes and culture-specific fundamentals that influence the structure of values (Sagiv et al., 2011). Culture can influence and manipulate attributes in real-life proceedings (Lee, 2014). As an example of this, we can examine differences initiated in cross-cultural attribute perceptions in the evaluations of female physical charisma. In this case it is the cabin crew's lifestyle that comes to the fore, with value placed on fashion and health awareness, brand loyalty, and opinions of leadership, which are variables that influence the value given both to certain attributes and to product perceptions (Hui et al., 2004).

This notion is supported in a study by Lee (2014) into product perception. Her findings suggest that foreign branding evokes cultural stereotypes and manipulates product perceptions and attitudes. It is plausible to suggest that there is a considerable variation in the image of a particular service industry, such as the airline business, whereby this sector might create certain cultural stereotypes and manipulate

perceptions of other cultures involved in interactive activities. This assumes particular importance in the context of globalisation, where culture is transmitted to both individualist and collectivist countries.

However, perception is a process which includes the self as well as the social structure containing it. Furthermore, there is another side of the coin which has to be considered, which is that culture can be regarded as an important part of conflict and conflict determination. Conflict is influenced by people's lives and relationships. It can shape perceptions, attributions, judgments and ideas of self and other. Nevertheless, cultures are powerful as they can unconsciously influence conflict and at the same time attempt to resolve it in unnoticeable ways.

What follows deals with communication and social interaction. In some literature, such as Smith et al. (2014), it is shown that reaction patterns might not be biased as such, but communication styles may be related to cultural characteristics, so that reaction styles may be manifestations of culture. Agreeing with this view, Fischer (2011) mentions that cultural tendencies, such as responding in a more submissive style, may replicate fundamental cultural characteristics such as politeness or respect for high-status individuals in collectivistic countries. Therefore, these differences might replicate different communication styles across cultures, rather than constituting a bias that needs to be controlled. Given these trends, Smith et al. (2014) also found that predictors of individual-level compliance will not necessarily be the most valid culture-level predictors. A culture in which the majority of members act in a compliant manner is likely to replicate socially constructed and long-established systems of social interaction more strongly than individual personality dynamics. With regard to Smith's findings of other cultural biases in perception theory, such as in Schwartz's findings, three principal dimensions of culture-level variation (harmony-mastery, self-sufficiency embeddedness, hierarchy) were employed by Schwartz (2006). Given the complexity of bias perception and the wide range of theorists involved, GLOBE investigators concluded that reaction to bias was not a major provision in most of the country scores that they had investigated. Investigators regressed standardised scores on raw scores to identify those nations where bias was strong. Corrections were made to those few outlying areas where this practice indicated that bias was noticeable (House et al., in press). The seven estimates of bias

therefore comprised three that concerned values (Hofstede, Schwartz, GLOBE), one that was concerned with beliefs (Patel, 2014, p. 71), one with socially desirable responses, one with reports of personal behaviour (Smith et al., 2014), and one with the behaviour of others in society. It is clear as a first estimate that individually related bias is found in the nations that Hofstede defined as collectivist rather than individualist. The individually related bias estimates are highest in nations where GLOBE respondents reported the society to be less structured than expected or than they would like it to be. Of this observation, Smith et al. (2009) agreed that the best analysis of individually related bias is not the existing level of apprehension, which would have shown up as an important correlation with Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance, but that lives should be more expected to be guided by rules. It appears that this consideration is currently more common within collectivist nations (Smith et al., 2014).

### **Key theorists in the field of culture**

This section focuses on three theorists whose works have been pioneering and widely accepted within the field of cross-cultural psychology, and who are greatly influential on other research in the cross-cultural area. From these three basic theories, the reader will be able to understand more about the culture index and Thailand's index values. The discussion will start with Hofstede and Trompenaars' model, then move onto Hall's cross-cultural communication studies, and finally examine Schwartz's value model.

### ***Hofstede (2001): six national societal factors***

There are many theories related to cross-cultural management. One of the pioneering theorists was Hofstede (2001; 2015). His theory views culture as a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one member or category of people from another. From this point of view, culture transmits values from one generation to another. Hofstede firmly placed cross-cultural studies on the agenda of international management research. His theory separates culture into five dimensions:

**Table 2.1: Five basic problems of national societies (Hofstede, 2001)**

<i>Power distance</i>	which is related to the different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality
<i>Uncertainty avoidance</i>	which is related to the level of pressure in a society with expressions of an unknown future
<i>Individualism versus collectivism</i>	which is related to the combination of individuals into primary groups
<i>Masculinity in opposition to femininity</i>	which is related to the separation of emotional roles between men and women
<i>Long-term in opposition to short-term orientation</i>	which is related to the choice of focal point for people's efforts: the future or the present

In 2010, Hofstede developed his later work which included the sixth dimension of culture, indulgence and restraint (French, 2015). In Hofstede's work, indulgence is related to enjoying life and having fun whereas restraint is related to society that has strict norms (Hofstede, 2011). The sixth dimension is related more to happiness. The purpose of Hofstede's analysis was to discern value differences amongst countries and to relate these to national characteristics; one could not expect to ascertain meaningful relationships for measures that were not more or less consistent over time. The other purpose was to study the country score levels that reflected both the collective state of mind of the respondents, and the collective situation in which these respondents found themselves. The theory has been widely used as a basic principle for cross-cultural research.

### ***Reflections on Hofstede's work***

The benefit of Hofstede's work is that his work has been used by researchers as a model of cross cultural training for international managers. Some researchers say that Hofstede's model is especially useful as it can explain different values in different cultures and his model seems to be successful in cross cultural studies (French, 2015). However, Hofstede's work has been questioned in some areas because each national culture has its own characteristics. In that case, how could countries with a high power distance work with organisations and individuals coming from countries with lower power distances? The work of Hofstede has been further criticised by Fang

(2003), for instance, where a critique of Hofstede's fifth dimension has been proposed. An illustration of Confucian dynamism referred to as long-term orientation is not compatible with the five basic problems of national societies. Not much research has been completed into the fifth dimension, as it is not relevant to cross-cultural studies. Critiques such as that of Confucian dynamism push interrelated values into two opposing poles, while the Chinese yin-yang principle is violated by this concept.

To reflect on his work, Fang (2011) stated that the paradigm was missing a duality perspective in as much as culture has the capacity to reconcile the opposite poles of any cultural dimensions. Moreover, and quite crucially, his work has no class analysis and it is only based on one single company, and fails to take into account cross-cultural dimensions within the same country. Moreover, both Hofstede and Trompenaars do not take into account the changing economic context and the impact of globalization.

Moreover, Hofstede's fifth dimension (Long- versus Short-Term Orientation (LTO)) is confused as it was an oriental contribution that is not registered in the Western mind and it has not been well received by Western or Chinese cultures (Fang, 2003). Fang (2011) also criticised Hofstede's work for failing to take into account both globalisation and tendencies within national cultures to change over time. Despite such changes, Fang (2011) also stressed the enduring cultural beliefs in non-Western countries which reaffirm notions of Yin Yang, which perceive the world in through holistic dualism, whereby the entity cannot be complete unless it has two opposite elements to balance with each other.

McSweeney (2002) investigated Hofstede's work, determining further areas of criticism. For example: can the IBM sample be nationally representative? The other argument by McSweeney was at the societal level of cultural factors: whether individuals from different nations who share the same occupation can share cultural uniformity or not. McSweeney argues that instead of cultural uniformity, as Hofstede's findings would suggest, Hofstede is employing cultural average tendencies when comparing between nations, so that cultural uniformity cannot be demonstrated even within the sample population of any given nation (McSweeney, 2002). He also

criticised the questionnaire method. Can it be used as a dominant dimension of culture or not? The final criticism concerns restrictions on the workplace, as some employees are not accounted for, resulting in a limited applicability of the findings (McSweeney, 2002).

Some of Hofstede dimensions are not valid in other countries such as uncertainty avoidance (Schmitz & Weber, 2014). It can be used in some countries but not in every country. It has been argued that national culture changes over time whereas Hofstede has stated that national culture is stable overtime (Hofstede, 2001). However, Hofstede's survey data was collected 45 years ago and it was based on one company. The question has arisen as to whether the data still represents the multinational cooperation companies nowadays. Although the data has been used worldwide, doubts have been raised concerning the application of values and beliefs to predict behavioural outcomes. However, there is no evidence that his work is currently being discounted.

### ***Trompenaars***

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) take a slightly different stance and argue that culture is not just composed of a way of life, but actually represents cultural group attributes as perceived by other groups elsewhere. Thus they draw attention back to Shweder's formulation (2002) quoted above, in which self and other dynamically, dialectically and jointly constitute each other.

Trompenaars' work has been used in more than 50 countries around the world and his work is well known to international managers. Yet, Trompenaars has been criticised by Hofstede regarding his work. For example, Hofstede notes that the work of Trompenaars is self-standing and there is no correlation between individual, organisation and country levels (Minkov et. al, 2012).

Despite such objections, certain similarities can be observed between Trompenaars and Hofstede's work in the following dimensions. One of the similarities concerns Neutral & Affective display of emotion. Trompenaars mentioned that there are culture differences between those where the emotion is concealed (in this case it is neutral) and cultures where emotion can be displayed openly especially in the business world.

From a cross-cultural management point of view, Hofstede's work is related to face values where people in countries leaning towards collectivism prefer not to have any emotional expression when it comes to confrontation. This is of particular relevance to my research question in terms of how traditional Thai cultural values can influence organisational and employees' behaviour and to what extent does their work appear to be influenced by national culture.

Another instance of a similarity between those two theorists concerns notions of Individualism & Communitarianism. Trompenaars' model is useful in management because it can be used in practical terms. For example, individualism can influence and motivate people within the organisation in terms of promotion prospects, so that individuals may be rewarded if they are distinguishable and contribute something unique to the organisation, whereas such a promotion system cannot be applied as effectively within a communitarian society.

Moreover, Trompenaars' work is related to my research questions in terms of work and motivation and why cabin crew jobs are popular in South East Asian countries as a whole. His work is also related to the research question in terms of Specific & Diffuse role relationships. In practical terms, there is an informal relation between employee and employer and in this case it is applied to passengers and cabin crews. This will be illustrated in the chapters on research findings.

In terms of differences between the two authors, Trompenaars' dimensions of Achievement & Ascription, are of particular significance in a society where achievement has been judged through social status, education, social connection and wealth, whereas there is no mention of this in Hofstede's work. This will be examined further in connections with my work on work-life-balance, work motivation and why a cabin crew job is perceived as a prestige job in developing countries.

Another difference between Trompenaars' and Hofstede's work is that in Trompenaars' work, gender is only examined at the management level whereas cross-cultural management should be considered at all three dimensions; individual, organisation and country level. Trompenaars discusses gender within organisations without mentioning the issue of culture or upbringing, factors which do have an effect

on employees' behaviour and emotional expression's work has also been criticised by Hofstede for confusing conceptual categories arising out of Trompenaars' empirical data with conceptual categories which may be preconceived by the investigator. As a result, there is a lack of evidence to support some of Trompenaars variables. Hofstede also criticises Trompenaars for being dismissive of American cross-cultural research and personality studies.

***Hall's (1990) cross-cultural communication model***

Hall (1990) elaborated on Hofstede's theory by suggesting that one of the cultural differences that has been observed is in fact created by communication. He divided communication into two types, conceptualised in terms of high- or low-context societies. The reason for mentioning Hall's theory here is because cross-cultural communication is needed when we deal with people from different cultures. Thailand is a high-context culture according to Hall's theory, and tends to be homogeneous and collectivist. People in high-context cultures have a more indirect style of communication. They are not clear and rely more on non-verbal communication. Communication is made in order to maintain harmony and save face in relation to others.

Countries are classified as high context in relation to the degree of sharing and understanding within society, in the following circumstances:

- There is an indirect communication style, such as sharing information, speaking and writing in an indirect way.
- Relationships with others are considered to be an important part of society. Conversely, low-context countries meet the following criteria:
- There is direct communication, including verbal and non-verbal communication.
- There is a focus on performance outcomes rather than on relationships with others (French, 2007).

**Diagram 2.1: High-low context (Hall, 1990)**

<p><b>High-Context Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• polite</li> <li>• respectful</li> <li>• integrates by similarities/harmony</li> <li>• not direct</li> </ul>	<p><b>Low-Context Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• open</li> <li>• true</li> <li>• integrates by authenticity</li> <li>• direct</li> </ul>
<p><b>High Context claims Low Context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• impolite</li> <li>• ‘cannot read between the lines’</li> <li>• naive</li> <li>• no self-discipline</li> <li>• too fast</li> </ul>	<p><b>Low Context claims High Context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hiding information</li> <li>• not trustable</li> <li>• arrogant</li> <li>• too formal</li> <li>• too slow</li> </ul>

Hall’s review makes a valid point in terms of high-context communication. In service industries such as airlines and other hospitality management sectors, character traits such as politeness, respectfulness, harmoniousness and indirectness might be useful, since too much openness might lead to arguments. Being positive and harmonious should be considered important in this kind of service, because reacting too fast may give rise to conflict and leave a negative impression in the long term.

***Reflections on Hall’s work***

The discovery of Hall’s communication theory benefits research on communication among cultures. How each culture approaches others who originate from different countries is an interesting issue, especially when the organisational culture requires ample communication, such as in service industries including airlines. Hall’s theory differentiates between communication in the East and West. There are other theories such as Gudykunst (1995) which provide an insight into cross-cultural communication. The findings are interesting, as Gudykunst relates a sophisticated theory of methods in which apprehension and uncertainty surround communication with strangers, both within and between cultures. So the argument takes on a new level of complexity, in which communication is examined both within and between cultures and so brings into question whether communication theory should be concerned with cultural differences or universal models. From Hall and Hofstede’s theories, the concept of cultural influences in the 21st century now moves onto Schwartz’s theory, which is related to values.

***Schwartz's universal values model: a theory of content and value structure***

The research of Esser and Hannitzsch (2013) adds to the development of cross-cultural theory, as it shows the ethical dimensions of values. It was in the early 1990s that another significant step forward was made, with Schwartz's formulation of a theory relating to the general content and structure of values (Esser & Hannitzsch, 2013). Values were revealed as transsituational objectives, varying in significance, that provide influential values in the life of a person or social unit (Meyer, 2012).

Three general requirements were considered to be at the root of values: the needs of individuals as biological organisms, the conditions relating to social interaction, and the requirements for the implementation of society and the survival of groups (Meyer, 2012). From these three basic objectives, ten motivational value types were derived:

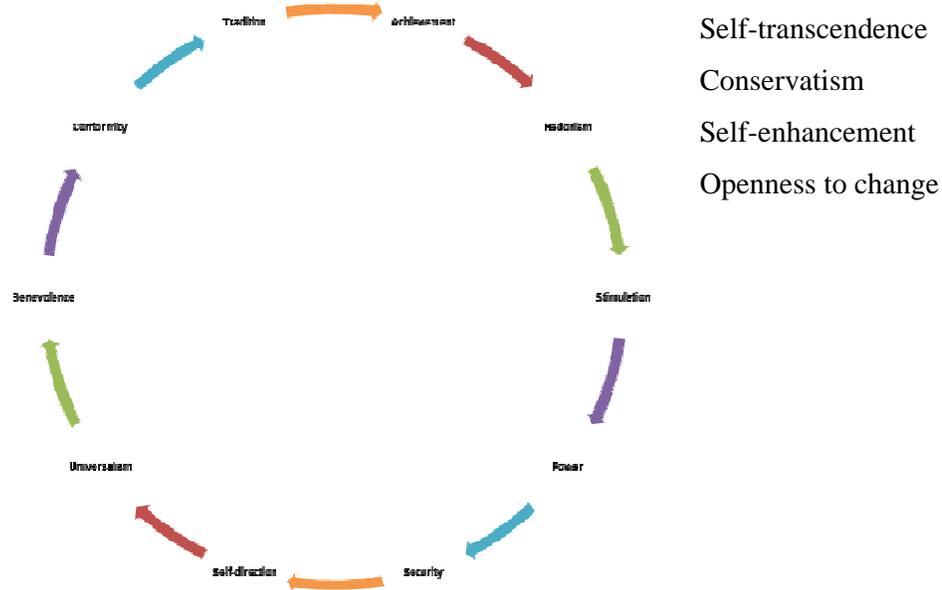
- (a) Achievement: personal accomplishment through the manifestation of competency in relation to social principles;
- b) Benevolence: concern for the well-being of close contacts in everyday interaction;
- (c) Conformity: self-control in actions, preferences and impulses that could distress or harm others and break social expectations or norms;
- (d) Hedonism: enjoyment and sensual satisfaction for oneself;
- (e) Power: achievement of social status and reputation, and ability to organise or govern people and resources;
- (f) Security: well-being, safety, harmony and stability of society, relationships and the self;
- (g) Self-direction: independent thinking and action;
- (h) Stimulation: enthusiasm, innovation and the need for challenge in life;
- (i) Tradition: respect, obligation and acceptance of the traditions and ideas that one's culture or religion establishes in relation to the individual;
- (j) Universalism: consideration, admiration, open-mindedness and feeling of protection of the welfare of people and nature.

These ten value classifications were compiled using the Schwartz Value Survey.

Schwartz's (1992) theory also describes the formation of the motivational classifications in a bi-dimensional space. In the case of parallel structure investigations, the similarities are usually measured by the correlations between substances. Some values appear constantly in their theoretical value type – for example, social control, enjoyment and obligation (Schwartz, 2006). This statistical

process appears to be extremely efficient in explaining the structural function of the model. Schwartz(2006) identified the solutions needed across countries to identify whether the substance is or is not a comparable, applicable and reliable process within the different value types. These analyses, in addition to investigating assumptions in the general theory of the substance of values, are mainly appropriate for evaluating Schwartz’s propositions relating to items per value type (Meyer, 2011). Following the results, one could conclude that there are four value types: conformity, benevolence, self-direction and universalism.

**Diagram 2.2: Self-transcendence, conservatism, self-enhancement, openness to change**



Schwartz designated human values for the purpose of fulfilling people’s lives and goals. His work dominates cross-cultural literature, as it is an alternative source for the cross-cultural model to Hofstede’s formulation and provides a different perspective.

As seen in Diagram 2.2, his conclusions reveal bipolar dimensions between:

- Self-transcendence and self-enhancement, where self-transcendence is concerned with others’ well-being and merit, and self-enhancement is more concerned with self-interest and dominance over others;

- Conservatism and openness to change, where conservatism reflects conformity and tradition, and openness to change is concerned with self-direction and hedonism;
- Hierarchy and egalitarianism, where hierarchy is concerned with social power and authority, and egalitarianism is more concerned with social justice and responsibility-sharing;
- Embeddedness and autonomy, where embeddedness includes social respect and social order – in simple terms, it is social identification – while autonomy is concerned with self-expression;
- Mastery and harmony, where mastery values concern control of the social environment and nature, whereas harmony is more involved in the protection of the environment (French, 2007).

Many researchers in recent years have made use of Schwartz's model of human values. Schwartz (Morselli et al., 2012) has improved on a broad model for categorising the scope of values, with 56 value substances containing ten universal value types. Cross-cultural research has shown that these ten value types can be regarded as supplementary, and therefore condensed into four value categories: conservatism, openness to change, self-enhancement and self-transcendence (Schwartz, 2006).

To have a better understanding of Schwartz's findings, it is helpful to know that openness to change is explained by values such as self-direction, inspiration and self-satisfaction. Conservatism is explained by values such as security, tradition and conformity. Self-transcendence is identified by values such as benevolence and universalism. Finally, self-enhancement is explained by values such as achievement and power. A large number of cross-cultural researchers have confirmed the value of Schwartz's organisational model for classifying and measuring values across many different cultures (Schwartz, 2006).

### ***Reflections on values and environmental attitudes***

Environmental attitudes are influenced by the collection of beliefs and behavioural intentions an individual possesses concerning, and environmentally associated with,

performance or issues. From this viewpoint, environmental concern is one feature of an environmental attitude (Schultz et al., 2005). This theory is concerned with environmental attitudes and behaviour emanating from a responsiveness to the effects of valued substances. Valued substances are oriented around three fundamental sources: other people, the self, or all other living things. Egoistic implications concentrate on the individual (Schultz et al., 2005). People with egoistic environmental attitudes are involved with the environment, but their concern is at an individual level. However, social-benevolent attitudes are explained in general as concern for all people. People with social-benevolent environmental attitudes are concerned about environmental problems because these problems have an effect on other people (Schultz et al., 2005).

Schultz and the team have confirmed this aspect of the investigative procedures, and this creates a strong case for the difference between egoistic, biospheric and benevolent concerns. The results demonstrate that egoistic and biospheric environmental concerns are effectively related to Schwartz's values scale. A positive relationship was established between self-transcendent values and benevolent and biospheric concerns. They have discussed the fact that there are individual differences in the extent to which people incorporate the environment within their cognitive representations of self. For individuals with a high level of inclusion, self and nature are interrelated, and nature is valued only to the degree that it influences self. From this viewpoint, self-transcendent values stand for a larger degree of inclusion, such as a valuing of goals and objects not directly attached to self-interest (e.g. unity with nature, equality, world peace, broad-mindedness). In contrast, self-enhancement values focus on goals and objects that are completely associated with self, such as success, social power and wealth (Schultz et al., 2005).

### ***Reflections on values and environmental behaviour***

The relationship between values and environmental behaviour is less obvious. Schultz and his colleagues investigate this connection, and concentrate principally on two of Schwartz's value categories: self-transcendence and self-enhancement. To sum up, the results from earlier studies propose that values dictate environmental attitudes and behaviour (Schultz et al., 2005). Findings have shown a reasonably positive relationship between biospheric attitudes and self-transcendence, and a lesser positive

relationship between egoistic attitudes and self-enhancement (Schultz et al., 2005). This assumes that self-enhancement (negative) and self-transcendence (positive) would give an explanation as to the principal amount of difference in environmental attitudes. It makes that assumption even though the universalist values associated with nature and the environment are an important forecaster of attitudes and behaviours (Schultz et al., 2005). With respect to earlier research findings, the results give a substantial indication of the composition of environmental attitudes across cultures. Earlier research has also demonstrated the sets of attitudes related to values: values of self-transcendence are likely to be positively related to the processing of biospheric environmental concerns and negatively to egoistic environmental concerns, whilst values of self-enhancement are likely to be correlated negatively with biospheric concerns and positively with egoistic ones (Borg et al., 2011). Schwartz analyses universalism as consisting of nine items: protection of the environment, a world of beauty, harmony with nature, broad-mindedness, social integrity, equality, wisdom, a peaceful world and internal harmony. The findings demonstrate that universalism is an important predictor of biospheric and egoistic environmental concerns. In Schwartz's theory of values, self-transcendence implies valuing more than the self. This means a concern for the well-being and interests of others (Borg et al., 2011). But if self-transcendent values were concentrated exclusively on other people, they would have been associated only with benevolent concerns, which we normally do not observe.

On the other hand, values of self-enhancement are directly concerned with self-interest. Schultz (2001) shows that it is not the values as such that raise these types of concern, but the relative construal of self. People who take account of nature within their cognitive self-image are likely to be concerned about more than just themselves. Self-enhancement demonstrates a restricted self-construal, one that is less aware of other people or conditions in the world. Such a self-construal guides people towards more egoistic concerns, and a concentration on the pressure on the self imposed by environmental problems (Schultz et al., 2005). There are three value types which were scored analytically: tradition (negatively), universalism (positively) and power (negatively) (Schultz et al., 2005).

### ***Reflections on Schwartz's work***

In summary, the work of Schwartz is based upon some of Hofstede's dimensions, but focuses on individual values. He extends his individual-level analysis to the cultural level. The work of Schwartz is similar to the yin-yang theory in terms of two opposite reinforcements. Everything in the universe contains two major controls: black and white, good and bad, soft and hard. The model is a basic principle for further research. However, some researchers such as Fischer and Smith (2003) have criticised this work as being mostly based on idealism and hence difficult to apply in research on a wider spectrum of attitudes and beliefs, including cognitive, emotional and behavioural components of the values. Yet once a preferable perception of culture has been conceived, it can enable a valuable model for organisational culture, as will be illustrated in the following chapter.

### **Conclusion**

It is important to learn from this literature review about diversified organisational cultures so that the reader will get to the root of the cultural context of this study, which is in a dynamic and multicultural environment. Once this particular environment has been investigated, the model can be adapted to other organisations. I have found is that in cross-cultural research there is a tendency to use only one approach – either an emic or an etic approach. The emic approach is an insider or inductive approach, expressed in terms of concepts meaningful to the native people of the specific culture in question, in this case Thailand. Conversely, the etic approach is an outsider or deductive approach. Skytrax has done research using the etic approach, and has interviewed millions of passengers. The strength of the etic approach is to gather statistics from different countries, enabling comparisons to be made. A combination of the etic and emic approaches gives credibility to my research. The beauty of the emic approach that I used is that the data spoke for itself, allowing themes and concepts to emerge, and there was a potential for unexpected findings.

Another point is that cross-cultural research has mainly been conducted in Western countries. Often when it is conducted in collectivist countries it focuses mainly on international business or international negotiations, such as Chinese negotiations. There is nothing mentioned about universal characteristics which might be adopted in the Far East as well as the West.

From a cross-cultural perspective, it can be seen that cross-cultural management has developed over the years. The main theories developed in cross-cultural research started by focusing on individual beliefs and values, especially in relation to management issues. This research was inspired by Hofstede's and Schwartz's theories that beliefs and values can influence employees' behaviour. The next chapter will examine national culture, where individual values are taken into account within organisational management.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **National Culture and Individual Values**

#### **Introduction**

A considerable amount of literature has been published on culture and thought. Nisbett (2009, p. 20) claims that East Asians are more holistic and more concerned about the environment. They tend to make relatively little use of formal logic, whereas Westerners use a more analytic approach and use formal logic in order to understand people's behaviour. These two types of cognitive process are embedded in different social systems (Nisbett, 2009, p. 23). What we know about the thought differences between the East and the West is based upon studies that investigate how the ancient Greeks contemplated the nature of objects and events around them and created models, whereas by contrast East Asians, especially the Chinese, provided values. The Asian counterpart to the Greeks was a sense of collective agency. Asians believe that individuals are part of a collectivity such as a family or village – parent and child, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother – or else are bound by bonds of friendship. Ancient Chinese society made the individual feel very much part of a larger group. Such an emphasis on collective agency resulted in the Chinese valuing in-group harmony. The social-psychological aspects of ancient Greek and Chinese life had correspondences in the systems of thought in their respective cultures. Their metaphysical beliefs were reflections of their social existences (Nisbett, 2009, p. 33).

The aim of this chapter is to review Thai national culture as well as Thailand's history and background. The first section examines national culture and individual values, followed by an overview of Thailand's history and background, including a discussion of the characteristics of collectivistic culture. The final section examines the interrelationships between nations, cultures and individuals, focusing particularly on the ways in which individual behaviour is influenced by national culture.

#### **National culture and individual values**

According to Smith et al. (2013), it is important for psychologists to pay attention to the national circumstances surrounding the behaviour of individuals. They note that it is important to take account of the social groups to which an individual belongs, as

well as to other cultural matters in which that individual is involved. There is still some discussion as to whether explanations concerning differences in behaviour should be sought at the individual, group or national level. Yet nation-level studies have a fundamental and increasing role to play in explaining the different results obtained from individual-level studies conducted in various places and situations. These sources of information have the potential to produce secondary analyses that focus on nations rather than individuals as the unit of analysis (Smith et al., 2013).

Cross-cultural studies of nations have dominated research since the publication of Hofstede's work. However, an investigation of what can be accomplished through a focus on the national level has essentially provided access to more sources of information. Analyses which concentrate on national differences have the possibility of clarifying issues that reach further than general cross-cultural research strategies, which are normally concerned with individual-level information derived from no more than two or three nations (Morselli et al., 2012).

According to Smith, it is rare to create unidirectional ideals in fundamental relationships involved in human behaviour. The development of cultures over the centuries has involved a process of action and response involving many factors. National affluence can be considered both a consequence of this evolutionary process and a reason for it (Smith et al., 2015). In contrast to individual-level attributes, the amount and distribution of prosperity depends considerably on a nation's governmental and historical legacies. These can have a direct effect on most of the levels that influence individuals within a nation (Morselli et al., 2012).

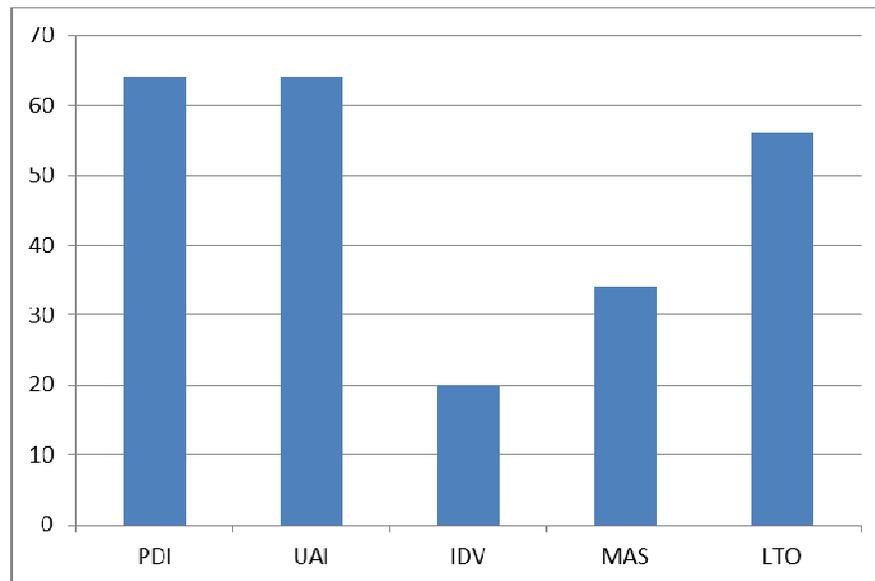
The complexities of cultural change due to increasing affluence at national level can be gauged by examining various models being developed in the field. Meyer (2012) regards national prosperity as a variable that intervenes between eco-cultural determinants and the subsequent national profiles of values and behaviours to be forecast. Smith et al. (2013) see GNP as an essential element of a nation's culture. Most of these results are derived from the aggregation of individual-level scores. Meyer (2012) discusses yet another layer of complexity in reporting on the finding that a percentage of a nation's response displays religious connections as a strong element in national mean scores on psychological variables. Smith et al. (2015)

demonstrate how nation-level compliance is explainable in terms of cultural values. The next section will present Thailand's history and background.

### **Thailand and national-cultural dimensions**

Hofstede classifies Thailand as a collectivistic country where the cluster of cultural dimensions is separated as follows.

**Diagram3.1:Index Values for Five Basic Problems of National Societies, Thailand**



In the diagram above, Thailand has a high power distance of 64, which can cause power inequalities. In an earlier work, Hofstede recognised an acceptance of power inequality in Thailand; this is demonstrated by the fact that even the pronoun 'you' is classified into 19 different words, each indicating position and hierarchy status (Chompookum & Derr, 2004). Such a power relationship based on role interactions has a positive effect, encouraging tenacious values and good relationships between people. From a more negative perspective, positional hierarchy status can cause communication difficulties. However, it can be argued that in practical terms, Thai rules and its system based upon respect are very flexible. Thai style has its own way of negotiating compromise with others, so that rules can be adjusted in order to create harmony with others and ease communication problems.

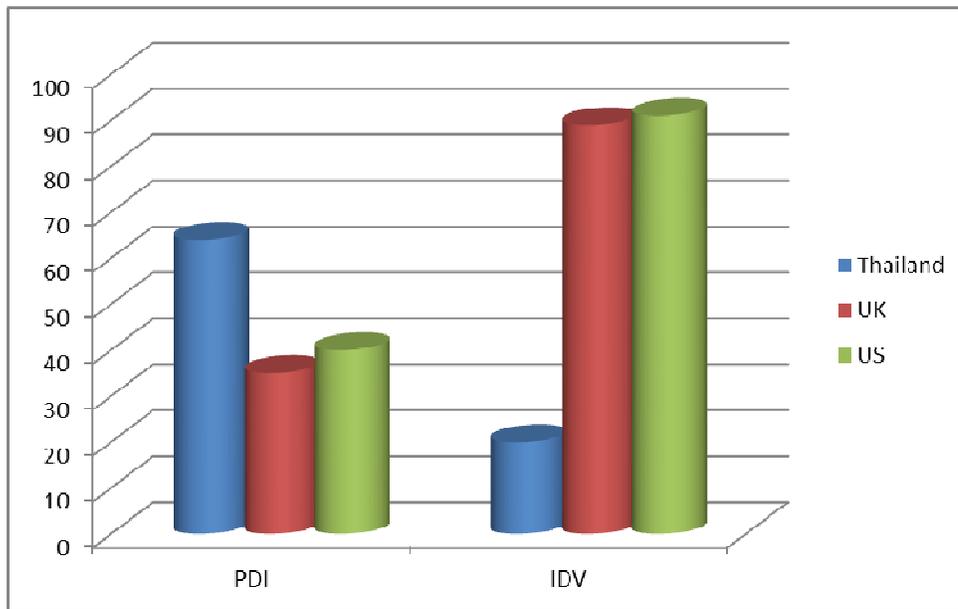
Nevertheless, an element of uncertainty remains, made worse by Thai society's resistance to change. Some rules have been in use for many years without change and might be a hindrance in certain areas, such as economic growth or adjustment to the economic climate, which is very competitive. Thus we can simultaneously observe both the strong characteristics of Thai society and the individual's ability to adjust to the environment through compromise characteristics. These are indeed two ways to view adjustments in the social structure: in terms of organisation, and in terms of the individual. At the individual level, Hofstede has indicated that the lowest dimension is 20. In addition to being low, the implication is that the collectivistic characteristic manifests itself as a long-term commitment to the group. The society is responsible for this commitment within the group; collectivistic countries place a high value on maintaining face within one's society.

A further analysis of Hofstede's dimensions in terms of masculinity has found that Thailand has the lowest score of 34 in comparison with other Asian countries. Hofstede's analysis demonstrates that Thailand is a feminine society, where quality of life is a sign of success. However, one question needs to be asked: 'What are the criteria for quality of life?' One culture can judge the quality of life in a different way from another. Some cultures value a simple life and good health, whereas other countries value the fulfilment of materialistic desires.

In broad terms, Hofstede's findings imply that this is a society with less assertiveness and competitiveness, which are associated with masculine characteristics. His research interprets behaviour using the traditional roles of men and women. In contrast, the coexistence within Thai culture of collectivism and female attributes creates an interesting issue concerning competition between individuals. This contrasts two opposing values: strong competition between individuals, and teamwork as part of collectivism in an organisation. Hofstede's theory of socialisation states that in countries that have a high power distance, children are expected to be obedient to their parents from early childhood. Respect for the elderly is a basic principle of these cultures (Hofstede, 2010). This can be related to national characteristics, plus specific considerations such as gender and religion, and is transferred from cultural groups to individuals through principal socialisation during the early years (Thomas, 2015).

When comparing the value index between three countries, Thailand, the UK and the USA, power distance and individualism are very contradictory, as seen in Diagram 3.2. Thailand has a high power distance and low individualism, whereas the UK and USA have low power distance and high individualism. In Hofstede’s definition, power distance is ‘the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally’ (Hofstede, 2010,p.52).It is important to study this dimension because it is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. It is related to whether people’s self-image is defined in terms of ‘I’ or ‘we’, and this is directly related to Thai social structure. In individualist societies, people are supposed to look after themselves and their immediate families only. In collectivist societies, people belong to in-groups that take care of them in exchange for loyalty. These two issues are the key to any examination of Thai culture and provide us with insights as to how Thai society manages to combine Eastern and the Western styles of management.

**Diagram3.2: PDI and IDV between Thailand, the UK and USA**



### **Thailand’s history and background**

Thailand is becoming one of the most modernised countries in South-East Asia. Global economic development in hospitality and tourist management has become a

major component of economic growth. During the past few years, both the government and the private sector have concentrated on Thai culture as one of the focal points in promoting the country. As a result, the high number of tourists visiting Thailand has come to the attention of the government. This has led to the strategy of focusing the country's economic growth on tourism and other hospitality industries. One key reason for Thailand's reputation is a 'culture issue', and people from all over the world have either temporary or permanently settled in Thailand. The diversity of cross-cultural contact with foreigners is compatible with Thailand's intrinsically diverse ethnic and cultural background. I now turn my attention to the circumstances behind this, and to how Thai culture influences foreigners' decisions to visit the country.

Historically, Thailand is the only country that has not been colonised. An ability to compromise and associate with others should be noted, as well as European powers' tendencies to add to their colonial possessions. Thailand employs an old and effective survival policy, called 'bend like the bamboo in the storm' (Welty, 2005). The most recent use of this was in September 2006, when the military coup overthrew the elected caretaker government. There was no bloodshed or violence, which caused other countries to wonder how the compromise had been contrived. The latest evidence in 2014 revealed the military coup which took over the Thai government. There was no bloodshed, but instead the country announced the return of happiness. Thailand's most revolutionary period was under the reign of King Chulalongkorn, who introduced the country's first Western-style school and became the acknowledged founder of modern Thailand. He is credited with having kept Thailand free when other South-East Asian countries were collapsing under the forces of colonialism. The threat from outside required rapid modernisation, and therefore the bureaucracy had the foresight and ability to instigate and carry out this plan (Hirsch & Tapp, 2010).

The relevance of history to modern Thais is related to the sakdi-na system. Sakdi-na is the system of recognising that the amount of land a man controls is the key to wealth and status ('sakdi-na' means 'the power of the fields') (Wilson, 2004). Young and/or modern and democratic Thais will automatically say 'wai' (greeting) first when meeting older people or those who hold a high status in society. They will adjust their vocabulary depending on the age and status of the person they are talking to. Non-

verbal communication is natural to them, e.g. passing things first to those who are senior to themselves shows respect and deference. These habits result from a long history. The next section will provide a general picture of the Thai population and distribution(Wilson, 2004).

### ***Population and distribution***

In 2005, the Thai population was estimated at around 62 million people, which includes the population of Bangkok at around 6–8 million. In terms of learning, Thai education has greatly improved in recent years. Thailand's literacy rate is 95%, which is one of the highest percentages in Asia (Cooper, 2005).In terms of diversity in unity, 75% of the population are Thai. It has been estimated that ethnic Chinese account for about 10% of the population. Some families remain essentially Chinese and follow Chinese culture throughout their lives.

In terms of Thai values and traditions, there was a significant transition created by the movement of people away from agricultural villages into urban centres, where education and jobs by no means retained the traditional controls and coping mechanisms. This is associated with the pursuit of material consumption and the trophies of modern life, which encourages young Thais to seek employment with higher salaries such as in the airline industry. It is important to understand Thai rules regarding respect, which are taught from early childhood. This can influence individuals' behaviours and their attitudes towards social status. An illustration will be provided in the following section.

### ***Thai rules of respect***

From young children to adults, Thai citizens learn respect by behaving in a way that demonstrates consideration for others' feelings, obedience, humility and politeness. This is the origin of the Thai word 'krengjai', which is usually interpreted as 'consideration'(Hirsch & Tapp, 2010).Thai people are considerate and adjust their behaviour to give others peace of mind. In Thailand the person who is considerate is inferior in any social relationship. This has many implications for the country's hierarchical system of status and respect (Wilson, 2004).Terms used between family members, such as brother and sister, are extended into the Thai community. This practice indicates relative hierarchical status rather than the establishment of close

relationships. There is a family term for the majority of people in Thai society. This gives an implication of friendly but hierarchical inequality. In agricultural settings, the term 'krengjai' is used frequently. Parents receive others' consideration and respect. This leads to a specific way of life in terms of interaction with others who are not in the family, and creates an informal relationship with strangers, thus reducing role conflict in future communications. Another important consideration that should be taken into account is the Thai social structure, which will be investigated in the following section. This will provide a clearer idea of the social interactions and complexities of the Thai system.

### ***Thai social structure***

The complexity of the Thai system commences with the Thai language, which delineates a behavioural pattern and social hierarchy that are separated into positions of superior, inferior and equal. In terms of hierarchy, everyone has a well-delineated position in relation to other Thais. Through various Thai social levels, citizens are aware of how to determine their status in relation to everyone else, which leads to appropriate behaviour towards everyone. One of the most widely observed Thai social values is embodied in brother-sister relationships, which do not require people to be related. The brother-sister system creates respect, protection of reputation, obedience and respectful service. The younger brother/sister deserves protection, and is advised and maintained by an older sister/brother. This concept is of great significance in Thai culture. The power of seniority is still also quite common in the Thai government, military and civil service. This gives an overview of hierarchical attitudes in Thai society. The further concepts of group orientation, seniority and acceptance of authority integrate well with Thai society. As for superficiality, it is dealt within the key word 'krengjai'. The following section will illustrate how Thai people use this word superficially in their society(Hirsch & Tapp, 2010).

### ***Superficiality and non-verbal communication***

According to 'krengjai', the promotion of 'cool-heart reactions' can produce a harmonious society. Such a 'cool heart' can be the result of conflict avoidance, in opposition to the 'hot heart' that implies shortness of temper, anger and displeasure. Surface actions have different implications from those in the West. The Thai surface refers to surface harmony. Another element that requires consideration is non-verbal

communication, which is part of my research focus in terms of the observational methodology. The following section will illustrate Thai greetings and positive non-verbal communications. The Thai greeting known as 'wai' represents an attitude of respect. It provides an implication of Thai values and attitudes. In a social encounter, the social superior assumes a posture of non-verbal communication. The 'wai' is an action of the head, which comes down to meet the thumbs of both hands with palms pressed together and fingers held upwards. In Thailand, the smile is also an important part of the culture. A smile can show amusement, offer an excuse, thank someone or show embarrassment.

### ***Thailand and Spirituality Buddhism***

It is a widely held notion that intrinsic values are part of human beings' ethics and philosophy, giving meaning to life. The key concepts of Buddhist spiritual values are the concepts of impermanence and the notion that there is no self (Taylor, 2012). The intrinsic value comes from the innermost structure within ourselves which leads to action (Hershock, 2006). This spiritual and value concept is related to the cause and effect of the present moment as a whole. As Hershock explains, Karma consists of 3 categories: Firstly, a karma (or cause and effect) can stop the self from behaving in accordance to perceived values, leading to intention and actions in the present moment. Secondly, it is a chance to increase the values and actions in a positive way. Thirdly, people have a chance to improve their karma (cause and effect) which will lead to a new relationship with human kind (Hershock, 2006).

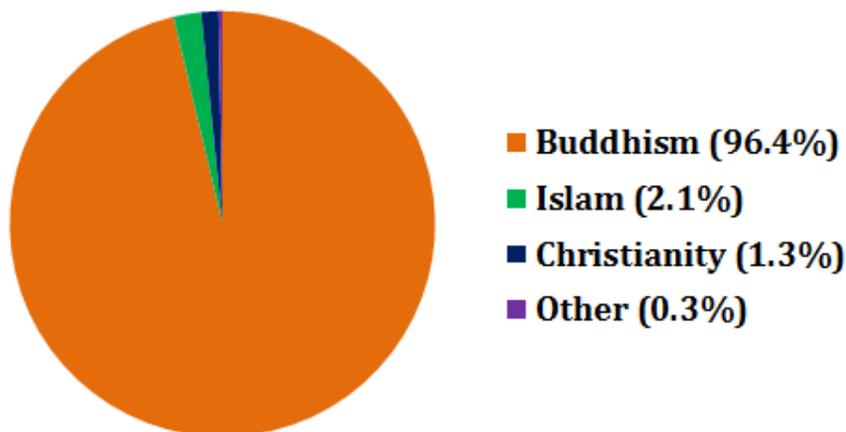
From my point of view, the above idea is related to self-improvement where it could be applied to any culture. In this study, the research investigates how spiritual and Thai culture can influence employees' behaviour. In Buddhist terms, wisdom comes as a result of mindfulness and it is not related to emotions. Happiness comes from the body and mind's tranquility, free from stress and an awareness which people of all cultures can experience. Once we have realised that the nature of life is impermanence and suffering then nothing exists. When it comes to emotion, in Buddhist terms, it relates to greed, desire, anger, hatred, and the cause of suffering comes from a false sense of the ego. In the real world, practicing mindfulness can increase people's ability to deal with a dynamic situation. It makes people aware and ready for improvisation which is suited to a complex world that keeps changing all the time.

People tend to create the conditions which makes them suffer. The example of this is the analysis from Gross National Happiness (GNH) and the results illustrate that Bhutan is one of the happiest countries in the world. This has been analysed in relation to spiritual, physical, social and environment (The Guardian, 2012). The principle of mindfulness comes from a practicing of the eight noble truths which is illustrated below;

Division	Eightfold Path factors	Acquired factors
Wisdom	1. Right view	8. Superior right knowledge
	2. Right intention	9. Superior right liberation
Ethical conduct	3. Right speech	
	4. Right action	
	5. Right livelihood	
Concentration	6. Right effort	
	7. Right mindfulness	

**Table 3.1: Eight noble truth (Buddha’s Brain, 2012)**

James Taylor (2012) gave a definition of religiosity in Thailand as comprising of many aspects in terms of dedication and strong belief in all kind of religious activities. Taylor stated that some Buddhist beliefs in Thailand have a consumerist interpretation. For example, Some people in Thailand believe that the more you donate money to the monastery, the better material benefits you will get in current and future lives.



**Figure 3.1: Religious pie chart in Thailand (Hardy, 2008)**

In Thailand, Buddhist spiritual values have a connection with everyday life including the government. Hardy (2008) mentioned that Thailand is the only country that has a constitution which states clearly its Buddhist affiliation and values. Nevertheless, despite the constitution's embrace of Buddhism, it may be argued that the country is not necessarily following the right path, since the course of economic development may be bringing with the rise of erroneous beliefs and superstitions. Moreover, there are large social gaps in society as the country has been transformed from one based on cultivated land to a more globalized society in which rural differentiation and inequalities are becoming more apparent. As mentioned earlier, this research aims to explore the extent to which spirituality and traditional Thai culture interact with organisational culture and to what extent behaviour and conduct based policy is related to spirituality and traditional Thai values. The research focuses on Thai Airways, whose headquarters are based in Bangkok. Certain key values and beliefs within Buddhism and in Thai society still persist and are of particular relevance to this study. One is the belief that the manner in which people interact and relate to each other has a profound effect on their Karma. The other belief is in the impermanence of everything, which is acutely relevant to the airline industry as a whole, both at the organisational level and at the level of team work, due to the dynamic and constantly changing nature of the work environment. There are modern spiritual practices currently available such as those of Rick Hanson (2012), who is trying to relate the subject of Spirituality, Neuroscience and Psychology by practicing mindfulness.

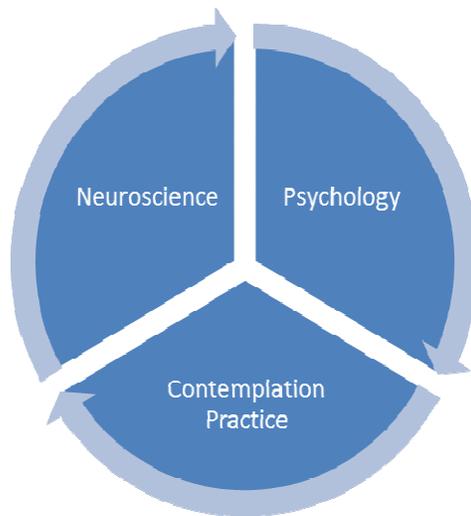


Figure 3.2: Mindfulness practicing (O'Connor et al., 2015)

O'Connor et al. (2015) stated that compassion can reduce stress and increase self-worth. It is difficult to conduct and it takes time to develop. However, if this has been an internal value, the deep and surface acting would be a genuine one. According to O'Connor et al. (2015) inner resource is an important factor related to spiritual teaching. Once a given situation has arisen, it will pass away. If we could control the neural states that are activated, it can create two possible scenarios. One possibility would be the creation of inner poisons such as greed, desire, hatred which in turn cause suffering and negative cycles, whilst the other scenario is the possibility of tapping into inner resources where peace and happiness arise, which in turn would cause a positive cycle within ourselves.

The table below shows the inner resources which could include:

Virtues ( such as patience, energy, generosity)	Executive functions (meta-cognition)	Attitudes (optimism, compassion, kindness)
Capabilities (emotional intelligence)	Positive emotions (gratitude, love)	

Table 3.2: The inner resources (O'Connor et al. p.35, 2015,)

If such qualities had been developed since childhood and embedded as an internal value, it will become behaviour. In terms of psychology, right mindfulness and right effort can be practiced through working with the mind by reducing negative thoughts and increasing positive thoughts. The mind is also an important factor. If the mind stays positive, the brain will shape itself to this and happiness starts to be created inside. Once mindfulness starts being created, the mind will become stable and steady (Carter et. al, 2005).

### **Self-construal**

In discussing cross-cultural management, we cannot avoid also discussing the self. Self-construal refers to an individual's sense of self in relation to others. Two primary types of self-construal have been identified: the independent and the interdependent (Markus & Kitayama, 2010).As the basis of this research is cultural transition and employee behaviour within the airline industry, it is appropriate to focus a discussion on theories of self-construal, which are at the heart of social theory and indeed highly relevant to cross-cultural theory as well.

The term 'self-construal' has been used since the 1990s. Key findings by Singelis and Brown (2006) show that people with interdependent self-construal, such as those in collectivistic countries, have behaviour patterns that are more easily influenced by situations than do individuals with independent self-construal. More recent findings by Hannover and Kühnen (2007) demonstrate that individuals with interdependent self-construal are easier to stimulate in context, which they call context-bound thinking (Kokkoris & Kühnen, 2014). The ability to be interdependent and use context-bound thinking should be particularly suitable for the airline industry, where the main characteristic of the job is dealing with people, often in a cross-cultural context.

Following the self-construal argument, Van Egmond and Kühnen (2014) propose three sources of self-representation: the personal, the interpersonal and the collective. Their claim is that the personal self is differentiated at the individual level, whereas the interpersonal self-concept arises from relationships with significant others. Their findings are similar to those of Markus and Kitayama (2010) in terms of the interdependent self. Furthermore, Kokkoris and Kühnen (2014) also propose that there are implications at group level for the collective self, where this represents the social identity. Having looked at some of the characteristics of self-construal, we can conclude that East Asian self-construal is based more on the need for relatedness – that is, it is an interdependent self-construal. Markus and Kitayama (2010) explain that the Western way of thinking about the self is extended and enhanced by the inclusion of the self not only in relation to the other, but also in relation to the social situation. They outline the conceptualisation of East-West differences, and cite a number of studies that find little support for the argument that self-construal can be based on cultural differences. At the same time, Kashima et al. (2009) have elaborated a model that views the relational self as separate from the individual and collective selves. The relational self is conceptualised as a self-definition with links to others, thereby stressing the relational quality involved as well as the value of those relationships. Their findings initiated the claim that the relational self was connected to gender but not culture. In particular, investigating cultural variations within self-presentation provides an opportunity to look at the implications of behaviour in context (Singelis & Brown, 2006).

In the literature introduced by Beugelsdijk et al. (2010), the autonomous-relational self is a good example of an integrative combination of Western social theories and the Taoist perception. The autonomous-relational self is a self-system that derives from a family model of emotional interdependence and authoritative parenting (Singelis & Brown, 2006). It combines the two contradictory patterns that have been expounded in Western theories, the one stressing autonomy and the other emphasising the value of human relationships. Beugelsdijk et al. (2010) suggest that autonomy does not prevent relatedness. One can be both autonomous and strongly oriented towards close interpersonal relationships (Singelis & Brown, 2006). Indeed, given the effects of globalisation, it can be argued that the two contradictory patterns of Eastern and Western philosophy, autonomous and interpersonal relationships, can be usefully and appropriately combined. When dealing with cross-cultural issues, the observation and analysis of social characteristics and ensuing behaviours requires some modifications in methodology. The very few studies that have been undertaken in this area look at interactions between people as reported and observed. As we now know, interacting with people from other cultures first came to the attention of researchers interested in cross-cultural psychology (Singelis & Brown, 2006). The level of cultural differences as seen in collectivism and power distance provided an explanation for differences in the dependent variable connected to difference in behaviour (Singelis & Brown, 2006).

While the process of measuring cultural differences in psychological constructs can be difficult when conducting cross-cultural studies, it is essential to locate the specific aspect of culture which can be said to influence differences in observed behaviour (Kokkoris & Kühnen, 2014). At this point, culture is conceptualised as subjective (Kashima et al., 2009). Culture, through its foundations, interaction patterns and socialisation systems, gives the direction for human behaviour and interactions, thereby rewarding individual forms of social cognition (i.e. self-construal) (Singelis & Brown, 2006). Hence both group and individual levels of investigation are required, with the individual level separated into psychological and behavioural categories.

### **Collectivistic cultural characteristics**

Van Egmond et al. (2013) state that the effect of cultural variables on the psychological constructs of self-concept relates specifically to individuals' reactions and responses within those cultures. In particular, they have found that interdependent

self-concepts more usually take place in tight-knit and collectivistic cultures, while independent self-concepts appear more in individualistic and loose-knit cultures. Generally, people from collectivistic cultures have been shown to have interdependent self-concepts, while people from individualistic cultures are more likely to have independent self-concepts (Van Egmond et al., 2013). Other research has demonstrated that people from collectivistic cultures are more likely to display more external attributions, while people from individualistic cultures are more likely to have more internal attributions (Van Egmond et al., 2013).

Culture consists of shared elements (Kimmelmeier & Kühnen, 2012) that lead to beliefs, feelings and behaviours at both sociological and psychological levels of investigation. Kimmelmeier and Kühnen (2012) say that a cultural model is a pattern of shared beliefs and values, attitudes, categorisations, norms, self-definitions and role definitions that is structured around an idea that can be recognised among those who speak a certain language and those in a geographic area during a certain historical period. Collectivists are more interested in how their own behaviour influences in-groups than individualists, and so experience interdependency with in-group members (Van Egmond et al., 2013). They focus on group harmony and group success. In 'tight' cultures, norms are specific and strictly enforced (Kashima et al., 2009). In both collectivistic cultures and tight cultures, corporations, religions and traditional ancestry can have an influential effect (Kashima et al., 2009). Consequently, in my study of the airline sector in Thailand both of these cultural variables are examined as separate predictors of self-concepts and fundamental attributions. On the other hand, the interdependent self is comprised of elements of the self that are connected with social in-groups or with important other people. People from collectivistic cultures have more highly approachable collective self-representations than people from individualistic cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). Generally, collectivists are more likely to attribute events to external sources, whereas individualists are more likely to attribute events to internal sources. Within cultures, respondents are expected to attribute their positive reactions more to internal sources (Markus & Kitayama, 2010).

In general, the interdependent self is significant, although surrounded by a context of social interactions, responsibilities and representations. Consequently, interdependent self-concepts are likely to be connected with collectivistic and tight-knit cultures. They are more expected to take place in collectivistic cultures, while independent

self-concepts should occur in individualistic ones (Kashima et al., 2009). In collectivistic cultures, people show behaviour that accomplishes in-group goals and continues friendly relationships. However, in individualistic cultures, people show relatively more independence. In 'tight' cultures, behaviour is clearly defined. A person must obey the rules of the in-group norms, and the self is defined in terms of representation and status (Kokkoris & Kühnen, 2014).

In collectivistic cultures, the basis for behaviour is concentrated on things external to the self and the group; in individualistic cultures, it is concentrated on the self. Consequently, external attributions should be more prevalent in collectivistic cultures, while internal attributions should be more in evidence in individualistic cultures (Kokkoris & Kühnen, 2014). In 'tight' cultures, on the other hand, failure and negative behaviour might be endorsed as individuals' or subgroups' alternatives to connecting with non-normative behaviour. In 'loose' cultures, behaviours are more generously selected, so that the source of both positive and negative behaviour might be attributed to internal perspectives or motivations (Van Egmond et al., 2013). The argument for this is that the cause might be attributed to many factors: firstly, an individual's goal, purpose, values, preferences or need for personal control; secondly, a long-term characteristic such as genetics, mannerism, capability, habit or behaviour; thirdly, a momentary trait or short-term response, whether emotional or physical; fourthly, a reaction to a condition, environment or situation; fifthly, others' influence; sixthly, the presentation of a role, custom or tradition, or normative behaviour; and finally, chance, destiny, fate or supernatural forces (Van Egmond et. al., 2013).

## **Reflexive discussion of power influence, authority and gender management**

### **The relationship within individual-collectivism**

Thomas & Peterson (2015), suggests that individualism and collectivism have also been separated into horizontal and vertical types, where the horizontal aspect puts the emphasize on group members, and the vertical aspect emphasizes hierarchy and competition. The variation in the appraisal and image of horizontal and vertical types is that, for example, Thai organisational hierarchy is built on vertical influences, and promotion comes through seniority levels.

In terms of individualism, this is related to intellectual and affective self-sufficiency at the cultural level, and to self-direction, inspiration and self-satisfaction at the individual level. This is an interesting point, the principal purpose being to argue as to why cabin crews possess both inspiration and self-satisfaction at both individual and social levels. There are many circumstances to consider here, such as power distance between cabin crews and passengers, dealing with legitimate power, knowledge power and the power between cabin crews and management at a senior level.

The first part of the argument suggests that there is inspiration and self-satisfaction on the individual level, due to social norms and economic influences. Consequently, the airline industry combines both internal and external reward strategies within the airline industry. As for collectivism, it is associated with conservatism at the cultural level and with tradition, conformity and security at the individual level (Tassell et. al., 2012). With these findings, it is likely to be one of the main core issues of collectivistic countries. However, social conformity should be interrelated with individual self-satisfaction under social norms. Tassell et.al. ( 2012) suggest that the process of income differentiation starts prior to the transition to materialism. Thomas and Peterson (2015) further note that in societies stressing vertical hierarchies, the element of competition is given even greater emphasis. This has implications for the airline industry, where face value and materialism are considered to be part of organisational values (Thomas and Peterson, 2015). In the context of comfortable circumstances, other individualistic values, such as individual freedom, personal development, quality of life, and relational interdependence become more significant to individual ego goals.

A critical discussion of advantages of the empirical work, specifically in relation to my stated research question, is to examine the case of comfortable circumstances, the main factors to be considered are as follows: Firstly, in the airline sector, the basic pay is often supplemented by fringe benefits (subsidized airfare, subsidized hotel, accommodation) a fact which should not be ignored, as it leads to individual freedom in terms of travel and financial security. Secondly, within the airline business, there is personal development such as in the field of cabin crews' behavior and character. There are also clear gender distinctions, whereby women are encouraged to improve their appearance. Thirdly, it is plausible to suggest that the characteristics of airline employment might improve the quality of life of employees. This is supported by the

fact that studies into job satisfaction within the industry generally find relatively high level of job satisfaction among airline employees (Boyle et. al., 2015). In this respect beliefs or norms could also be useful in unpacking the effects of culture (Boyle et. al., 2015). It follows therefore that frameworks are needed in order to include additional variables such as social skills and possessions. On the other hand, the rapid growth of the service industry in the modern economic environment makes predictions about the importance of other skills (such as social competence) all the more urgent, and all the more so in different cultural contexts (Thomas & Peterson, 2015). At the national level, an increase of revenue through increased wages may potentially be linked to subjective well-being and in certain cases may also lead to a reaffirmation of religious and spiritual values (Thomas & Peterson, 2015),

### **Reflexive discussion of Thai culture, face values, gender and organisational studies**

In order to explain the relational link between Thai culture and gender characteristics, the research requires a theoretical concept uniting the general idea of socialization and individualism in a holistic way, before embarking on an examination of work within organisational theories. The theoretical review which follows is an attempt to find concepts and explanations for the gender behaviour which forms the basis of the research. As the concern of the research is with national culture and gender, in the context of the airline industry, there are two levels of argument to contend with; those at the level of national culture, and those at the level of the individual. The starting point for theoretical review is to state what has to be explained. In this respect there are a few areas where explanatory theory needs to be applied.

Firstly, it is noteworthy that the majority of the cabin crews are female. A recent report from Thai Airways (2014) records that there were 3688 passing online applications in March 2006, from which 398 crew members were required (173 men and 225 women). One element of a significant cultural transmission involved in this study concerns the important attributions of employers and prospective employees in the context of adaptation from a collectivistic country. Thailand in this case, where face value implies the need for social acceptance or recognition in group situations, where individuals attempt to keep face before others in order to be acknowledged and included in the group.

Having discussed some aspects of work connected with face value, Bullingham & Vasconcelos (2013) examine how individuals enthusiastically manage verbal interactions with each other in a society in which there is a need to take into account both personal needs and those of others in a collectivist manner (Chiu & Hong, 2006).

Indeed, Hwang et al. (2003) show the need for face in Asian cultures and highlight the importance of social roles in such interactions. It is clear that face requires a collectivistic basis, because face arises from others' expectations of self and results in compliance of behaviour to increase their appreciation. Bullingham & Vasconcelos (2013) argue that, with regards to face, cultural dimensions could provide a context that formed a tendency to respond to the environment in particular ways. One of the purposes of this empirical work in relation to the research questions is to explore the idea of face value. It can be seen that one of a cabin crew's job characteristics is to reflect face value in order to increase appreciation. Furthermore, this can be reflected in a power implication that when power is perceived to be less, the tendency to increase face value rises. This can provide some implications for research in general.

Tassell et al. (2012), suggest that individual attributions are related to independence, autonomy, self-reliance, achievement, coordination differences in individualist and collectivist attitudes in different types of relationships, such as with one's partner, parent, neighbour or co-worker. To create a critique of this approach, the claim is examined that those parts of the environmental circumstances, such as family and peers, form part of the self-construal ability to relate with others by an application of social norms and culture. A counter argument could be put forward that in the context of a 'national culture', being a member of a group as Thais can be a weakness, since it could create high competition within the society. As mentioned earlier, Thailand places a high value on keeping face within one's society. Competition can be measured through such values as materialism and other external factors that imply financial security or specific economic gains.

Thai Culture Face Values	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sense of duty toward one's group</li> <li>- Interdependence with others</li> <li>- A desire for social harmony</li> <li>- Conformity with group norms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Positive Verbal interaction</li> <li>- Personal needs of others and self</li> <li>- Expectation of self</li> <li>- Conformance behavior to gain recognition</li> </ul>

Table 3.3: Thai Culture (Hofstede et. al, 2010, p.28)

Crucially, for this study, the difference characterized in Thai culture between collectivism and female attributes creates an interesting point of further tension between contrasting values represented by notions of face value, strong competition between individuals and team work as part of collectivism within the organisation.

The contribution of organisational studies to the airline industry in particular is that this approach needs to be separated into two parts; firstly, the issue of one organisational culture within a multicultural environment; secondly, how to create a globally characteristic management style that takes this into account. One of the first features of the cultural studies is gender differences, which significantly are among the most commonly reported findings of within-country variations of individualism and collectivism. This supports the idea of individualist characteristics being naturally associated with masculinity, whereas collectivist characteristics have been more often related to femininity (Tassell et. al., 2012). Their findings illustrate that between country variations appeared most strongly when concerned with individualist self-dimensions, whereas gender differences were mainly related to components of the self, women being more emotionally connected to others than men (Tassell et. al., 2012). This study examines such national variation by focusing on individual-level assessment, with sub-dimensions of individualism and collectivism. Given these trends, it is not surprising that airline work, both for cabin crews and front line check-in duties, tends to be female dominant.

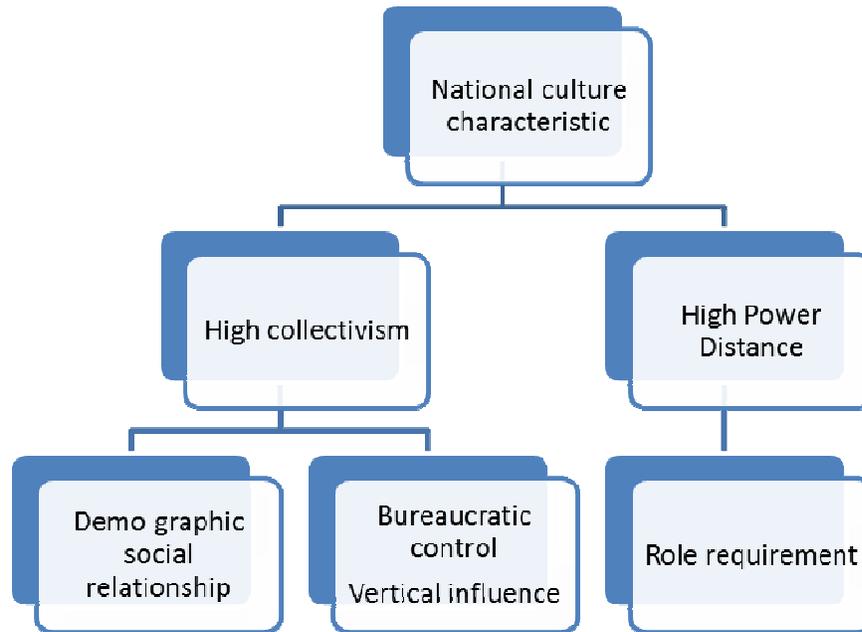
This is one side of the picture; the strong characteristic of Thai society is the individual's ability to adjust to the environment, through compromise characteristic. So these are the two ways to look at the adjustment in the social structure; both at the level of organisations and at the individual level. Furthermore, more recent organisational theory recognises that managers also receive guidance from other non-personal sources, both inside and outside their organisations, such as organisational rules and regulations, organisational norms and social norms (Thomas & Peterson, 2015). It seems that the organisational system also reflects national culture, social norms and beliefs. Vertical sources such as the promotion to higher levels on the basis of seniority is more significant in collectivist societies, such as the Middle East, Africa and Asia, than in individualist societies (Hofstede et. al, 2010).

This reflects the differences in the promotion system. In the system where work promotion was through seniority levels, employees' retention, including employees' loyalty could be enhanced. The opposite argument is that it could result in employees' lack of interest and resistance to any change needed within the organisation.

### **Reflexive discussion of Thai culture and organisation studies**

Before embarking on an examination of Thai culture and background, it would be useful to reflect upon the process of organisational culture, and on the preceding circumstances such as power and authority. Partly due to organisational uniqueness, as in each organisation having its own behavioural and management styles, it is important to pay attention to the relationship between culture and organisation. Perhaps the most sweeping trend currently underway in social psychology is in the increasing awareness of both organisational and national culture. When investigating social relationships in an organisation, the implication of demographics for these relationships takes on special relevance (Boyle et. al., 2015). The use of vertical sources of guidance by managers can come from demographic features such as age and gender in widely differing cultural contexts, so that organisational research frequently now takes demographics into account. In this case, Thai cabin crews tend to have a limited starting age, the maximum age being 25. Once they reach to the senior level, there are certain criteria to proceed up to the top level, whilst some cabin crews tend to remain at the same level, This is often due to choices in work-life-balance where family life is prioritised over work. Boyle et. al. (2015) proposed that

demographic variables have an important fundamental influence on a variety of organisational outcomes. This reflects differences in the promotion system.



**Diagram 3.3: National culture characteristics (Minkov et. al., 2012)**

When compared with collectivism, this becomes a sense of duty toward one's group, interdependence with others, conformity with group norms and a desire for social harmony (Tassell et. al., 2012). However, behaviour and attitudes of collectivists are influenced by norms, or the demands of people in the group, such as family or community. As a critique of this issue, Thomas & Peterson (2015), suggested that individuals have both an independent and interdependent self-construal. Komin (1990) categorises Thai values into clusters, and ego orientation is one of these. When Thai people deal with their superiors, it is important for them to protect the ego of the other person as a rule of social interaction. This is due to face-saving, which is similar in other Asian countries. With reference to Hall's theory, Thailand is also ranked as a low-context culture. The communication style is indirect and emotionally restrained. Straightforward communication is unacceptable in this society because it makes the other person lose face.

Another Thai characteristic is criticism avoidance (Komin, 1990). A direct criticism is seen as an insult whereby the other person loses face, so criticism needs to be made in

an indirect way. A third characteristic is 'krengjai' (discussed above). A fourth is the grateful relationship orientation, which entails the mutual exchange of goods. This can cause a lot of problems in Thai society, leading to corruption and bribery. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (Ugas, 2015), Thailand ranks 76th out of 168 countries. The gratitude orientation also generates power for those who help others, and tends to be common amongst wealthy members of society. Moreover, Komin also mentions smooth interpersonal relationships with others which focus on surface harmony and freedom from conflict. Thai people are seen as being relaxed and having pleasant interactions. This also relates to smiling at all times, whether there is a problem or not. This can cause a problem when it comes to business negotiations, because the other party may not understand the meaning of smiling –whether it signifies agreement, disagreement or no opinion at all. However, in a service industry smiling all the time can be a positive thing. Moreover, Thai people are situation-oriented rather than system-oriented, which means that the law depends on the situation and the person you are dealing with. For example, if a person has a lot of power, the law may be on their side.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has examined various theories concerning national culture and individual values, as well as Thailand's history and background, in order to provide the necessary background to the empirical study. The theory of self-construal has enabled me to explore and bring together the ideas of both national culture and individual self-construal. This formulation firmly establishes the need to study individual behaviour in the context of human relationships, taking into account cultural attributions as to the value and importance of such relationships. It also provides a firm basis for the empirical investigation of Thai airlines within an environment of diversity that acknowledges both cross-cultural difference and established norms and values within Thai culture concerning in-group loyalties and hierarchical distinctions.

In conclusion, the benefit of this overview of the Thai cultural background is that it provides a profound understanding of how the culture might be adjusted to conform to social relationships. Qualifications and differing capabilities may be necessary for the psychological adjustments required in the cross-cultural environment of the airline sector. This could help to develop expertise other countries to assist their workforces

to cope with the challenge of global competition, and to increase cross-cultural awareness and so create harmony in those environments. On the basis of the literature review in this chapter, I will look at evidence from Thailand where there is a strong belief in religion, and at how traditional Thai cultural values can influence organisational and employees' behaviour and the extent to which their work-related cognitions are influenced by national culture. I will also look into employees' beliefs and values, as these create attitudes and behaviour, including their spiritual values and beliefs.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Culture and Gender Roles in the Cabin Crew Industry

#### Introduction

The first part of this theoretical literature review outlines the concepts and theories around gender behaviour that form the basis of research undertaken for this study. The focus is on theoretical approaches relevant to an assessment of the cultural consequences of using soft skills within the airline industry, and the implications this might have more generally for cross-cultural research. The second section of the literature review examines specific gender-societal factors. This will provide a necessary background for the impact of gender and its interplay with other factors. This forms an important aspect of this study, because the airline industry falls within the service sector and so is more open to employing women than many parts of the manufacturing, construction or engineering sectors: according to the Federal Aviation Administration's Aeronautical Centre, in 2013 the number of female cabin attendants was 143,701 (Federal Aviation Administration, 2013). Moreover, the special kinds of skill associated with female social interaction should be taken into account.

Thailand scores 34 on Hofstede's (2001) culture dimension, and is thus considered a feminine society. What is the definition of 'feminine society'? In masculine societies there is a greater differentiation between male and female roles, whereas in feminine societies there is greater gender equality (Hofstede, 2001). Thailand has the lowest masculinity ranking among the Asian countries, where the average is 53 (the world average is 50). This level indicates a society with less assertiveness and competitiveness than those where these values are considered more important and significant. This has further implications, since within the service sector more generally the preponderance of women also entails a higher premium and importance being placed on the role of emotional labour (Hochschild, 2012) and emotional competence (Goleman, 2006).

This chapter will first cover the topic of the traditional role of Thai women, including the differences between Thai women from rural areas and those from big cities. Then it will move onto women and social studies; theories of the emotions; theories of aesthetic labour; and the theory of erotic capital. Then it will discuss women and

work-family balance, and women in the airline industry, including female work-life-balance as it is subconsciously related to individual need satisfaction, which forms part of my secondary research objective.

### **Traditional role of Thai women**

Women's traditional role still exists in Thai society. Women still expect to be good wives and good mothers. Women still rely on financial assistance from their husbands, and still have to look after domestic work such as cleaning and caring for children and the elderly, although households with dual incomes from both husbands and wives have been rising. Thai women nowadays have more opportunities to work and to become as well educated as men, although they still have to contribute to the household and domestic chores. The population is tending to migrate to Bangkok or other large cities because these are more civilised and modern, enabling people to have a more convenient lifestyle, and better education and money-making opportunities. The society is moving towards a materialistic approach to a better standard of living, and the extended family is less pervasive in the larger cities, where nuclear families are becoming the norm. Thai women in the middle class tend to find jobs that can provide high rewards, such as in the banking, airline or hotel industries. However, in some cases the elderly may still have to provide financial support to their grown-up children; the duties and responsibilities within the extended family have not disappeared altogether, and such responsibilities cut both ways, with the duty of care being shouldered by all concerned (Wilson, 2004).

One difference between Thai and other cultures is that when the adults create their own family unit by having children, the grandparents tend to look after those children, as the parents often have to migrate somewhere else for a better job or a better financial situation. Whilst the role of grandparents in looking after grandchildren is not unique to Thailand, the family bond remains particularly strong in Thailand as part and parcel of Thai culture (Wilson, 2004). Nuttavuthisit (2007) suggests that there are two sides to Thailand: one can be perceived as negative, concerning sex tourism, and the other is a positive perception concerning the hospitality of the Thai people. As for the negative perception, economic, political and social factors have led to the growth of the sex industry. Poverty is the basic premise for prostitution. Kabilsingh(1991) suggests that this type of work can provide women with material

goods, houses and vehicles where the rural economy is very poor. Lynch (2004) also mentions that money can provide a feeling of independence, opportunity, power and glamour. From a socio-economic point of view, the increasing competitiveness within society drives people further towards a materialistic lifestyle. Hence this also drives women to find ways to obtain the money they need to buy clothes and other material goods in order to reach the social status to which they aspire (Lynch, 2004). In order to reduce the negative perception surrounding the sex industry, Nuttavuthisit (2007) suggests that there should be measures to counteract it through government policies which might create positive images, such as the unique culture and beautiful places that might attract people from outside the country. As Freire (2005) suggests, the stereotype can be changed to a positive image through a country-branding strategy. Apart from the positive side of Thailand concerning place-branding, Nuttavuthisit (2007) also recommends focusing on positive images concerning hospitality. This includes the friendliness of the Thai people, which might create a positive impression amongst visitors. From the marketing point of view, this relates to brand personality, which means the relationship between human characteristics and the brand (Fayrene & Lee, 2011). It also relates to the characteristics of the locality and its people (Kotler et al., 2002). In terms of personal image, Nuttavuthisit (2007) has developed a typology of Thai-ness, and separated it into four characteristics related to Thailand's branding: 'fun', 'fulfilling', 'friendly' and 'flexibility'. These terms reflect the Thai lifestyle and localities. 'Fun' relates to the entertainment experience that customers perceive as part of the Thai lifestyle – going out and having fun. 'Fulfilling' means peace of mind, which relates to relaxation and avoiding the reality of working life. 'Friendly' is the term often used by people following their visit to Thailand, and 'flexibility' refers to relationships among people in a diverse environment, including the situation in Thailand. Whereas Thailand is in the process of recovering from a negative image related to sex tourism, this image often used by the airline and tourist industries to suggest that Thai people often make for beautiful flight attendants. While it represents Thai hospitality in a positive light, the image of a smiling Thai woman might also be a reminder of sex tourism. Hence such images might simultaneously promote both positive and negative images of the country (Nuttavuthisit, 2007).

*The differences between Thai women from rural areas and those from big cities*

Regarding the social hierarchy, there are differences between Thai women in rural areas and middle-class Thai women. Thai women who live in rural areas have to face local hierarchies. In Thailand, personal relationships include gender role expectations about the male being the breadwinner and the female looking after the household. Thai females from remote areas believe in the benefits of Western values, which are synonymous with hopes for a better future. An important factor in finding the right man is to find a partner who is financially secure and to achieve the much-desired status of housewife (Wilson, 2004). During the 18th century, Western men who worked for colonial powers in Asia bought Asian women as ‘temporary wives’ providing domestic and sexual services (Cohen, 2011). Overtime the availability of female labour has contributed to the merging of the sex and tourism industries (Cohen, 2011).

Thai women who live in rural areas tend to move to Bangkok, as they see Bangkok as a place to meet and ultimately ‘catch’ foreign men. The alternative employment opportunities in the city, apart from the sex trade, are factory work, market and street trading, cleaning and domestic work, and assisting with childcare – all probably poorly paid, but affording more opportunities than are available back in the rural areas. If the women can win the affection of a foreign man, the relationship will result in economic support. They generally perceive Western men as a means to financial security, and such men are seen as dependable husbands. Marital status is important for Thai women because they believe that it gives them social recognition as adults and mothers. Young women are considered to have adopted ‘Western’ practices, which further gives rise to fears that traditional Thai values of modesty and purity are being eroded and lost. The controversies about sex and traditional gender roles in the literature reviewed above contain some valid points in terms of the traditional gender roles that still prevail in Thai society. This implies that Thai cultural values and gender characteristics can influence organisational and employees’ behaviour. Moreover, it also implies that face values or superficial levels still exist in Thai society, of which financial security has been seen as an important part. This is the result of Thailand’s development from an agricultural society and its recent integration into the material worlds of production and investment. The Thai economy

and society have become more capitalist and Westernised, attracting foreign investment.

There has been an increase of Thai women in the workforce in the last few years due to factors such as the growing economy, changing cultural norms and better childcare facilities. Phongpaichit and Baker (2002) mention numerous reports of large numbers of women currently entering both the political and the private sectors. Although there is an increasing number of women working in the global market, there are still some obstacles to women seeking progress and promotion in their careers (Wailerdsak, 2008). In 2007 there were 65.7 million people living in Thailand, of whom 33.5 million were female (Wailerdsak, 2013). Thai women play an important role in economic growth. This includes a high level of education, which is the result of a rapid transition to and social acceptance of gender equality in Thailand (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2002), enabling Thai women to make favourable adjustments to their work-life balance. This is especially marked in comparison with other Asian countries. Also, there has been a rapid growth in women's opportunities in the private sector. In 2007, the percentage of women who worked in the private sector rose to 35.8%. However, men still play an important role in higher positions compared with women. In 2007, the percentage of women in subordinate positions was 25.9%, compared with 12% for men. However, in the same year, 14.6% of women were promoted in their careers as managers and professionals, compared with 15.9% of men, denoting a narrowing of the gap between men and women at higher levels (Wailerdsak, 2013).

It can be seen that there are social gaps between Thai women. There are also other women who might be considered middle class. Wailerdsak (2013) demonstrated that there were 603 women executives in 211 family-owned businesses in March 2006. Family-owned businesses are an important part of Thai culture, and this is reinforced by Thai beliefs in the importance of the family, not only in the home, but also in the economic realm, so that family members are often included in the business (Nuttavuthisit, 2007). Thai education is the way to climb the social ladder. Education has been valued as a decorative symbol rather than for its intrinsic value (Wailerdsak, 2013). Women whose educational qualifications were obtained abroad, especially those who hold an MBA degree, find themselves in a particularly favourable position

in this regard, and are seen as a great asset to a family business; this in turn helps them in their career development and future employment prospects. In relation to this study, education has an effect on recruitment and selection for Thai Airways (Thai Airways Annual Report, 2014), where candidates are required to have completed bachelor degrees.

### **Women and social studies**

The positioning of this research is to study women in a specific culture, in this case Thailand, so it is important to study the position of Thai women within the context of the socio-economic and sociocultural aspects of Thai society. Much literature has been published on women's position in society. These studies provide a broader perspective on women from the past to the present. This literature review focuses more especially on the feminine nature of the work expected of women in society, starting with the classic formulation of the theory of emotional labour by Hochschild, since this has direct relevance for the study of female cabin crew in the Thai context. The review then moves on to a discussion of the theory of aesthetic labour in connection with services that use aesthetic skills such as body language, dress, voice and communication. The discussion then moves on to the more controversial theory of erotic capital, which has been heavily criticised by feminists.

### ***Emotional labour***

According to Hochschild's theory, the work of female cabin crew involves the use of feminine charm, caring and sexuality in order to attract passengers (Hochschild, 2012). The work is a mixture of commercial performance and skills employed in the domestic sphere, including the increasing use of emotional labour among cabin crews. Emotional labour is normally regarded as part of women's natural skills. As Hochschild defines emotional labour in *The Managed Heart*: 'the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display (Hochschild, 2012, p32). There is a general debate about whether it is appropriate to force staff to be 'nice' to customers. Such concerns are especially relevant within the airline industry, including low-cost airlines such as EasyJet, where front-line staff are considered to be acting as ambassadors for the company, or even Singapore Airlines, which seeks to promote Singapore girls as a marketing image. As Carlzon, CEO of SAS, says in *Moments of Truth* (Carlzon, 1987), an interactional skill is both very important and

hard to control or enforce compared with other skills. Cabin crews need to develop a feminine style. In this connection it is worth recalling that the first female cabin crews, recruited in the 1930s by United Airlines, were nurses who were seen as caring mother figures. By the 1970s, cabin crews reflected the wider radicalisation of feminism and identified more with the personal nature of cabin work. In 1972 Stewardesses for Women's Rights began a series of negotiations between cabin crew and employers. Thus the abilities that many women are said to possess naturally are now gradually being acknowledged as of value to airline companies, and as a result traits such as emotional intelligence are now being taught in many organisations and are seen as valuable for men as well (Newman et al., 2010). Hochschild's work lends support to the idea that emotional labour using female characteristics can be suitable for service industry workers in order to delight and satisfy customers.

Thus some airlines promote the idea that both men and women should employ a female style of management, using such female characteristics as care, good interpersonal skills in communication, and better service skills associated with emotional labour. However, there is some debate concerning such emotional labour, in that employees may not feel the emotions that they are required to display. There are differences between using emotional intelligence and doing emotional labour at work. Emotions relating to weakness and stress are still not acceptable (Grandey et al., 2013). The very long working hours of cabin crews contribute to feelings of stress, especially for employees with children. This appears to be considered as belonging in the category of emotional labour. There is always a certain amount of extra, albeit subconscious, emotional work which women put in to justify their position in the workplace (Hochschild, 2012). In Hochschild's research, 'people skills' such as communication and good listening were a precondition for the job.

### ***Aesthetic labour***

'Aesthetic labour' is defined as the 'mobilisation, development and commodification of embodied dispositions' (Witz et al., 2003, p. 37). Findings by Tyler and Abbott (1998) indicate that women are performing their traditional gender roles in the workplace, just as they are expected to do in society. Female work also becomes sexualised work. Much research related to female occupations indicates that women's attractive appearance can become an important part of the service (Koch et al., 2013).

This can lead to more likelihood of sexual harassment. Although women perceive their role and their appearance as part of emotional labour, there is evidence of sexual harassment occurring (Koch et al., 2013). Huber (2014) shows that although female-orientated occupations tend to entail sexualisation and lower status, men can adapt the structure in order to maintain their own status and position. From a gender perspective, there is a clear relationship between gendered personality and a front-line service that is created to be compatible with customer expectations (Grandey et al., 2013). This is related to Tyler and Abbott's (1998) findings that an attractive personality and appearance are something required of women. Stephen (2014) states that beautifying the face of labour is part of the work of customer service, recognising that appearances are noticed by profile customer groups.

To clarify the above point, Stephen (2014) states that traditional gender role behaviour within the production and service sectors is related to customer expectations of normal social interaction, and so is seen as simply part of the service. This is an interesting point which relates to research involving national cultures: having individual characteristics which are seen as normative within that culture might help to deliver a positive performance outcome, and given the right context and environment might also help to reduce potential role conflict within the airline sector. Within the framework of gender and service satisfaction, Guerrier and Adib (2003) discuss personal service encounters between employees and customers. They point out that the more complex the service encounter, the more personalised the service expected by customers. Consequently, customers might assume that a higher airfare justifies a greater expectation that their needs will be met. Moreover, Huber (2014) states that the service industry consists of social functions alongside economic exchange, because service interaction is a part of product-buying and so, by implication, is also part of the sociological experience.

### ***Critiques of emotional and aesthetic labour***

Hochschild (2012) notes that flight attendants are obliged not only to smile, but also to try to work up some warmth behind the smile, and she goes on to ask how this is to be achieved Gabbott and Hogg (2013) and Hochschild (2012) define deep acting as a modification of inner feelings matched with suitable expressions, whereas surface acting is a modification of facial expressions only. Hochschild's work differentiates

'surface acting', such as smiling, from 'deep acting', where employees try to make themselves happy so that they will be able to smile genuinely. For example, as Hochschild argues, the way we think about people in some situations can create feelings of sympathy towards them, leading us to feel sorry for them (Hochschild, 2012). However, there is a disadvantage of surface acting which can give rise to job burnout and depression, identified by Grandey et al. (2013). Ironically, surface acting can cause emotional exhaustion. It is suggested that in order to cope with emotional exhaustion, employees may reveal their negative feelings to customers or passengers to reduce the emotional dissonance, despite the fact that employees are expected to appear friendly and show a positive attitude (Avey et al., 2014).

My research investigates traditional Thai cultural values and gender characteristics that can influence organisational and employees' behaviour, and assesses the extent to which their work is influenced by gender and national culture. Self-maintenance or values derived from spiritual beliefs – such as letting go, self-reflection and mindfulness – influence cabin crews' behaviour at work. Deep acting is a way to keep a person from becoming burnt out, because customers will respond in a more favourable way, whereas surface acting is associated with emotional exhaustion and breaking character. Because front-line staff in the hotel and airline industries are expected to express positive emotions, it is even more important for these employees to use deep acting. This is because deep acting comes from expressing true inner feelings and appears to be authentic to customers or passengers. Research has shown that deep acting has a positive influence on passengers (Koole, 2009). It is therefore suggested that employees should receive deep-acting training and learn appropriate techniques of emotional work (Koole, 2009).

Yoo and Arnold (2016) refer to effective service delivery where the key factor is an authenticity of reaction, such as an authentic smile. This has an effect on deep acting, because once an internal state is changed, the expression will be authentic. This is because in a service industry such as the airline industry, passengers do not want to experience negative feelings, so there may be some evidence that cabin crews suppress negative moods or reactions. In the airline industry, where companies have to adapt to a constantly changing environment, crewmembers also have to be constantly adapting to changes in destination, time zones, passengers, even teammates

and colleagues. This need for flexibility and adaptability actually helps cabin crews to display positive behaviour and feelings, despite any challenges they may face.

Let us move onto gender characteristics in Hochschild's theory. Godwyn and Gittell (2012) suggest that women have different and indeed better skills than men for managing the demands of the global workplace. Research in gender differences has consistently found that perceptions of specific differences are greater than the reality of any difference (Godwyn&Gittell, 2012). This study will examine the importance of traditional female gender roles such as listening and emotional work, and their impact on gender roles within the airline industry. Part of the female gender stereotype is listening. Listening is important for gathering information about problematic behaviour. People perceive that their ideas and beliefs are of value when they are asked for clarification. Women have been found to be better listeners because they are more intense, thoughtful and attentive than men (Godwyn&Gittell, 2012). This non-verbal demeanour is likely to be even more effective when combined with smiling, demonstrations of concern, and sensitivity to affective states. A counselling approach may be strengthened through better listening, supportive communication and sensitivity to others' feelings, including empathy and understanding. These are some of the characteristics of a cabin crew's job. Both verbal and non-verbal communications are important in terms of interaction with passengers. Also a good listener is more thoughtful and attentive, which would be a good cabin crew characteristic. Some companies have included this in their behaviour and conduct policies.

As mentioned before, social skills and feminine qualities in terms of connecting networks of relationships have been taken into account. My research on the airline industry in Thailand examines the correlation between culture and gender. This is all the more relevant in the case of Thailand, since collectivist traits have been linked to femininity (Kashima et al., 2013). A competitor with Thai Airlines is Singapore Airlines. Heracleous et al. (2006) note that Singapore Airlines has a good reputation for service because the company develops its staff in a holistic manner, making it a desirable and challenging workplace for the younger generation. Heracleous et al. (2006) also state that Singapore Airlines helps cabin crews to deal with emotional

turmoil and to increase passenger satisfaction without them feeling they are being taken advantage of.

The concept of emotional labour is about a mindfulness of feeling and the self. Hochschild(2012) criticises the work of Goffman for only focusing on impression management or surface acting, which is all about how to use the body to show inner feelings. Deep acting, on the other hand, is related to how to manage one's feelings. It is about the inner self. For Hochschild, deep acting should be authentic and based on inner feelings, otherwise it will become false. The concept of aesthetic labour is different from that of emotional labour. Bourdieu (1986) mentions that aesthetic labour can be developed to make oneself more attractive, where physical attributes become commodities to be traded on the labour market. He further argues that embodied disposition is the way in which people walk, stand and speak in everyday interactions. The kinds of embodied disposition that acquire an exchange value are not equally distributed socially, but are fractured by class, gender, age and racialised positions (Bourdieu, 1986).

### ***Erotic capital***

The literature on erotic capital mentions the six elements of the theory developed by Hakim. Firstly, erotic capital consists of beauty, and there are many variations on the definition of beauty. Some people and cultures may judge something to be beautiful in which others may not be interested. Second is sexual attractiveness, which entails facial attractiveness, sexual appeal and social interaction. Third is charm, which means the likability of the person to those around them. Fourth is liveliness, such as humour and vivacity that can make people feel happy. The fifth is social presentation including social skills, make-up, dress and hairstyle. The sixth is sexuality itself. Hakim (2010)cites Michelle Obama as an example of erotic capital. She claims that Michelle Obama is a post-feminist First Lady: she both has academic credentials and has become an icon of fashion, power and everyday style in the United States. It is interesting to observe that within the airline industry, on Singapore Airlines for instance, once cabin crews have been trained, all of the women transform themselves to become another person who is attractive to passengers. Hakim (2010) states that erotic capital also plays a role in the hospitality or service industry and her study showed that women can be feminine but be strong, independent and clever at the

same time. Hakim's work can be related to self-help literature such as *Emotional Intelligence* by Goleman (2006) or it can be improved through personality development and social skills. This can lead to personal professional benefits.

### ***Reflections on sociological literature and Hakim's theory of erotic capital***

Within sociological discourse, gender focuses on femininity and how to express female gender characteristics. Sociology tends to differentiate between sex and gender very clearly. Sex is related to biological traits and the physical body, whereas gender is about how society behaves and responds to a specific gender (Hakim, 2010). Sexuality is about sexual attraction. In some cultures, gender roles are more strongly delineated, for example with men seen as the breadwinner and women as subordinate. These expectations vary in different cultures. However, Hakim (2010) has claimed that erotic capital is widely used in the media, advertising and social interaction. Her work has been criticised by lots of sociologists, such as Green (2013), as the idea of erotic capital is related to individual attributes. Her work may be interpreted as a point for second-wave feminists who focus on collective action and personal power through sexuality (Green, 2013).

Erotic capital is a broad concept, as the area concerns sexuality and its advantages for women. Hakim developed a broad concept of erotic capital around notions of beauty and personal appeal. Yet her work lacks sufficient analytical insight, as it fails to take into account the effects of class, power and status. Green (2013) states that Hakim's work has so far failed to fulfil its expected promise to gender theory. For this reason, Hakim's work does not have a direct relevance for my study of the airline industry because my research has taken other factors such as culture, ethnicity and social structure into account. It is clear that in many cultures beauty and appearance play an important role for cabin crewmembers. In my research, becoming a member of the cabin crew is linked to attaining a certain social status, yet this does not entail sexuality as such, since traditional Thai cultural values still predominate. Hence I would argue that while beauty and appearance are relevant to obtaining a position as cabin crew, this is in no way synonymous with erotic capital as defined by Hakim.

### **Women , ageing and work-family balance**

In a workplace context it cannot be avoided that ageing has an effect on embodiment (Clarke & Griffin, 2008). Butler (1969, p.243) defines ageism as the stereotyping of and discrimination against workers because of their age. Some research has shown that older workers can be made redundant and subsequently it is difficult for them to find a new job (Ahmed et al. 2012). Some people who work for the same organisation for a long time might not be willing to learn new working methods or adapt to changes within the organisation. This unwillingness to change and adapt to new management techniques, technological advances or the installation of new computer systems can lead to a negative attitude towards the organisation. However, cabin crew who have provided the service for a long time should be kept on as employees, as they are an important asset to the company, and this is reflected in HR policy in terms of length of service. In Thai Airways there is a job rotation policy so that staff can move to another department due to health and personal issues (Thai Airways Annual Report, 2014).

As mentioned earlier, it is important for cabin crew to be adaptable and able to deal with changes in time zones, so a healthy body is needed. In addition to the time zone issue there is also the lack of sleep and long, irregular hours (Kecklund et al., 2010). According to Bergmann and Gilberg (2015), ageing also has an impact on cabin crew work experience in terms of increasingly negative attitudes, particularly when they compare their current experience with their work situation in the past. According to Bergmann and Gilberg review, most cabin crew were happy with their work, travel, colleagues and lifestyle. However, once they reached middle age things become more difficult, such as with health problems and workloads. This led to a feeling of dissatisfaction with their job, and it was found that they started to exercise and look after their health more – for example, eating healthy food and avoiding alcohol – as cabin crew need to be fit and ready for an emergency situation. Working conditions on aircraft have an effect on all ages, but particularly on middle-aged employees. One of the ways for middle-aged cabin crew to carry on working is not to work full time. According to Bergmann and Gillberg (2015), some cabin crew who have ten years before retirement would like to leave the job, but they would struggle to find a new job at that age. Moreover, the management would also like to end their contracts because they would prefer young cabin crews who are not so experienced, have less

of a voice in the company and are therefore easier to handle. It can thus be seen that age might have an effect on management and employees. It is also related to gender roles in terms of recruitment and selection. Age is also related to aesthetic labour and erotic capital. Bodily regulation can arise from working with a certain age group in the airline industry, causing the sexualisation of service labour (Sangster & Smith, 2016). This might lead to grievances over embodied labour in some cases (Sangster & Smith, 2016).

The literature on career commitment and achievement investigates the experiences of people whose accomplishments in their chosen careers generate positive perceptions and improve attitude consistency (Seierstad & Kirton, 2015). As has been seen, it is part of many company policies, including in the airline industry, to reflect positive feelings related to work in order to develop a good attitude towards customers. Many authors (Seierstad & Kirton, 2015) mention that positive performance outcomes result in extrinsic rewards, such as a high salary or a promotion, which in turn are related to internal standards:

- 1) Extrinsic outcome (pay, promotion)
- 2) Intrinsic outcome (satisfaction)

It is interesting that in the case of cabin crews, the pay and rewards are high in comparison with other jobs at the same level. The majority of cabin crews in Thailand hold undergraduate degrees, whilst some hold postgraduate qualifications. The intrinsic rewards in these cases may arise from a balance of work, money and family that might be part of cabin crews' satisfaction. According to Minkov et. al. (2012), the degree to which people concentrate on their own appearance differs according to culture. At face value, one would expect a relationship between gender and fashion, but a variety of requirements are associated with fashion: dressing in a contemporary style can satisfy the need to be neat, the need for status or the need to be different. Although there is some documentation on status obtained by expressing either one's accomplishments or one's authority and social position, it can be accepted that status is related to masculinity and/or to power distance (Minkov et al., 2012). An example such as wearing a very expensive watch appears to meet another status need – to represent one's position in society – and this is a part of the power index.

This clearly applies to the situation regarding face value, where one would expect the level of masculinity in a culture to influence females' need to look nice in order to be more attractive to males, and cosmetics to be used accordingly (Minkov et al.,2012). Cosmetics predominantly imply two other needs: the need to distinguish one person from another, and the need to look young. The use of cosmetics therefore relates positively to individualism and negatively to power distance. When comparisons were made in a study of emotional labour by Seierstad and Kirton (2015),company image was found to play an important part, especially in service work. Physical attractiveness, plus appropriate dress and age, can be used in order to create a positive attitude towards customers. Again, this is related to Hakim's theory, where make-up and dress are part of erotic capital.

In Thailand, cabin crew work is one of the most popular career choices in the service sector. It is considered to be attractive, well paid, multi-beneficial and of high social status. Following on from motivations and need satisfaction, the macro-environment and work-family conflict should be taken into account. This relates to the traditional role of females. Their need satisfaction might cause work and family conflict, and this will be reviewed in the next section. Whilst the traditional family ideal includes a homemaker who combines work with family demands, single-parent households and adults in dual-earner relationships have to continuously struggle to balance work and family requirements (Seierstad & Kirton, 2015). This balancing act is considered in the idea of the work-family system. Thailand is generally ranked quite highly amongst collectivist societies. The comparatively low score of 20 indicates a long-term commitment to groups such as the family and the extended family. In collectivistic countries, Hofstede shows that group loyalty plays the most important part. The society supports strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility and is loyal to their group. Two results from a study by Daverth et al. (2015) are worth mentioning here. Firstly, areas of conflict and involvement were seen to be connected to life satisfaction. Secondly, career and family satisfaction were connected to life satisfaction. These correlations seem to imply that psychological progress and the effect of emotions in work and family domains are not culture-specific (Minkov et al.,2012).According to Daverth et al. (2015),the macro-environment affects the daily lives of individuals, and frequently requires shifts in family and work arrangements. Economic cycles are a practical example, in that many two-parent families need

family members to be in employment to meet financial commitments. Particularly in the case of married working women with children and the forming of more dual-income families, there is concern about women's ability to perform efficiently in the two roles of work and family (Daverth et al., 2015).

However, in the airline industry, where the nature of the job is shift work, the working hours are different. Women's financial situation should not be a problem because they can earn a higher salary than in an average job, helping them to function effectively in the two roles. Economic concerns are often a major stress factor for individuals in their efforts to create a comfortable home environment for family members, but this may be not the case for those employed as cabin crew. In managing people in different countries, multinational companies need to be sensitive to how specific factors within their countries of operation may be interacting with the society's cultural values to produce stress and work-family conflict.

### **Women in the airline industry**

Many studies investigate the implications of the biological differences between genders that might account for emotional and social gender roles. Surveys on the importance of work targets show that women generally are more connected to social goals. According to the ideology of sex differences, men should function as economic providers whereas women should tend to be carers or responsible for domestic affairs. However, for economic reasons society has become increasingly dual-income. The purpose of this section is to explore job roles in the airline industry in order to assess the extent to which women's societal roles, such as their domestic characteristics of nurturing and caring, might also be beneficial to the work situation. Because women nowadays have to help out with the financial support of the family, it is interesting that when we look to the airline business there is social/caring concern within the context of a more female work environment. Cabin crews working in this female environment tend to achieve their goals by balancing career, money and family. As mentioned earlier, in Thailand cabin crew work is a prestigious job and a way to develop social status for those who are able to afford childcare (otherwise grandparents can look after grandchildren). This also extends to domestic responsibilities, where maids or cleaners will be able to help out so that cabin crews' goals and social responsibilities can fit together to satisfy their needs. This will be

related to the theory of cross-cultural management: Hofstede mentions that social/ego factors across occupations also relate to social/ego factors across countries, where occupations can be considered more masculine (ego) or more feminine (social) (Minkov & Hofstede, 2012).

One question that needs to be asked is whether women's work and work-life balance can adequately fit within the job required of cabin crews. There is a contradiction between the ideal and the practical, since the nature of the job itself is to be away from home regularly. Women need to be balanced between the domestic and the work sphere. If we look specifically at the airline industry, according to previous research, positive interactions with passengers can have an effect on customers' responses to the service industry. Many theorists have broken down the service industry into two dimensions: outcome and process (Morais et al., 2013). The service industry needs a lot of social interaction. Previous research has indicated that customer satisfaction mainly derives from positive emotions, as all interactions deal with emotions (Morais et al., 2013). Apart from positive emotion, there is some involvement of gender issues. As Won (2015) states, women are more emotionally expressive, or in other words they are emotional providers, both at work and in the domestic sphere. He also mentions that female customers are more influenced by the helpfulness and politeness of service staff, and they will be more satisfied with positive interactions. In fact, women are expected to be the main front-line service providers supporting the customer, and real-life customer experiences appear to show that gender stereotypes are integrated into customer expectations regarding good service (Won, 2015). Women are socialised to make the most of the interpersonal aspects of their relationships, thereby contributing an important component of the process (Morais et al., 2013). Whenever a problem arises, if female service staff carry on smiling during poor service, still being friendly to passengers in spite of the problem, passengers will feel better as a result.

Another question that needs to be asked is whether there is a difference between the interactions of male and female staff, or between female staff and male customers (Gilligan, 2009). In Gilligan's (2009) study, women used emotional displays to influence outcomes. Research by Morais et al. (2013) also states that there is a difference between high- and low-power interactions, where high power means the

customers and low power is the service staff. Those in low-power positions smile, and Morais et al. state that there is a tendency for women to smile more than men, and that this depends on culture and age. One of the limitations of this explanation is that it does not account for countries with a reputation for smiling (such as Thailand, 'the land of smiles'). There might be different types of smile for consideration. The question arises whether this smile service is related to cultural norms in specific countries such as Thailand. Mattila et al. (2003) argue that management should to train customer-contact employees to be aware of gender-based expectations, to be smiling and friendly, and to control negative emotions. Women are often highly sensitive to negative emotional displays during service encounters. The results of this study also indicate that affective displays are helpful when things go wrong (Mattila et al., 2003). Gender and affective display can thus be seen to have a positive effect on customer satisfaction. Both male and female customers are satisfied with positive emotional displays. Mattila et al. (2003) state that quality is a significant part of service interaction (Won, 2015), and that satisfaction is a fundamental aspect of customer service evaluation. Because service transactions are characteristically considered to be social relationships, strong norms continue regarding which emotions service workers should and should not express to their customers (Gilligan, 2009). However, such explanations tend to overlook the fact that cultural variables are also important, especially in countries such as Thailand where power distance and authoritarian values play an important part in any organisation. This includes the expectation that women should work at face (superficial/outer) level and not reveal their (inner) feelings to customers. We cannot avoid emotions, and paying attention to which emotions are manifest is important, because customers use these emotional hints in evaluating service quality. Previous work shows that customers tend to be more content with service interactions when employees express positive emotions (Won, 2015). Service work is characterised by an organisational environment that demands the 'display of good cheer and the skilled utterances of social niceties' (Won, 2015, p148), regardless of whether these expressions specify actual feelings of well-being on the part of service employees (Won, 2015).

Despite the relationship between positively expressed emotions and service satisfaction, there is a relative rarity of research undertaken on how managers can recruit and select employees who have the ability to show the desired emotions (Won,

2015). Another problem is that it fails to take culture into account because recruitment systems in some cultures can be different from those in others. In some cultures which already have a good reputation for their service industries, recruitment can shift to other criteria such as age, educational attainment, friendliness, or references from relatives who already work in the company. When considering Thai characteristics, it is interesting that in this culture positive emotion and service satisfaction perform important roles. At the same time, national culture also influences employees' behaviour, such as in positive non-verbal communication. To an extent, service organisations could include emotional intelligence or emotional expressiveness as a principle in the employee selection process, or as a key element in customer service training. Once recruited, employees are trained in knowledge of the service culture. Such training programmes might improve employees' recognition of their service roles, including a greater internalisation of occupational display rules (Gilligan, 2009). In addition to having relatively service-based performance criteria, cabin crews' responsibilities are primarily based upon the process of gender differentiation, involving social, historical principles, and an understanding of the differences between genders (Benhabib, 2011, p. 152).

Following this argument, it is plausible to suggest that female flight attendants are required to organise skills and abilities which they are held to possess simply by virtue of their gender difference from men (Tyler & Abbott, 1998). Nonetheless, a common approach is to use skills and abilities supposedly based on gender differences as standardised job characteristics needed by both genders. The principle of service is to have characteristics of emotional intelligence and related traits, which can be adopted by both genders. One crucial finding from the study by Tyler and Abbott (1998) is that the organisational behaviour of female flight attendants implies a certain amount of panoptic management. Panoptic management refers to the way managerial power, tied in with employees' intimate beliefs, creates behavioural conformity (Tyler & Abbott, 1998). As a consequence of panoptic management, organisational behaviour is conducted according to the disciplinary values of group and self-surveillance (Tyler & Abbott, 1998). Employees influenced by this kind of management will manage their own activities, undertaking their individual self- and group observations, and adjusting themselves to managerial discipline by modifying their own behaviour. The literature suggests that organisational behaviour

management is mainly concerned with the promotion of flight attendants' appearance as an illustration of cabin crew standards, such as in advertisements presenting them as the face of the company, or implicitly in terms of organisational behaviour. The personality of the airline should be reflected in the personality behind the smile.

In terms of service improvement strategies and the influence of cultural differences, the service improvement concept has emerged as a consequence of elementary changes in how management philosophy is viewed. Service improvement is a generally used term for any planned and implemented actions which modify the negative perceptions of dissatisfied customers (Gilligan, 2009), such as differences in individual expectations, service conditions in real situations, and other external and unmanageable factors (Won, 2015). A recent study shows that, although efforts to improve may not completely resolve the dissatisfaction, disappointment and irritation related to a negative service experience, they appear to have a consistent and positive influence on customer loyalty (Daverth et al., 2015). It is claimed that services that require customer contributions are more effective because customers have experience of the role requirements. In the meantime, research demonstrates that an individual's values, norms and expectations for appropriate social behaviour are, to a certain extent, established and determined by the culture in which he or she is raised (Daverth et al., 2015).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to provide theoretical support for my research propositions. It has taken theory from a number of disciplines, which is justified by the complex nature of the female gender behaviour involved. The concepts which have been imported into the research are emotional labour; service organisation; needs, motive and career commitment; and the emotional competence framework. Female characteristics are therefore considered to be a potential instrument for positive reactions to customers. Although female characteristics alone might be applied to good effect, a further understanding of their nature would greatly improve the chances of achieving effective and optimised application in service on an industrial scale. Consequently, an investigation into gender and the service industry, including motivational processes, is necessary before other managerial systems are developed. A number of studies have investigated gender behavioural process using

emotional labour. There are, however, very few studies concerning female gender from an Asian perspective. Therefore, on account of emotional labour, this area needs to be investigated further in order for the applied potential of this service industry to be fully realised. Hochschild's research mainly had a Western perspective and focused on a North American company. *The Managed Heart* was first published in 1983, and we are now in 2016. Thirty-three years have passed, and these areas have moved on. There is more globalisation involved, and the airlines' strategies have changed over time. Each airline has developed its own strategies, as I demonstrate in Chapter Five. The airlines' strategies are not only concerned with cabin crew performance and appearance, but are also related to operational costs such as the type of aircraft, the change in the international political landscape, internal conflicts, international perceptions and so forth. From 2010 onwards, each airline started to develop a new strategy in the wake of issues such as 9/11 and the economic crisis. Operational expenses are concerned not only with cabin crews' appearance but also with airport charges, maintenance, station expenses, passenger services, ticketing and administration. The airlines are not only concerned about the micro level, but also about the macro level.

Secondly, Hochschild's concept of feeling and framing rules is related to social construction and the complexity of emotion. From my point of view, culture cannot be avoided when we look into social construction and emotional regulation, because each country is different. To judge from Hochschild's work, American cabin crew have a specific cultural dimension compared with crew from Thailand or other Asian countries. American people have been categorised as having high individualism. High-individualism countries tend to express emotions such as anger more easily than collectivistic countries (Leu et al., 2010). Since Hochschild's work was done, there has been more research on emotional labour in different countries, such as the work by Leu et al. (2010). They have found that American respondents tend to blame the opposite party when it comes to emotional regulation. They also have a tendency to claim their rights, whereas Asian respondents try to justify offenders' behaviour by looking into the situation and seeing it from their perspective. There is evidence that they solve problems through harmony rather than through logic (Leu et al., 2010). Hence my reflection on Hochschild's work leads me to look in my own research at the cultural context as well.

In terms of Hall's (1990) communication theory, the USA and UK tend to have a direct discussion style, whereas Japan, Thailand and China tend to have an indirect accommodation style which is also emotionally restrained. Therefore my work needs to consider the cultural context, because the cross-cultural model can form a basis of knowledge and practice and bring about a balance between Eastern and Western thinking. According to Kitayama et al. (2006), the American model of the self is to be independent, and relationships with colleagues at work are not seen as necessary, unlike in Eastern cultures, where relationships are very important. Sociocultural context can lead to different practices in everyday life (Kitayama et al., 2006). From my discussion this chapter, it can be seen that there are links between culture and gender roles, and Thai cabin crews appear to be influenced by these factors. This leads to my research objective to investigate how Thai culture as well as gender characteristics can have an impact on organisational culture and individual behaviour.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Airlines' Organisational Culture in a Context of Diversity

#### Introduction

Air travel has brought radical changes to global society, effectively shrinking the time it takes to travel, contributing to the globalisation of the market economy and enabling more people to travel. The purposes and objectives of travelling are varied. The main challenge for the industry is to ensure flight safety and to enable aircraft to reach their destinations while providing a good service to passengers, earning their satisfaction and loyalty. When planning a flight, passengers look at the cost in relation to several other factors, including in-flight service. This might account for the significant growth in demand and competition within the airline industry. It is also clear that the airline industry operates within a multicultural environment, as it caters for people coming from all parts of the world and travelling to a vast range of destinations. The multicultural aspect of the environment in which airlines operate is receiving increasing attention from researchers in a variety of disciplines (Gittell et al., 2015).

The first section of this chapter will discuss airlines' organisational cultures. This will explain a new trend in the airline industry in the 21st century. It is important for the reader to gain a conception of the airlines' organisational cultures in order to have a better understanding of why it is important to outline the specific core competency of each airline. Each airline has its own cultural characteristics. I have chosen particular airlines for the following reasons. Southwest Airlines has a very good reputation for soft-side organisational management or spirituality management. British Airways is the UK's national airline. Singapore Airlines uses images of Singaporean women as part of its brand image and advertising campaigns. Malaysian Airlines received the World's Best Cabin Crew award in 2012. These examples illustrate the combination of spirituality or soft-side management with gender issues, including national identity. Their recruitment processes and strategic management will be discussed later in the chapter. The highly competitive nature of the airline industry is forcing airlines to take drastic measures to reduce unit costs on the one hand, and to improve customer relations and service delivery on the other. This chapter will focus attention specifically on how national culture might have an effect on employees' behaviour in the airline industry, and on understanding airline culture in a context of diversity. The

next section will discuss the airlines' organisational cultures, especially as they impact on and influence front-line interactions dealing directly with customers.

### **Airlines' organisational culture**

The reason why it is important to study airline organisational culture is because it reveals the distinctions between airlines and demonstrates that each airline culture is unique. Unfortunately, not many airlines are successful in creating a strong brand image for their global business. There are a few drivers that can be used to create such a brand image, such as distinctiveness, relevance, consistency, authenticity, transparency, experience, creativity, innovation, emotion, leadership, employee branding and personality. Virgin Atlantic, for instance, seeks to emphasise customer service as part of its brand, and offers an on-board bar and beauty treatment area, including hand and shoulder massage, in order to promote the idea that is user-friendly and cares for the well-being of its passengers (Lovegrove, 2005).

In this section the discussion will focus on three specific airlines from three different regions – British Airways (Europe), Southwest Airlines (USA) and Singapore Airlines (Asia) – as they each represent a unique style of strategic management. The research for this study focuses particularly on the organisational culture within Thai Airways, but the description of organisational cultures in three other airlines will form a useful point of reference and comparison for the Thai study.

### ***British Airways' culture***

British Airways was an official partner of the London Olympics and Paralympic Games in 2012. It is the UK's national airline, and has positioned its identity by demonstrating Britishness in the last decade. According to Wright (2009), 'Britishness is about shared values of tolerance, respect and fair play including a belief in freedom and democracy.' In order to develop British Airways' corporate branding, there were a lot of changes in strategy during the late 20th century. The company used corporate brand management, employing six facets of the framework: actual, communicated, conceived, covenanted, ideal and desired branding (Bamber et al., 2009). British Airways has gone through many 'eras'. From the 'appalling era' of the pre-1980s, it moved towards an 'appealing era' in the mid-1980s by repositioning its communications with passengers, employees, investors and privatised corporations. Under Marshall's leadership, it started the programme of 'putting people first', which

led to superior customer service. A staff training programme was established whose objective was to achieve traditional Britishness, which comprises calmness, efficiency and politeness. Then it moved to the 'adoring era' in late 1980s and 1990s. There was an alignment between communicated and covenanted identities, establishing a shared belief in the British Airways brand among employees, customers and others. This led to its winning the *Air Transport World* magazine award for Airline of the Year in 1992. The management put in a lot of effort to become customer-focused (Bamber et al., 2009). In the 1990s, there was a slight change in strategy to be less focused on Britishness, because the market economy, and hence the airline industry, was becoming more global. Since the 2000s, according to Wirtz et. al. (2015) British Airways have been able to create a strong brand image in the UK compared with Virgin Atlantic. However, due to high competition in the airline industry around the globe, the new airline trend is not only about brand identity but also includes cost reduction, mergers and new technology. Another weak point for British Airways is the existence of a strong trade union. There are a large number of strikes, labour disputes and negotiations over wages. This causes a conflict between cost reduction and staff motivation. However, there are also some opportunities, such as mergers. In 2012 British Airways and Iberia (Spanish Airlines) were merged, and this might provide benefits for passengers such as more destinations and new agreements between airlines. Moreover, there is also a possibility of growing globally through the tourism industry.

### ***Southwest Airlines' culture***

My reason for choosing Southwest Airlines is that it is one of the most successful airlines in the United States, and is related to soft-side or spirituality management (Gittell, 2003). Its strategy is based upon high numbers of employees, rapid turnaround and single-class service, including open seating. In terms of rapid turnaround, co-operation among different departments, including cabin crews, gate agents and operation agents, is important to prevent delays. Human resource management plays an important role in building shared goals, shared knowledge and teamwork ability (Wirtz et al., 2015). During the recruitment process, candidates are asked how they manage problems. The recruitment group will try to identify how the candidate demonstrates an awareness of others. After the recruitment process, everyone receives on-the-job training. The recruitment and training process is aligned

with job design, which is based upon functional HR and related to job descriptions. Southwest Airlines also assigns operational agents as cross-functional team leaders in order to coordinate information among different departments before departure. Bamber et al. (2009) state that when something goes wrong, responsibility is placed upon the multiply functional aspect of the work, thus reducing the need for colleagues to blame each other. Moreover, a conflict resolution approach has been adopted in order to better understand how each function works and how they might work better together. There are team-building meetings, increasing understanding and empowering teamwork. Apart from that, the airline also has a family balance procedure to ensure that staff are able to enjoy and have fun with their work, including having time to spend with their families.

People at Southwest care about one another's families. We recognize deaths and births. We assist in times of tragedy...We hire people who have worked for other airlines who say they never received anything at home from their former employers, that they never were acknowledged in a personal way. (Bamber et al., 2009,p.91)

Moreover, the Southwest model is also concerned with employment security. They attempt to avoid layoffs. Southwest Airlines has invited unions to be a part of its decision-making process, thereby creating a partnership which hopefully will reduce conflict in the industry. One of the key HR practices is the relational work system, designed to form the strongest bonds among employees (Bamber et al., 2009, p.93). The company employs a cautious and conservative strategy, expanding through slower growth. This leads to a high level of operational performance with high commitment from employees. In 2007, Southwest was one of the US airlines granting high salaries and benefits to employees (Wirtz et. al., 2015). Boguslaskiet al. (2004) suggest that one of the crucial management skills required for success is the management of cognition, including personality traits. Moreover, they also mention that service should concentrate on soft skills such as teamwork and customer orientation. In addition, Gittell (2003) suggests that teamwork ability is also needed to accomplish certain tasks related to relational competence.

### ***Why relational coordination works***

Gittell (2003) states that there are three core elements to achieve coordination: shared goals, shared knowledge and mutual respect. These elements can shape personal identities. If these three elements are shared within the organisation, it can lead to collective identity and effective action; hence relationships are considered to be a soft side of organisational factors.

### ***Southwest and spirituality***

Individuals view spirituality as a soft-side approach, but it can have a positive effect on both employees and organisations. The spiritual model is adapted from two theories: one developed by Anderson (1997), which is a values-based management model; the other by Schuler and Jackson (1987), based on their studies in strategic human resource management. Spiritual management refers to the sense of purpose and meaning. Spiritual values within organisations can help to set the agenda for business plans and goals, moving forwards to human resource management practice and positively influencing the outcomes of organisational performance (Fry et al., 2011). A good example of spiritual management is at Southwest Airlines, where it helps to shape a cooperative culture. Southwest Airlines is concerned with community in its widest sense (Tyler & Abbott, 1998), which also includes its customers as well as its employees, thereby leading to a teamwork orientation. The employees at Southwest Airlines always assist each other, and this extends to the involvement of their families. The families can participate in many kinds of activities organised by the airline. Armstrong and Baron (2005) state that employees at Southwest Airlines feel part of the organisation and that their participation is valued. In addition they are also entitled to frequent flights at low fares. This kind of participative culture encouraged by the airline produces a corresponding belief and value system amongst employees. They believe their work is meaningful and feel that they can contribute something to the organisation (Benefiel et al., 2014).

Another of the benefits of the spiritual model in the workplace is empowerment (Benefiel et al., 2014). Employees believe that they can initiate change by accepting the values and culture of the organisation. Everyone is encouraged to take action in order to meet customers' needs, and this can reinforce the self-worth of employees. They are encouraged to make suggestions in order to improve the company so that

staff are involved in company decisions and policies, and they are permitted to express their ideas about how to manage the company (Schaeffer & Mattis, 2012). An important feature that relates to intellectual and skill-based aspects of work is that the organisation encourages employees to show their sentiments of caring for everyone, whether staff or customers. There are many examples of this trait beyond normal working hours, such as escorting delayed passengers back safely (Schaeffer & Mattis, 2012). Even their CEO has a sense of humour. As Miller (1992) suggests, ensuring that employees are caring and nurturing is an important part of the spirituality model at work. Southwest Airlines' philosophy is to have happy and relaxed employees in order to make the work more productive (Fry et al., 2011). They are encouraged to add fun and humour when they interact with their passengers. This is considered a part of the company's core values and strategy. Applicants are required to participate in tests of friendliness and ability to work with others, including group interviews and telling jokes. As a result, companies such as this provide an excellent working environment for their employees. I will now move on from the Western strategic style of management to the Eastern style as seen in South-East Asian airlines, with special reference to Singapore. My purpose is to demonstrate differences in approach in terms of identity branding in a highly competitive industry.

### ***South-East Asian airlines***

The Asian airline industry is predicted to grow even further in the next ten years, as Asian branding will focus more on Asian charm and hospitality, thereby enhancing its competitive position (Wittmer et al., 2011). Due to high competition within the Asian airline industry, the competitive tactic is to improve the quality of service. Moreover, there is a difference between wages, as Asian airlines generally provide higher wages than Western airlines (Chan, 2000). Each airline will adopt its own tactics: for instance, Japan Airlines may recruit staff of other nationalities, such as Thai cabin attendants, instead of Japanese staff, in order to cut costs. Cathay Pacific may follow a similar approach, but Singapore Airlines takes a different route, putting much more effort into a recruitment drive and selection in favour of Singaporean nationals. Not only is Singapore Airlines seeking to improve its quality of service by ensuring that each cabin attendant covers no more than 22 seats, which is uncommon in the industry more generally, but it also places great emphasis on recruiting women under the age of 26. Moreover, it offers a five-year contract and six-month training course

for such recruits, hoping to attract suitable candidates in this manner. This is similar to Thai and Japan Airlines, which recruit young women and similarly hope to improve service standards (Wittmer et al., 2011).

One of the most notable examples of the use of the female image is Singapore Airlines. They promote their women as embodying Asian values, Asian charm, friendliness and warmth (Chan, 2000). This contrasts with Cathay Pacific, which recruits staff with the motto 'Service straight from the heart', reflecting yet another aspect of the modern Asian image ([www.cathaypacific.com](http://www.cathaypacific.com), 2015). Due to the high competition in the airline industry between East and West, aversion of emotional labour that uses 'oriental mystique' has become a strategic management tool for Asian Airlines, whereas in the West anti-sexism campaigns are employed (Sangster & Smith, 2016). Singaporean women were regarded as international service icons as early as the 1990s, by comparison with British Airways and United Airlines. In the 1980s, British Airways also created a training programme for cabin crew and focused upon informality, such as making more eye contact and spending more time with passengers (Straits Times, 1998, p.6). As for United Airlines, they have developed a customer service philosophy in which employees focus on the quality of their communication with passengers as well as with each other. Singapore Airline uses Singaporean women as a strategic symbol of service excellence –as mentioned in *The Sunday Times*, 'She evokes the very best in Asian charm and hospitality' (1997, p.3). Singapore Airlines believe that word of mouth is an important strategy for marketing. They believe that service quality cannot be purchased, but can be built (Chan, 2000). In the meantime, *Harvard Business Review* (1995) states that people in the United States are willing to pay more in order not to be treated like cattle. This indicates that there is something that makes Singapore Airlines distinct from the others, quite apart from the image of Singaporean women. The quality of its catering, its unlimited budget and the effort that the company as a whole puts into service delivery are just as important in promoting their good name. Networking or the Star Alliance is another important strategy for the airlines, in addition to the quality of service delivered by the cabin crew.

### ***Malaysian Airlines' culture***

Malaysian Airlines seeks to create a corporate culture that integrates the values of gratitude, trustworthiness and discipline in order to generate long-term commitment in their employees. Wirtz (2010) refers to the importance of the initial training programme, which can create basic beliefs and values that will act as guiding principles for good performance and integrate those values into practice. Moreover, such values need to be reinforced by making employees aware of them and continuously communicating them, so that they become part of daily routine. Malaysian Airlines' value profile consists of five dimensions: freedom, sociability, power and influence, learning, and honesty and integrity. All of these involve personal interactions and relationships, such as leadership, collaboration and social interaction. After all the coaching, the next step is to internalise the process. From Wirtz's (2010) findings it appears crucial for there to be commitment to such values among employees as well as top-level management in order to maintain a sustainable organisation. Hence there is a need to develop personal human values by involving all employees in this model. Moreover, there needs to be clear communication throughout organisation concerning these values. Role models should also be considered, and company policies and HR practices should be aligned with those values. According Skytrax (2009–2011), Malaysian Airlines was one of the top three airlines in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

### ***Singapore Airlines' culture***

Comparing Malaysian Airlines and Singapore Airlines, there is some similarity in terms of HR practice. Heracleous et al. (2006) mention that there is a high proficiency in recruitment and selection at Singapore Airlines. Apart from its success in cost control, alliance networking and management, its cabin crews are among the best in the world, according to Skytrax (2010). Training and development are crucial in this regard. All the women have a full year's training; by the time they finish the course, which runs along holistic staff development lines, they are fully transformed and in tune with the airline's corporate values. Its 'Self-Development Programme' focuses more on service excellence, in response to rising customer expectations influenced by service standards within the industry. The airline trains 9,000 staff a year through a programme called 'Transforming Customer Service'. Singapore Airlines believes that service staff form a crucially important part of the company's public face and so are a vital asset representing and reflecting the company's brand image. The airline seeks to

recruit staff who have empathy with people, with cheerful, friendly personalities, because it would like passengers to have a good time when they are onboard the aircraft (Heracleous et al., 2006).Singapore Airlines’ senior cabin crew also conduct on-board assessments. The assessment criteria are listed in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: On-board assessment, Singapore Airlines (Wirtz et. al., 2015)**

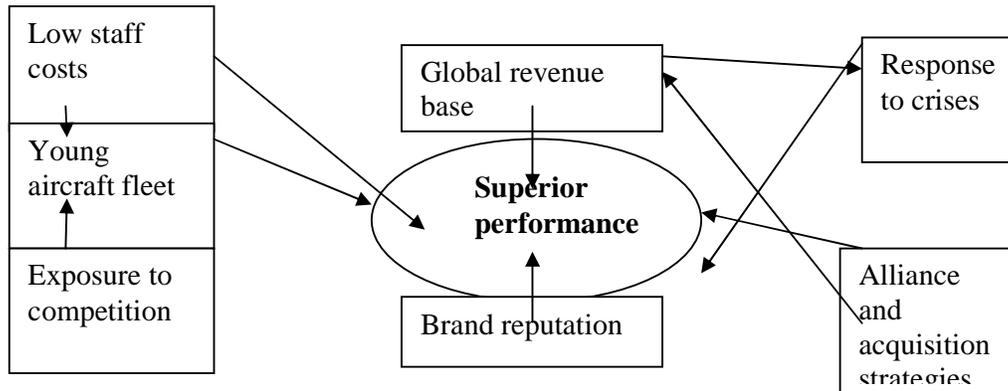
Image: uniform, grooming
Service orientation: interaction with passengers
Product knowledge and job skills: familiarity with procedures on board the aircraft
Safety and security: safety procedures
Work relationships: team spirit
People management skills: ability to work with various services
Pre-flight session: pre-flight briefing

Singapore Airlines employs the image of Singaporean women as a platform for service excellence. Cheong Choong Kong, former Singapore Airlines chairman and CEO, said:

The Singapore Girl was conceived, a personification of oriental charm and friendliness, which the airline made real through careful recruitment and painstaking training. Effective and original advertising, together with word of mouth praises from satisfied passengers, would create an aura of superior service and style. The aura, once established, had to be sustained through constant training, clever advertising and ingenuity in the cabin. (Heracleous et al., 2006, p. 59).

This is supplemented by the ‘three Cs’ strategy of consistency, clarity and conformity (Wirtz et. al., 2015), with the cabin crew being the key factor to deliver these. The following analyses the performance success of Singapore Airlines.

**Figure 5.1:** Key factors in Singapore Airlines' superior performance (Heracleous et al., 2006)



As can be seen from the diagram above, the brand identity is not only related to Singaporean women but is also comprised of other factors such as a young aircraft fleet, exposure to competition and alliance strategies. The combination of all these strong points has made Singapore Airlines the world's leading airline, as can be seen in the Skytrax results each year (Skytrax, 2010).

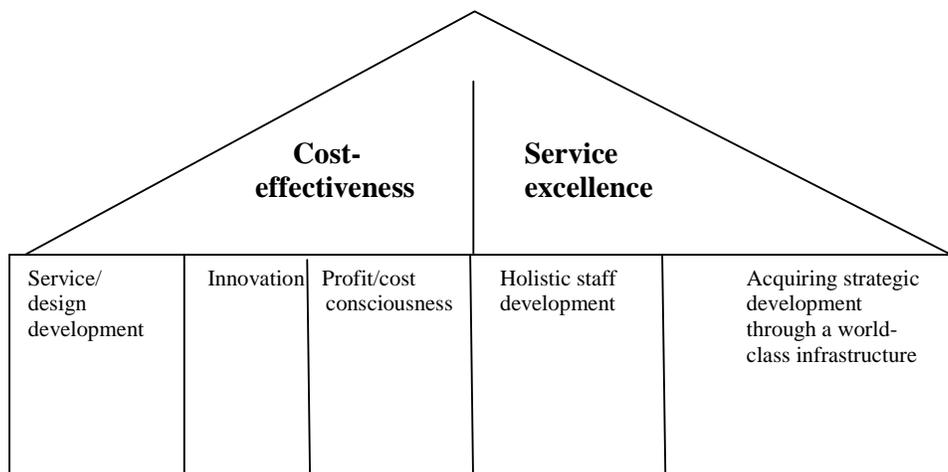
***Recruitment and selection***

Behind the 'Singapore Girl', the most important key to Singapore Airlines' success is its front-line staff, as follows.

***Service excellence***

Heracleous et al. (2006) state that Singapore Airlines has created a culture of customer orientation and cost consciousness. Service excellence is composed of the following elements:

**Figure 5.2: Cost-effectiveness and service excellence model** (Heracleous et al., 2006)



According to Singapore Airlines, the company maintains a service development department. This supports research, the assessment of customer reactions, and anything related to service innovation. This emphasises a corporate culture that accepts change. In terms of profit consciousness, the company has trained every employee to be aware of the conflict that might arise between excellence and profit. Therefore the customer must be satisfied in a cost-conscious way. Moreover, Singapore Airlines builds teamwork by dividing the team into small groups and keeping them together for a minimum of two years. In terms of developing staff holistically, everyone from top to bottom maintains a clear goal. The training covers soft skills such as personal interaction, including emotional skills for the purposes of dealing with stress and passenger demands. Lastly, Singapore Airlines achieves its strategic goals through its world-class infrastructure. This includes catering, maintenance and airport management.

***Budget airlines: Air Asia's culture***

There are a number of budget airlines in the airline industry, such as Air Asia, which is one of the biggest budget airlines in Asia. Its main operations are based in Malaysia and Thailand. The need is to keep operational costs as low as possible. The literature shows that the low-cost model can produce a reasonable net revenue; the question is whether low-cost operations can maintain a quality service on a par with other airline providers. A key issue is service ability, training and development, and hence the issue of recruiting the right personnel is crucial, both for maintaining quality and for keeping to budget. Air Asia has been successful in maintaining a high-quality service which it classifies as 'friendly and personal' (Chan, 2000). Chan states that budget airlines such as Air Asia have been particularly successful at targeting business travellers on routes between capitals and commercial cities. He states that Air Asia has five business strengths: there is a single class, the service does not include in-flight meals, there is in-flight entertainment, loyalty programmes are offered, and the purchase of seats is non-refundable. Air Asia staff have to be able to carry out varied jobs since the airline expects efficient operations and high aircraft utilisation, such as short turnaround time (approximately 25 minutes) and longer working hours. One of Air Asia's mottos is 'now everyone can fly' (Chan, 2000). This alludes to the affordability of the airfare.

The literature summarised above illustrates some issues concerning the characteristics of Asian airlines and the strategies adopted by various companies based on employees valuing both themselves and organisation. Three of the Asian airlines discussed above seek to make employees believe in themselves and to generate self-confidence in their staff. The next section will move on to discuss Thai Airways, where my main study is focused.

### **Thai Airways' culture**

In everyday life we cannot avoid interactions with others, especially in the service industry. My research investigates the airline industry. This section will discuss Thai Airways and its organisational structure, including the company's strengths and weaknesses such as its powerful brand equity, its decline in productivity and increased debt, the opportunities for government support and strategic marketing schemes, and the decline of the Thai tourist industry. This will provide an overall picture of Thai Airways for readers. Thai Airways' recruitment and selection process for cabin crew uses specific criteria, such as the need to have completed a degree or a Department of Civil Aviation qualification. There are two key issues for being a flight attendant: a concern for safety and a service mentality. Cabin crew must be willing to assist others and help them have a pleasant flight. Being a member of the cabin crew is a privileged job in Asia, as it requires a good educational background and offers a chance to travel abroad. The demand for such jobs is based on a head count of passengers: one crew member for every five passengers in first class, one crew member for every 12 passengers in business class, and one for every 32 passengers in economy class. The screening process is as follows (Thai Airways Annual Report, 2014).

#### ***Physical size***

Weight and height criteria (165cm, BMI) are required because physical flexibility is needed in an emergency, and to help passengers to close the overhead compartments.

#### ***Personality screening***

Appearance, composure and posture are all considered to be important. The appropriate way of greeting passengers, a gentle manner throughout the service and even the way of handling baggage are important, as gentle, considerate and respectful

manners are seen to be an integral part of Thai culture. Cabin crew are expected to be representatives of Thai culture, and so must be seen to behave accordingly.

### ***Written exam***

There is an attitude and aptitude test. A cooperative working relationship is seen as essential, and there is also a check on mentality and psychological well-being. As well as such tests, candidates are required to undertake a group exercise involving some role play, a swimming test, and a health check-up provided by the Institution of Aviation Medicine. There is also a formal interview.

The training covers the following topics:

- Categories of aeroplane
- The aviation business, including the company's business targets, partners and customers
- Social manners, Thai society and culture

This training takes 12 weeks to complete; the pass mark is 90% in the security section and 80% on passenger service. It is interesting that the first lesson for flight attendants is to learn how to do a Thai-style greeting. The greeting is considered to be a significant aspect of Thai culture and makes distinctions according to social rank, with monks and elders being greeted differently from the general public. Such greetings, together with the distinctive Thai silk uniforms, are the first step to impress passengers, and have become the hallmark of Thai cabin crews.

Trainees also have to learn about social manners and being considerate towards passengers. As well as focusing on their external appearance and taking a make-up class, they also have to train in inner beauty and mindfulness, one of the most distinguishing features that sets the company apart from its competitors. Trainees have to become involved in a charity project, such as a school for the blind. This is to educate them about the needs of disabled passengers and how best to be of service to such passengers and take good care of them. By participating in charity projects, cabin crew are able to practise serving all kinds of passengers from their hearts, with mindfulness, expressing both internal and external beauty. Finally, the training covers in-flight simulation. Trainees then have to present their simulated flight to the assessment panel.

### ***Links between the training programme, organisational culture and Thai culture***

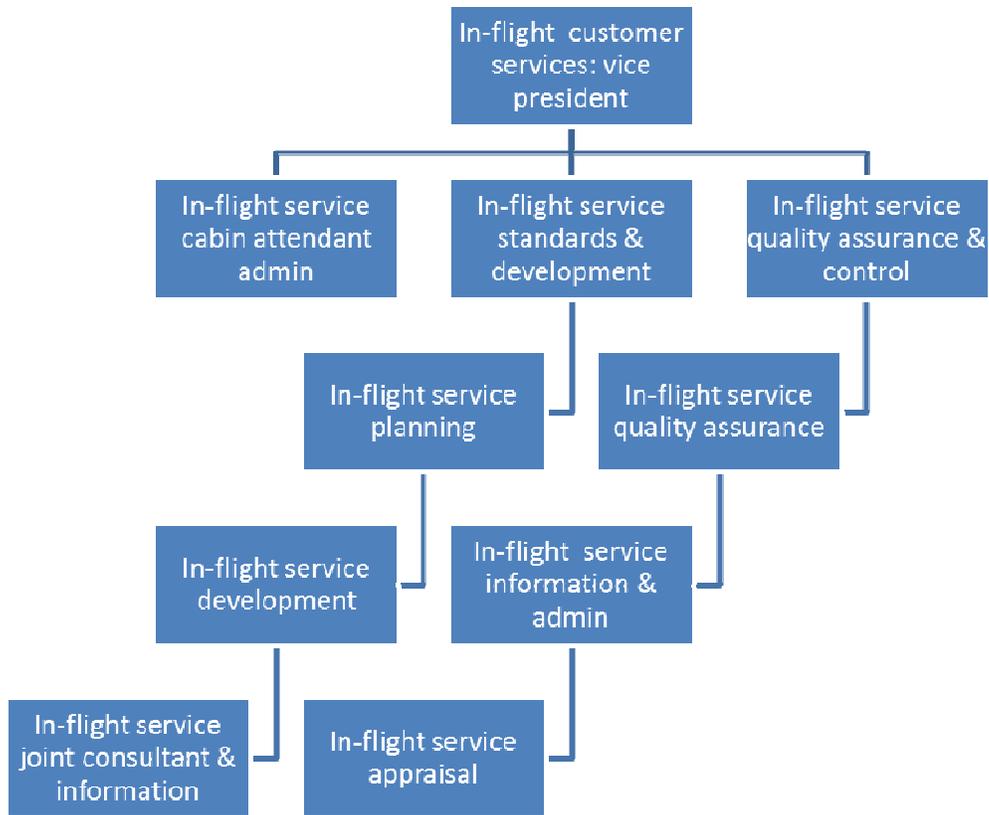
The issue of the management of cultural diversity in the workplace has taken on greater significance in recent years, and in the airline industry in particular. I have personally observed this phenomenon in the course of my own work experience within the airline industry, working for different airlines for well over ten years. It has also been noted by a number of researchers in the field (Minkov et al., 2012). It is within this context of managing cultural diversity that the kind of organisational culture being promoted by Thai Airways assumes particular importance. The company's focus on spiritual values and compassion towards others, on mindfulness and being attentive to others' needs, not only reflects traditional Thai culture, but also helps to embody such values in everyday work practices, through the kind of in-house training provided as well as through stated company policies and procedures.

The next section will move on to a reflexive discussion of Thai culture, gender and organisational studies. In the airline industry, the work of Wirtz et al. (2015) provides the model of high/low-contact service encounters. They separate customer contact from personal interaction services where there is a low need for customer contact, such as in telemarketing and Internet banking. As for the airline industry, they state that it processes people. The marketing challenge is to create a good experience. Customers have physical as well as personal contact with airlines, including with the service environment, and this influences customers' satisfaction. In low-contact services, there is little physical or personal contact with customers; it is more like self-service (Wirtz et al., 2015).

### ***Operational organisation***

Since my research area is related to in-flight customer service, and my research question is 'What are the contextual factors that may explain the continuous success of South-East Asian airlines' customer service?', the next figure shows how in-flight customer service is organised.

**Figure 5.3: Organisational chart of in-flight customer service(Thai Airways)**



Broadly speaking, the company is divided into nine functions (Thai Airways Annual Report, 2014):

- Customer services executive vice president
- Quality and safety assurance director
- Office of the executive vice president customer services
- VVIP services coordination director
- Customer satisfaction assurance director
- Ground services training
- In-flight customer service department:

- *Cabin attendants administration, standards and development*
- *Catering administration*
- *Equipment administration*
- *Quality assurance and control*
- *Economic control*
- Administration
- Planning and assignment

In each category, the functions are divided into between seven and ten divisions; each division has a manager, with subordinates under his/her control. Therefore this investigation of in-flight customer service follows the Thai tradition of superior/subordinate relationships. The cultural values are identified partly by hierarchy, in particular where the organisational structure is managed by a consultative decision-dictating style. This potentially affects employee behaviour as well as organisational processes. According to publicly available information, Thai Airways is a public company which is mainly owned by the Ministry of Finance and the Thai government. At first Thai Airlines was a joint venture with SAS. However, the Thai government bought out SAS's holding in 1977, and Thai Airways is now fully owned by the Thai people. The company policy is to acquire new skills and international standards, including raising awareness of Thai culture, customs and traditions (Thai Airways Annual Report, 2014).

The selection criteria for cabin crew state that as a minimum recruits need a bachelor's degree in any field, or academic accreditation from the Ministry of University Affairs for Overseas Graduates, with a minimum score of 600 on the TOEIC or 5.5 on the IELTS test. Moreover, they have to be able to speak and understand English, as well as having a good personality and good human relations skills. According to publicly available information, in 1997 Thai Airways started to create a Star Alliance with four leading airlines – Lufthansa, United, SAS and Air Canada – and since then further Star Alliances have been created. This is a result of

the changing face of globalisation. Since the Star Alliance was formed, positive feedback has benefited Thai Airways in the following ways:

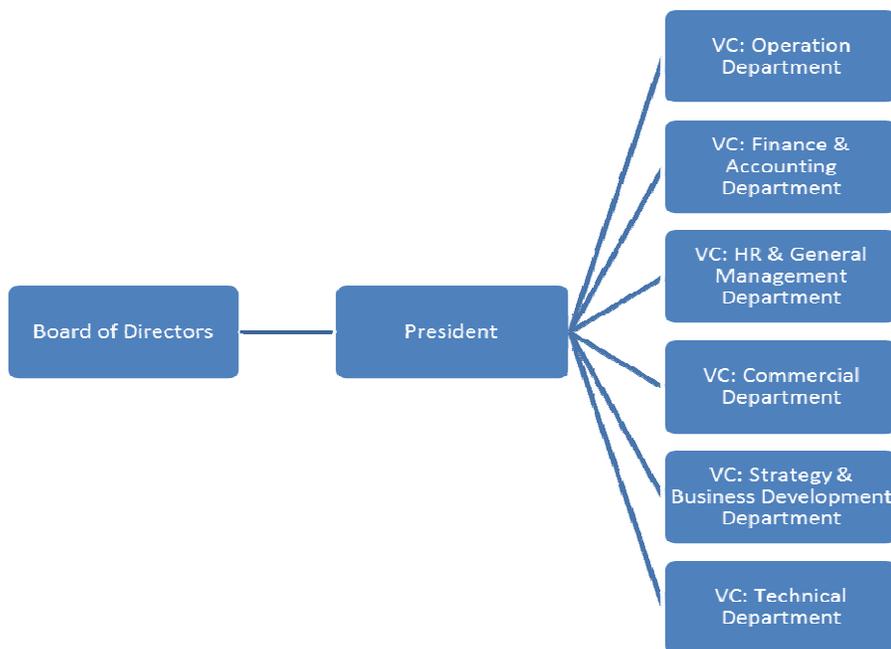
- It has created strength and maintained quality in a competitive market
- It has created a global network
- It has made Bangkok into an aviation base for airlines from around the world
- It has created a positive image for Thai Airways as a global brand and network
- It has created airline resource efficiencies, such as cost-effectiveness, use of a joint airport lounge, and bargaining power

(Thai Airways Annual Report, 2014):

### The organisational structure

According to the management group, Thai Airways' management consists of the president and six executive vice presidents. The following diagram shows the organisational chart.

**Figure 5.4: Board of management (Passenger Service Manual, 2010, Thai Airways International)**



According to the Thai Airways manual, the majority of the shareholders are distributed within the government. At the macro level the company structure is separated into:

- 1) Board of Directors (the majority are at the top hierarchical level, and from the government sector);
- 2) Executive Management Team.

Thus the major management decisions are made by a bureaucracy where power implies authority. Drawing on the notion of power-influenced authority, it can be argued that there is a degree of top-down management in the organisation. This is in line with Hofstede's research on power distance. In particular, this may well have an individual effect on cognition and performance, as is also suggested by Sue-Chan and Ong (2002).

**Table 5.2: Thai Airways' operational indicators, 2007–2009**(Thai Airways Annual Reports, 2014)

Financial sums are given in millions of Thai baht

Ending December	2007	2008	2009
<b>Net sales</b>	1999,921	202,606	163,875
<b>Net profit</b>	4,368	21,379	7,344
<b>Number of employees</b>	26,897	27,193	N/A

Data Monitor (2009) outlines a SWOT analysis for Thai Airways. Compared with other airlines, the company is part of a powerful union through its Star Alliances. This advantage enabled Thai Airways to market itself during the economic crisis. The credible significance of Thai Airways is its ability to maintain its strategic investments, such as code-sharing agreements with other airlines and a powerful brand. However, there is a decline in productivity, which is considered a weakness. In terms of opportunities, Thai Airways has extensive support from the government as it is a national airline. In addition, there is a strategic marketing scheme and increased e-commerce in the aviation sector. Since the political conflict in 2006, Thailand's tourist industry has been in decline. This had some negative effects on Thai Airways.

***Strength: powerful brand equity***

The following table shows the awards that Thai Airways has received within the last few years.

**Table 5.3: Powerful brand equity** (Thai Airways Annual Report, 2014)

A Skytrax survey ranked Thai Airways number one in the First and Business Class Airport Services categories
Thai Airways was awarded Best South-East Asian Regional Airline by <i>Global Traveler</i> magazine
Thai Airways was ranked third by <i>Travel &amp; Leisure</i> magazine in the World's Best Awards 2008: Top International Airlines, among other awards in 2008
Thai Airways' catering received OHSAS 18001 certification for food production safety standards from Bureau Verit as Quality International
Thai Airways won Best Airline Staff in Asia in 2014

According to Data Monitor (2009), Thai Airways has expanded its network by making connections with other airlines. The Star Alliance consists of 14 members, plus code-sharing agreements with 18 other international airlines and two domestic airlines to provide better routes and services. Code-sharing provides an advantage for Thai Airways because it is able to offer 560 daily flights, and the alliance enables Thai Airway to increase revenues with minimal costs (Data Monitor, 2009). Thai Airways maintains a strategy to operate its business by providing services such as ground customer services, cargo and catering services. The company has strategic investments so that it is able to relate to all business segments, such as Royal Orchid members, who can use the airport hotel for a special price. Thai Airways is also involved in low-cost airline investments such as Nok Air. Its strategy is to provide many services related to travel, hotels and car rentals, so that customers can find all their services located under one roof. Apart from Star Alliance, Thai Airways has also created IT initiatives such as the new e-payment system, or the Royal Orchid Plus system in which members can use points to upgrade their seats. The purpose of such IT initiatives is to improve service quality. The company uses multi-channel approaches in order to meet customer requirements. This can provide operational efficiency, including cost-effectivene

***Weakness: Decline of productivity and increased debt***

Data Monitor (2009) also outlines a few weaknesses.

**Table 5.4: Decline of productivity and increased debt**

Cargo segment: a decline in the ratio between capacity sold and capacity offered, from 70.3% in 2007 to 68.2% in 2008
Cabin factor: a decline of passengers from 79% in 2007 to 74.8% in 2008
Capacity sales: a very high rate of decline, which has an effect on overall productivity
Debt-equity ratio: the company's high debt-equity ratio of 3:1 indicates a high risk

Data Monitor (2009) predicted that this decline in productivity would affect Thai Airways' profitability, and that its high debt-equity ratio would be an important obstacle in its financial situation.

***Opportunities: government support and the strategic marketing scheme***

The government has announced a strategic marketing scheme to improve tourism in Thailand. There is more cooperation among leaders in South-East Asia, especially Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. This cooperation is to strengthen economic growth. The government is also supporting the private sector to promote tourism in Thailand and the subregions (Data Monitor, 2009). The following are some strategic marketing schemes promoted by the government:

- Value cards are issued for foreign tourists, with discounts on shopping in Thailand.
- The company is concentrating on developing domestic routes where fuel is a small percentage of the operating cost.
- E-commerce is being increased in the travel sector. According to industry sources, travel-related services still remain the largest spend category. Thai Airways is trying to increase e-ticketing and mobile ticketing, which might help the airline to increase revenue through this channel.

***Threats: the decline of the Thai tourist industry***

Due to political conflict and unsafe circumstances in Thailand since 2006, the number of tourists has declined drastically. This included the eight-day closure of the airport in 2008, when the difficult situation caused a million visitors to depart the country or cancel their flights (Data Monitor, 2009). Mergers between airlines are another threat. Mergers can limit the code-sharing relationships between Thai Airways and other airlines, and also creates a stronger financial situation for merging airlines compared

with code-sharing. Thai Airways is facing a generally difficult situation for commercial airlines and the tourist industry. There are many factors, such as the fluctuation of currency exchange rates and fuel prices, which are having a negative effect on other airlines around the world due to operating costs (Data Monitor, 2009).

Thai management is attempting to achieve business improvement by improving revenue generation and revenue quality through Internet channels. The company is trying to minimise costs by increasing revenue through domestic channels or regional flights. According to Euromonitor International (2010), Thai Airways is still the leader in the airline industry, even though it experienced a loss in 2008 –its first year of operational loss after 43 years of profit. Its strategy was to reduce all unnecessary costs and to increase revenues from profitable routes, including airline services. In order to gain revenue, Thai Airways increased the load of business and first class, including economy class passengers. Its plan was to increase international flights, from 62 to 70 flights with 36 countries (Euromonitor International, 2010). The purpose of this strategy is to create a strong position internationally, including promoting Thailand as a regional hub in South-East Asia. E-ticketing has been expanding quickly, especially for low-cost airlines such as Thai AirAsia, and Thai Airways is attempting to increase e-ticket revenues from 5% to 20% in the future.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, a literature review was conducted to provide a background on how airlines work, the shared aspects of core competency across the airlines, and some key areas of difference. This review has developed my research by helping me to consider how the company might influence employees' behaviour in order to make passengers happy. Thai Airways' company background has been introduced. This might give an indication of how the company's culture might influence its own and its employees' behaviour. All of the airlines mentioned so far share similar core competencies but adopt their own styles of management. For example, Southwest Airlines tends to emphasise fun and play, building team spirit, whereas Singapore Airlines is more focused on excellence and service quality while maintaining cost consciousness. Major airlines such as British Airways, Southwest, Singapore and Thai Airways all share aspects of core competency, namely good service. There are also some similarities in terms of interactions and relationships among employees and

passengers. For example, Southwest Airlines has a policy concerning relational competence which might create a collective identity, whereas Singapore Airlines has a service development department and uses customer assessments. They are both concerned with the quality of interactions and relationships with staff and customers. This is the point on which I focus my research in the following chapters, especially in the context of the national culture in Thailand, which is classified as a relativistic country where individuals maintain informal relationships such as brother-sister relationships (Hirsch & Tapp, 2010). The next chapter discusses the methodology that was employed in my research.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter first outlines the purpose of my research study, the main research questions and the overall research approach, raising ontological and epistemological concerns including an account of my own role as a researcher and my real-life experiences as an airline employee. This is followed by a discussion of the adoption of a research strategy involving a case study, the rationale for choosing the case study of a specific airline, and the means of access to the company. Next comes a more detailed description of the specific research methods chosen for the case study, including documentary analysis, observation and semi-structured interviews. This description also includes an account of what data was to be derived from each research method employed, how this related to the original research objectives, and how each research method was implemented. Issues encompassing the design of these research instruments as well as language issues, access, sampling and confidentiality will also be discussed, including how they were dealt with. Finally, methods of data analysis will be examined. This chapter establishes the methodological framework for undertaking research into women and cross-cultural issues in the airline industry. It relates to the primarily theoretical issues which were introduced in the previous chapters, highlighting epistemological concerns and offering a reflexive approach to the research process that is mindful of my own positioning.

#### **Purpose of study and research questions**

It is important at the outset to restate the main objectives of the research. Firstly, the study is interested in examining the interrelationship between Thai cultural values, company policy and individual behaviour at work in order to answer the main research question: what are the contextual factors that might explain the continuous success of South-East Asian airlines' service? In order to have a better understanding of the research methodology, it is important to review the purpose of the study. This thesis aims to examine how national culture might influence organisational behaviour, and to provide an insight into the responses of company stakeholders (employees and others) in the context of the business sector and cultural framework.

The research question that I have attempted to answer is the following: what are the contextual cultural factors that might explain the successful customer service of a South-East Asian airline, as viewed from within the airline? In answering this question I consider the following key aspects:

- Gender and culture – the traditional behaviour of women in Thai society, plus Thai cultural values and their relevance to the airline cabin crew's behaviour
- Sector conventions – the conventions of service provision in the airline industry and how they tie in with gender and culture

The two theoretical/conceptual focuses are now clearly outlined: customer service conventions in the airline industry as they impinge on organisational behaviour; and (Thai) national culture, particularly gender, as it is relevant to organisational behaviour. In answering my research question, I consider the following key aspects:

- 1) To investigate how company policy influences employees' behaviour in order to achieve Thai Airways' corporate goals.

This means exploring the interactions that are embedded in company policy and which might affect performance outcomes. This places an emphasis on behaviour and conduct-based company policy, and is examined through the content analysis of policy documents and other organisational reports and training manuals.

- 2) To investigate traditional Thai cultural and gender values that can influence organisational and employee behaviour, and the extent to which work-related cognitions appear to be influenced by gender and national culture.

The literature reviews in Chapters Two and Three provided a general background on Thai cultural values and gender. To develop this research question, semi-structured interviews investigated individual attitudes in order to examine employee conduct in the context of behaviour and conduct-based organisational policy.

- 3) To investigate the extent to which traditional Thai culture has an impact on organisational culture as expressed in expectations of individual and collective conduct as manifested in company policy.

The literature review in Chapter Two provided an investigation of spirituality as it impinges on individual and collective behaviour. This research question reflects individual beliefs, which again were investigated through observation as their outworking is embedded in passenger and crew interactions.

### **Secondary objective**

- 4) To investigate the relationship between female ego goals as subconsciously related to individual need satisfaction and manifested in the work context.

### **Identification of overall research approach in relation to ontological and epistemological concerns**

The goal of my exploration of Thai culture is to investigate and contextually explain the meaning of social interactions in a specific work-related environment. Each culture experiences life in a unique way, based on norms, values, attitudes and experiences specific to that culture. My task was to discover the cultural knowledge reflected in the way in which cabin crew in a cross-cultural environment proceed in their social setting. In this case, the research involves company policy, which embeds itself in the social structure, beliefs and values in order to create positive interactions. The aim of my research is to go to a deeper level and observe what is going on from the other side of the world, metaphorically.

In the previous chapter, I reviewed debates on cross-cultural history among anthropologists and other researchers, in studies which generally take Western culture as their starting point. In the case of this study, it was important to pay attention to any culture where collectivism influences people's behaviour. This might affect attitudes and behaviour, as people are concerned with peers and other social influences (Minkov et al., 2012). People's perspectives on others are a crucial factor in collectivistic attitudes. In China, this network of connections is called 'guanxi' (Thomas & Peterson, 2015). This has implications for cross-cultural interactions. Importantly, my investigation of Thai national culture reflects collectivism and high power distance, where bureaucratic control and vertical influence management can affect cabin crew behaviour. There are numerous research approaches and research

techniques in the field of business and management; some of these approaches will now be considered.

### **Methodological considerations and negotiation of access**

This research is concerned with gender and soft-side characteristics in the airline industry, specifically with female cabin crew and within a particular society and culture. The initial stage of the research was to explore women's perceptions of the airline industry. Secondly, the aim was to develop cross-cultural theory by generating the theoretical and conceptual bases of the study. A further aim was to develop a theoretical position on traditional gender roles and incorporate it into cross-cultural knowledge so as to understand the relationship between gender and culture. The work of Riach et al.(2014)is a good example of research on gender, sexuality and embodiment within organisations. Arthur et. al.'s 'intelligent career' (1995) can serve as a platform for understanding key personal and organisational competences on Thai Airways: *knowing why, knowing whom, knowing how*.

- *Knowing why* refers to one's long-term commitment to a job, career or profession – in this case, the cabin crew. Of relevance is the socio-economic position of the job in Thai society.
- *Knowing how* refers to understanding how to discharge a job effectively. The methodologies of focused semi-structured interviews together with job analysis and job description (through the interviews) as well as documentary analysis were employed to find out.
- *Knowing whom* refers to one's social capital –the networks and context necessary to be recruited into a position in the first place and then to maintain it.

These *knowings* are underpinned by Thai culture and values. My investigation of this was conducted with reference to relevant theory and was also supported by information gained through interviews as well as direct observations. The focus was on the individual knowing aspects within this particular organisation and with reference to the society and culture in which it is embedded. This is presented within the following framework:

**Table 6.1: Research framework**

<b>To answer the question</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Key concepts</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Methodology</b>
<b>Knowing why</b>	Thai society	Socio-economic status Work-life balance	Motivational logic	Socio-economic data Literature Interviews
<b>Knowing how</b>	Buddhist tradition	Letting go Self-reflection (Mindfulness)	Technique (Self-maintenance)	Documentation Interviews
<b>Knowing whom/what</b>	Thai culture	Thai values/ characteristics	Customer interface	Observations Open interviews Company documents

### **Using a qualitative approach**

The reason why I decided to use a qualitative method was because it would allow me to go more deeply into the data and probe into the cultural bedrock that might underpin individual behaviour, interfacing with the reality of real-world research (Robson, 2011). This approach allowed me to introduce spontaneous follow-up questions and, if there were any unclear questions or answers, to remedy that instantly. Methodologically the main focus of the research was to understand the work process through the eyes of female employees. Negotiating access to this airline was not difficult, because it is a national airline and a public company, and so in principle should be more open to public access –although in practice, good luck and perseverance also played a part. I emailed the president of the company, explaining that I was a Thai PhD student based in the UK, and outlining in brief my project and the help I required. The president happened to be greatly in favour of research, and he passed my request to the vice president responsible for cabin crew and to the cabin crew manager, with a favourable recommendation. Once I met the vice president, the research process started rolling I had a very good collaboration with their team, who assisted me throughout the research process.

### **Rationale for a single-case design**

To answer my research questions, case study research was conducted in order to explore particular questions concerning Thai society and its implications for the work-life balance of cabin crews and the factors that influence their work motivations. Moreover, the case study approach also allowed me to explore employee strategies for self-maintenance and the cabin crew-customer interface as mediated through Thai values and characteristics. I made a decision to limit the scope of the research to a single case study. The reason for this was related to the issue of practicality and the means of gaining company access, as it proved difficult to get access to other airlines. According to Robson and McCartan (2016), a case study deals with the complexity of and is specific to one particular culture, which can be a single organisation, a single geography or a single event. In this case, a single airline company was chosen to examine the influence of a particular culture (Thai) within a single geographic area (Thailand). Moreover, an intensive examination allowed me to look into different aspects of the organisation from different angles, and according to Yin (2003) a critical single case study approach enables a better understanding at a deeper level. Another reason for choosing the single case study approach was that it allowed me to look from both sides of cultural studies, both emic and etic. At the socio cultural level of analysis, research often involves two approaches. The emic approach entails the study of local customs and beliefs as described by natives of that culture, and includes the values of the members of that society (Ager and Loughry, 2004). On the other hand, the etic approach looks at culture from the outside, and is a more analytical approach based on previous constructed theories, with a view to discovering universal cultural processes as well as cognitive and emotional structures (Crane & Hannibal, 2009). From the point of view of cultural anthropology, these two approaches are key elements helping us to understand human behaviour and personality in the context of a single culture.

I decided that the best method to adopt for this investigation would be to combine these two approaches, thereby providing a richer cultural understanding of the specific work environment faced by Thai cabin crew members, using both perspectives (inside-out and outside-in). In this case, the emic approach was explored by examining Thai people's beliefs and everyday lives, and consequently their workplace behaviour as influenced by cultural norms (Xia, 2011). This was reflected in my use of semi-

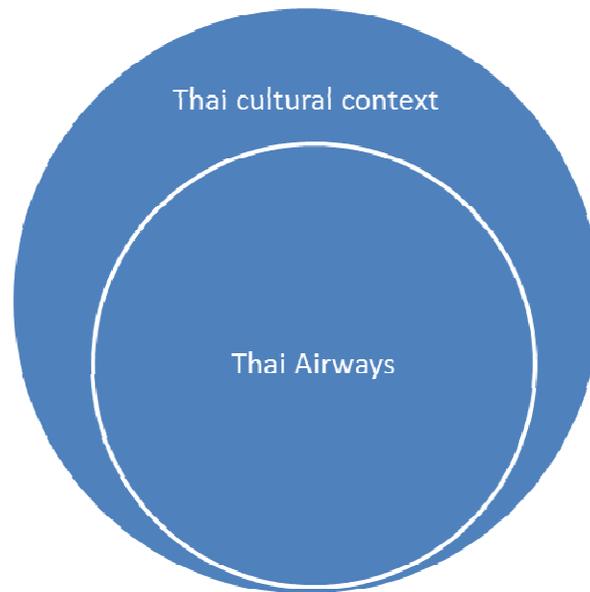
structured interviews as well as the content analysis of company documents. The etic approach is about how people from outside (i.e. non-nationals) perceive the country and its people (Xia, 2011). In this case study I examined passenger perceptions, partly on the basis of Skytrax research on how outsiders perceive Thai national culture and traditional gender roles, and partly based on my personal observations. A further reason for using a single case study was to explore Thai cultural influences in more depth within the context of social interactions in the workplace, both amongst company employees and between cabin crew and passengers, thereby allowing greater insights into the meanings invested in such interactions. Each culture experiences life in a unique way, based on norms, values, attitudes and experiences specific to that culture (Thomas & Peterson, 2015). The task was to discover the cultural knowledge that was reflected in the way in which cabin crews in a cross-cultural environment came to perceive their position and social setting. This yielded further insights with implications for employees' behaviour in the work environment, where the national culture, social structure and company policy dictate the norm for work-based conduct in order to promote positive social interactions. Importantly, an investigation of Thai national culture must reflect its collectivism and high power distance, which might have implications for cabin crews, where bureaucratic control and vertical influence management can effect cabin crew behaviour (Minkov et al., 2012). The next section will demonstrate the relationship between the research design and triangulation methodology.

The case study approach can be separated into four validities: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. For the construct validity of this study, I used multiple sources of evidence and three separate methods: secondary document data, semi-structured interviews and observation. A chain of evidence was established by linking the key informants, thereby using the triangulation method (Robson, 2011). For internal validity I provided a pattern matching these three methods and analysing the resulting data through explanation building and logical models. The validity and reliability of each method was evaluated through cross-referencing with the analysis of company policy documentation, and with data obtained from interviews and observations.

### Single case study design

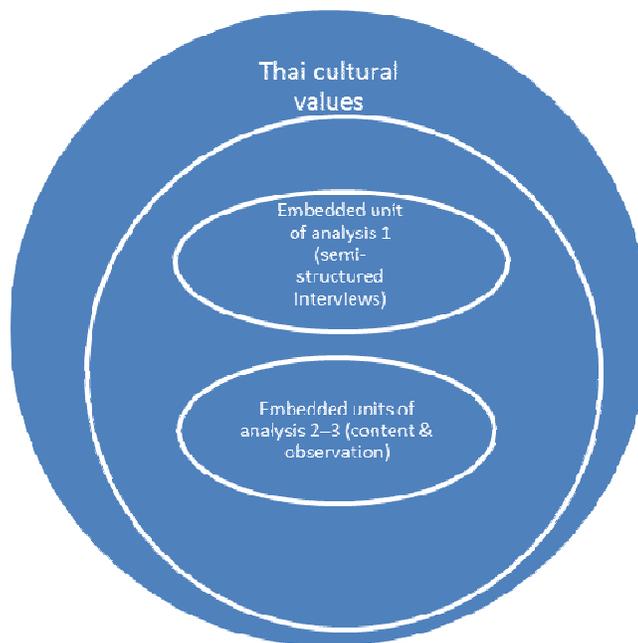
Yin (2011) says that the rationale for a single case study is the representation of a critical case, which can further contribute to the development of knowledge and theory.

**Figure 6.1: Single and multiple units of analysis**



Holistic (single unit of analysis)

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Embedded multiple units of analysis

In terms of data collection, this single case study sought to obtain the following data (see Table 6.2).

**Table 6.2: Design for data collection**

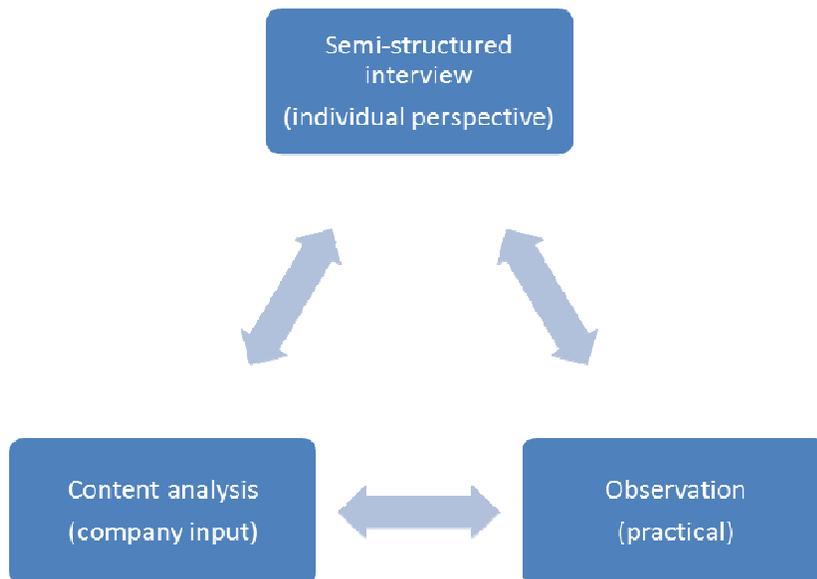
<b>From individuals</b>	<b>From the organisation</b>
Individual behaviour Individual attitudes Individual perceptions (about individuals)	Other reports of behaviour, attitudes and perceptions
How the organisation works Why the organisation works (about the organisation)	Personnel policies Organisational outcomes

**Data collection method**

In order to answer my research questions, I started with a conceptual framework and theoretical context. According to Robson (2011), triangulation means bringing together different types of data, or different ways of looking at data, to answer the research question. It broadens and deepens understanding, and adds richness as well as different perspectives. In this case the triangulated methodology, incorporating interviews, observations and the assessment of airline-based secondary data, enabled a better understanding of the relationship between perceptions, emotions and psychological factors in human behaviour (Robson, 2011). To explain how each method was related: the interviews highlighted employees’ perceptions, both individually and organisationally; observations drew attention to the emotional expressions and manifestations of cabin crew; and material gathered from airline-based secondary data furthered my understanding of organisational behaviour and national culture, which I used subsequently in the analysis. These three elements were addressed throughout the study. The relationship between the three methods and the time frame for each method were reflected in the repetition of data analysis and collection. This supported the reliability of the data. The combination of the three methods provided me with a broad understanding of what was happening, and with a detailed explanation of how and why things were occurring. The intended outcome was to produce and enrich understanding of the complex interplay between individuals, social structure and national culture within both micro and macro dimensions.

The validity of individual attitudes and reactions was demonstrated in relation to the psychological elements embedded in national culture. This thesis includes an illustration of company policy in terms of behaviour and conduct, and significantly highlights output from the organisational perspective. The triangulation methodology helped me to achieve confirmation of my findings through a combination of types of validity (Robson, 2011). I had increased confidence in the credibility of my results, because multiple data collection methods generated consistent findings while at the same time establishing the validity of the methods used to reach those propositions. It is necessary to identify the data collection instruments or techniques and their respective strengths and weaknesses with regard to threats to validity. The following figure (6.3) illustrates triangulated research methodology. An explanation of each research method will help to simplify the answering of my research questions later in this chapter.

**Figure 6.3 Research method**



From triangulated methodology, a grounded approach was produced in order to explore the reality of each point of triangulation. Having described the process by which the objectives were refined, it is now appropriate to discuss the design of the final research instrument. First, an explanation of the grounded theory approach will be given in the following section.

### **Grounded theory: an overview of procedures and practice**

Coding was used for the grounded theory logic and procedures of this research, because it allowed me to adapt and integrate my data with the logic and practices of other qualitative analytical styles. I used semi-structured interviews, content analysis and observation. An advantage of this approach is that it appears to adapt to the purposes and constraints of specific research situations, and to blend with other procedures. According to Corbin and Strauss, the phrase ‘grounded theory’ refers to the development of data collection as it applies to inductive theory. This means that the outcome of the theory matches the data, which differs from analyses derived deductively from a main theory without the help of data (Corbin& Strauss, 2008, p.12). The data from coding mechanisms derived from the airline’s perspective allowed me to have a better understanding of the variables. My case-oriented perspective tended to assume that variables were interacting in complex ways between cabin crew, passengers and the organisational culture. The grounded approach, particularly as Corbin and Strauss (2008) develops it, comprises of steps which are implemented to ensure a good theory as the outcome. Strauss suggests that theory is constructed by the process in which the quality of data can be evaluated. From a scientific perspective, this is differentiated from the generation of theory; new data that has been created can be explained through a theory (Corbin& Strauss, 2008). Researchers use categories drawn from the respondents themselves, and tend to focus on revealing implicit belief patterns, shown in realistic detail. The data that emerges reflects the real world. In addition to the reality of the airline industry, it was also significant for my research to be able to understand the reality of the cross-cultural environment. It is basic to the grounded theory approach to build a written database in order to identify variables and categorise them so as to find their interrelationships. In this instance, the data came from observations of behaviour, interactions and events from the cabin crew’s perspective, which gave me the ability to perceive variables and relationships by using the grounded approach.

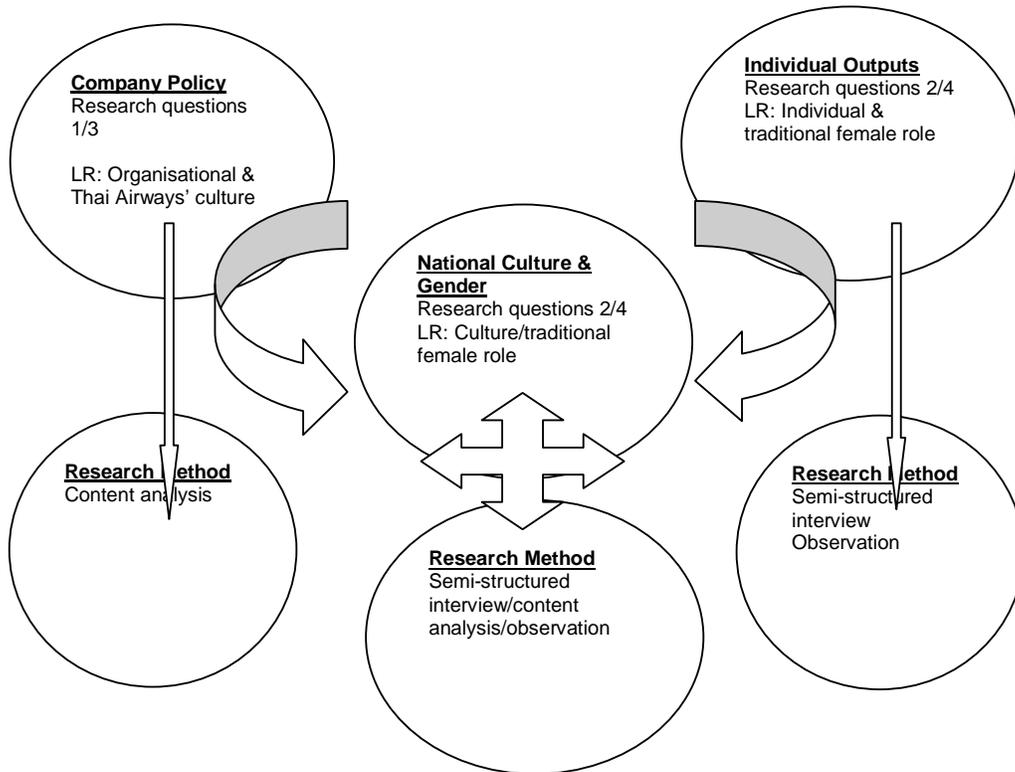
### ***Open coding***

In open coding (a detailed definition will be given on the following page), the analytical process is that in which concepts are identified and dimensions are perceived in the data, where the main idea implies a concept (Corbin& Strauss, 2008, p.103). Thus the grounded approach enables the researcher to define what he/she sees

and how one condition might be related to another. In general terms, the process of identifying and collating categories and properties is known as coding. Coding can be carried out very formally and systematically, or informally. In grounded theory, it is normally done informally. However, there are some benefits to maintaining an investigation of codes along with the descriptions which are considered to be useful, including the texts that contain them as indicators. Open coding provides the benefit of opening up the thoughts, ideas and meanings contained therein, in order to uncover and develop concepts that are needed for clarification of the text. The work of Corbin and Strauss (2008) shows that open coding is a part of the analysis related to identifying, naming, categorising and describing an occurrence found in the data. In my study, keywords were taken from each line, sentence and paragraph in order to search for answers to the questions ‘ what is this about? How and why has this happened?’ Strauss and Corbin (1998) state that when concepts are used in interaction, they often intensify a cultural metaphor, which fits into my research.

My research rests on information gathering and interactions between cabin crew and passengers from the perspective of a conceptual world. Part of the analysis is to identify general categories in which these elements are instances of organisation, work activities, social relations and social outcomes. In some grounded research, there is a theorising about how the world ‘is’ rather than how the respondents see it. In the case of this study, coding sought to uncover the respondents’ perspectives, rather than any prior theoretical assumptions. Next to coding, I consider that paying attention to processes is very important. Indeed, Corbin and Strauss are really just concerned with describing and coding everything that is dynamic, changing, moving or occurring over time in the research setting.

**Figure 6.4: Concept mapping between triangulation methodology and research questions**



The figure above was vital throughout this research. The figure can be divided into three major areas. The area on the top left – company policy input, identified as rules and regulations, passenger service and safety – focuses on behavioural factors and self-reflection. Company policy reflects the literature on culture, as it involves national culture. The areas in the middle identify national culture and gender issues through semi-structured interviews, company policy and observation. Finally, the area on the right reflects individual factors. Work-family balance influences behaviour and performance. This leads to positive performance outcomes at the organisational level. In this case, the individual reflects both organisational and national culture, in terms of interactions and relationships with others. This research is different from others in this area because of the following circumstances. Firstly, the scope of the specific cultural study was varied in its character. A single-culture study allowed me to explore the depth of the data. Secondly, the set objectives of the study necessitated data collection, in this case interviews (to explore employees' perceptions), secondary data analysis (to explore company policy) and observation (to explore the results of

individual and behaviour resulting from company policy). The following gives further details of each method. Having described the process by which the objectives were refined, it is now appropriate to discuss the design of the final research instrument. The advantages (and weaknesses) of these data collection methods according to Yin (2003) are set out in Table 6.3.

**Table 6.3: Strengths and weaknesses in data collection (Yin, 2003)**

Source of evidence	Strengths	Weaknesses
Secondary documents (company policy)	Stable and able to be repeated anytime Content names and references (such as company policy)	Bias on the part of the author May be difficult to access data
Semi-structured interviews (cabin crew and management)	Targeted directly for the case study	Bias can occur due to unstructured questions Interviewees might provide the answer that the interviewer would like to hear
In-flight observation	It is real and occurs in real time It covers the context of events	It is time-consuming Events can be various because events can occur differently Needs human observation

### **Company policy documentation analysis**

#### ***why study company policies, and what is their relationship with the research questions?***

Data management and analysis were performed on company policy to answer the research questions about ‘knowing how’ by investigating the techniques of self-maintenance in the documentation (behaviour and conduct-based policy, job analyses and job descriptions). In order to understand how culture regulates individual behaviour, an examination of company documents revealed some of the processes whereby organisational behaviour, hierarchy and organisational structure all interact with each other and in turn reflect Thai cultural values and characteristics. I had the help and support of the cabin crew manager and cabin crew senior staff, who supplied such documents for me. These documents included the passenger service manual, which cabin crews have to read. The manual contains the safety and quality policy, rules and regulations, service procedures, catering and cabin instructions, and safety procedures. In addition, company policy at a more strategic level was a separate but integral part of the study, as it represented an element of organisational culture and was also referred to in the Passenger Service Manual. A copy of this manual must be

available on every flight. In this document, the normative conduct of cabin crew is outlined; by normative conduct is meant actual behaviour, including the emotional displays expected of employees during different phases of a typical flight. The document also covers different eventualities, such as a flight irregularities and unusual circumstances. The manual is examined during initial training and serves as a guide for right and wrong actions, and so is consulted in cases of doubt. The crucial importance of this document necessitated a detailed analysis of its content, as it provided important insights into the normative behaviour expected of cabin crews, as well as Thai Airways' operational culture and the brand image the company wishes to endorse in its customer service provision.

Table 6.3 shows certain strengths of content analysis. Firstly, it has authenticity, which is a fundamental criterion in social research: original company policy documents were examined. Secondly, there is the credibility of the content. This analysis focused on behaviour and conduct-based policy related to cabin crews having to conform to stated rules and regulations. The organisation created the manual, and it coordinated closely with the other functions concerned. It is specifically prepared to facilitate the work of the cabin crew as well as their conduct whilst on board. Its contents create a personal vision for service improvement in order to maximise passengers' satisfaction. The manual is carried on board the aircraft on each flight. The procedures therein embody company requirements and rules, as well as those set by the government and other authorities. The procedures employed on any given flight should be consistent with those outlined in the manual. Additionally, another strength of my study lies in the interpretation and meanings derived directly from the content analysis of such company documents. The airline company documents were examined through both a literal and an interpretative understanding of their contents. The ultimate purpose of examining these documents was to arrive at an understanding of the exact meaning and significance of their contents..Secondary document analysis should involve making connections between cultural and normative frames of reference and those who produced the text under review. This study attempts to elucidate the objective meaning of the text itself, arguing that its cultural significance depends on what messages it actually contains and not on what its author may have intended.

The main research concern is to explain the nature of the documents themselves, which are regarded as social products and treated as the objects of sociological analysis. Documents have the potential to inform and structure the decisions which people make on a daily and long-term basis. The documents analysed in my research offer ideas of how the service should be organised in order to present the organisation in a positive light. The analysis began with an exploration of the procedures which formulated the document in the first instance. The document was separated into three levels of interpretation. Firstly, the meaning that the author intended to produce, secondly, the received meanings as constructed by the audience in different social situations, and thirdly the internal meanings that are constructed by individuals (Robson, 2011). Qualitative content analysis starts with the idea of process or social context, and views the author as a self-conscious actor addressing an audience under particular circumstances. In this research, my task was to read the text in terms of its symbols. The behaviour and conduct-based policy was approached through my own understanding of the context of its production. This was derived from the use of secondary sources and other methods, including observation. My content analysis for these documents focused on the behaviour and conduct of cabin crew, such as working routines, pre-departure routines, cabin crew-specific duties and passenger disembarkation duties. Its relationship with other research methodologies is through the reinforcement of the policy in individual conduct on the job. In summary, three key themes were identified in relation to behaviour and conduct:

- 1) General principles;
- 2) Duties and responsibilities;
- 3) Rules and regulations.

### **Semi-structured interviews**

This study employed semi-structured interviews in order to gather deep information. As is shown in Table 6.3, the strength and attraction of such interviews lies in the flexibility of non-standardised methods, and many influential and sophisticated analyses have been based on such interview data. The fact that interviewees, especially women, talk about sharing their views with respondents gives an idea of the opposition between those who prefer stimulus-response conventions and those who

believe interviewing should be an open method involving a genuine interplay between researcher and respondent. The benefit to my research of using qualitative methods was that they offer a comprehensive, independent and holistic structure which is dynamic and predictive. This can reconcile contradictory findings, because the role of variables is seen as the outcome of their different combinations and the importance of their interactions (Kleiner & Okeke, 1991). The aim is to gain a comprehensive, independent and holistic picture. According to Robson (2011, p. 269), an interview is the best method for getting access to private knowledge, or in this case inside information from a person. To be effective it should be fair and valid, because in this setting an evaluator has the freedom to develop trust and a friendly relationship with respondents, which are beneficial as a precondition of productive and valid interaction. As an outsider looking in, I am trying to find out what it is like to be an insider. This research used semi-structured interviews. The benefit of using an interview method is that it allows all parties to participate in the generation of an agenda, and also permits the interviewee to be proactive in that process (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The extensive and effective use of such interviews can help to restore the imbalance of interests that invariably ensues from the circumstances and sources of interviewer agendas. It allows an interviewer to get information and understanding about a problem, whilst at the same time promoting the manufacture of a trading commodity such as private data, personal experience and individual evaluations that will constitute the basis of subsequent efforts to achieve a knowledge exchange. I used a tape recorder for these interviews, which provided the best opportunity for capturing the interviewee's affective and cognitive experience. The presence of a recorder meant that I was free to concentrate on the task at hand, relieved of any immediate need to edit the communication. The record guaranteed the availability of an accurate chronicle of the verbal component of the interview. The taped interview was then transcribed, whilst the field notes I took at the time, in accordance with traditional fieldwork practice, provided a further basis on which to build the analysis and contribute to theory building.

### ***Interview questions***

The research questions were separated into eight categories, following the guidelines of theorists such as Hofstede (2010), Goffman (1971) and Maslow (1943), as explained further below. Category one was company policy. This was created in order

to explain the adaptation from theoretical to practical policy as seen from the employee's point of view.

The first category consisted of three questions. The first question was designed to investigate positive feelings and self-reflection. Questions two and three enquired about the company's focus point and how that was related to individual personalities, including the Thai national female strategy, from the employee's point of view. These answers explored the definition of Thai traditional roles or 'Thai charm' as derived from individual perceptions at a practical level.

The second category was related to Goffman's theory (2013), dealing with female stereotypes. The questions were divided into four sections. These questions investigated women's characteristics and skills, as well as whether the interviewees considered those characteristics fit the job or not. Moreover, they were designed to clarify the organisational culture within the airline industry.

The third category was related to Maslow's (1943) theory of need satisfaction and self-motivation. It was important to know how the interviewee viewed her life needs, motivation and satisfaction. This section included questions on cabin crew lifestyles and work-life balance.

The fourth category moved on to questions about rewards and strategy. After need satisfaction, it was important to identify the reward strategy and whether it fulfilled their need satisfaction and motivation. Three questions were devised for this category. This was to investigate how the reward strategy might be related to cabin crews' performance, and how intrinsic and extrinsic rewards might influence their lives.

The next category progressed to traditional gender roles. Five questions were raised in order to give a clearer understanding of traditional female roles and expectations, and how they might reduce conflict. These questions also explored such norms in relation to perceptions of positive performance at the individual and company levels. Some of these questions also explored the perceived fit or otherwise between Asian cultural values and expected work-based behaviour, an important focus for this research.

The sixth category referred to the single-culture study. Two questions were identified in order to acknowledge the place of national culture and individual behaviour in relation to managerial recommendations.

The seventh category moved on to non-verbal communication. This was to focus on how important non-verbal communication is. It was also related to the observational methodology. The idea was based on Frank et al.'s theory (2008), which involves non-verbal communication.

The last category involved emotional competence. This was vital in order to have a better understanding of female emotional competency.

In conclusion, the semi-structured interviews covered attitudes towards company policy, job skills, the nature of an organisation, and need satisfaction, and the combination of deep and surface attitudes was explored.

### ***Sampling issues***

The composition and size of the sample is important for any social research design. The discussion which follows is structured around two major areas: first, the determination of the target sample, and second, the sample size. As for the target population, given that the focus of the study was on the airline industry, it was decided that the sample should be taken from cabin crews, because these represent gender and embodiment. As previously noted, the airline industry has been defined as a dynamic environment made up of organisations and facilities which intend to produce excellent service and reduce role conflict. On the basis of this definition, the cabin crews' points of view were considered to be of crucial importance to this study. The major concern when constructing the sample was its representativeness. In order to secure this, the following measures were taken:

- Interview data was collected from Thai Airways using various levels of age, marital status and education, and was based on basic salary.
- The questions were put to a snowball sample of cabin crew. The snowball method is a popular method in business studies. Once I had contact with one cabin crewmember, she referred me to another crew member by providing me with their

contact details. Arguably using snowball sampling can lead to a biased sample, but because the crews had different schedules, I had to interview cabin crew who were available at the time. This may even have been a strength, because it was open to me to be able to interview anyone without prejudice.

The sample excluded male cabin crew. Partly this was due to the preponderance of women amongst cabin crews, but it was also dictated by the formulation of the research questions, and the focus on female gender roles and expectations both within Thai culture and within the specific organisational culture of Thai Airlines. As noted, there is a preponderance of women amongst cabin crew, and so this provided an adequate sampling size for the study, which was generally around 16 members per flight. This still allowed me to use vertical dimensions for analysis and so explore the data obtained at a deeper level. There were reasons to choose female cabin crew: firstly, to support my secondary objective in terms of the work-life balance and traditional gender roles that I intended to study; and in addition, the company policy document analysis and observations were applicable to both genders.

### *Sample size*

A number of interviewees were located in Thailand, with 16 cabin crewmembers for the main research. The snowball method was used to obtain data from interviewees, depending on the availability of cabin crew due to the variability of flight schedules. The reason for using the snowball method was that it was easier for me to find cabin crew who were accessible at particular times. According to Robson (2011), snowball sampling is similar to chain sampling or referral sampling. It is a non-probability sampling technique, and the sample group appears to grow like a rolling snowball. As the sample number grows, enough data is gathered to be useful for research. This technique is often used in hidden populations which are difficult for researchers to access, as in this case because of the cabin crewmembers' availability (Robson, 2011). The flexibility of this method was useful due to the time constraints faced by both cabin crew and me. One of the research objectives was to explore why female cabin crew would find such a job attractive (its perception as a prestigious job motivates cabin crew to work). This meant exploring female ego goals and need satisfaction, dealing with balancing work and family life. The 16 cabin crewmembers can be separated into graduates, who had just started their careers, and the married

group, who were engaged in family life. The benefit of having two specific groups was to be able to control the age variable regarding female ego goals, where females tend to find a balance between work and family life.

### ***Sample access***

Contact was also made with the cabin crew centre, with the cooperation of the Training Flight Attendants Division. All cabin crew were willing to participate in the interviews. The schedule was drawn up according to the time frame demands of the crew. Most interviews were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere, in order to help break through the barrier between interviewer and interviewees. There were a variety of places to conduct the interviews. They were mainly conducted at Thai Airways' head office and in the cabin crew centre, but interviews were also conducted at cabin crewmembers' houses and in a restaurant. The question of how I had gained access to the person concerned did not come up in the interviews. I was never asked about that. I assumed that it was sufficient for the person concerned that s/he had been asked by their superior to give their consent. The questions themselves did not have any negative implications for the workplace, and therefore there was no reason for me to believe that answers were influenced by the need to 'preserve face' for the company.

### ***Sample characteristics***

As I was focused particularly on the task of balancing female ego goals and need satisfaction, it seemed appropriate to focus the sample on women employees. Moreover, the job characteristics of caring and service mean the majority of staff are female. The age range was 25–45 years. The level of education was bachelor's degrees. Ten respondents were married, and the other six were single. Their work experience rating was between two and 25 years. The reason for requesting salary information was in order to compare Thailand's minimum wages with cabin crew pay. This was related to my research aim in terms of the rewards and motivations for working in the airline industry.

**Table 6.4: Cabin crew interviewees**

Cabin attendant (CA)	Age	Status	Work experience	Salary (in Thai baht*)	Education
CA 1	31	Married	10	30,000+	Bachelor
CA 2	32	Married	7	30,000+	Bachelor
CA 3	49	Married	26	50,000+	Bachelor
CA 4	49	Married	25	50,000+	Bachelor
CA 5	45	Married	25	50,000+	Bachelor
CA 6	45	Married	20	50,000+	Bachelor
CA 7	45	Married	28	50,000+	Bachelor
CA 8	45	Married	25	50,000+	Bachelor
CA 9	26	Single	5	30,000+	Bachelor
CA 10	35	Divorced	8	30,000+	Bachelor
CA 11	35	Single	11	50,000+	Bachelor
CA 12	40	Married	20	50,000+	Bachelor
CA 13	27	Single	6	30,000+	Bachelor
CA 14	27	Single	2	30,000+	Bachelor
CA 15	29	Single	3	30,000+	Bachelor
CA 16	35	Married	10	50,000+	Bachelor

(\*Currency: 1 GBP = 50.11 THB, 26 October 2011)

The sample represented three distinct age groups. The first age group were in their early 20s, with single status (four cabin crew: numbers 9 and 13–15). This group was at an exploratory stage in life. They tended to explore and be adventurous with new experiences. The second group were in their 30s, and their married status involved struggling to balance work, money and family (five cabin crew: numbers 1–2, 10–11 and 16). During this life stage, they were trying to find their life balance. The last group was at least 40 years old; everything was practically settled in terms of their work and family balance (seven cabin crew: numbers 3–8 and 12). These variables have implications in terms of female need satisfaction regarding the balance between work and family. Moreover, their years of work experience helped them with knowing how to interact with passengers and how to use strategic reactions in order to reduce role conflict. Additionally, wages were a significant issue. The minimum wage in Bangkok is 215 baht per day, and comparison with the wages of cabin crew reveals a significant difference.

**Table6.5: Thailand’s minimum wage**

**Minimum Wage Increases**

Province	Baht	US\$
Phuket	221	7.39
Bangkok, Nakhon Phathom, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Samut Sakorn and Samut Prakan	215	7.19
Chonburi	196	6.55
Chachoengsao and Saraburi	193	6.45
Phra Nakorn Si Ayuttaya	190	6.35
Rayong	189	6.32
Pang-nga	186	6.22
Ranong	185	6.19
Krabi	184	6.15
Nakhon Ratchasima and Prachinburi	183	6.12
Lopburi	182	6.09
Kenchanaburi	181	6.05
Chiang Mai and Ratchaburi	180	6.02
Chantaburi and Petchburi	179	5.99
Songkle and Singburi	176	5.89
Trang	175	5.85
Nakon Si Thammarat and Angthong	174	5.82
Chumporn, Pattalung, Loey, Satul and Srakaew	173	5.78
Prachuap Khiri Khan, Yala, Samut Songkram and Surat Thani	172	5.75
Narathiwat, Udon Thani and Ubonratchathani	171	5.72
Nakornnayok and Pattani	170	5.68
Trat, Lampun and Nongkhai	169	5.65
Kampangphet and Uthai Thani	168	5.62
Kalasin, Khonkaen,Chainat and Suphan Buri	167	5.58
Chiang Rai, Nakon Sawan, Buriram, Petchaboon, Yasothon, Roi Et and Sakon Nakorn	166	5.55
Chaiyaphum, Mukdaharn, Lampang, Sukhothai and Nongbus Lumpoo	165	5.52
Nakorn Panom	164	5.48
Phichit, Phitsanulok,Phree, Mahasarakam, Mae Hong Sorn, Amnatcharoen and Uttaradit	163	5.45
Tak and Surin	162	5.42
Nan	161	5.38
Sisaket	160	5.35
Payao	159	5.32

Source: [www.thaigov.go.th](http://www.thaigov.go.th) as of Dec 16, 2010.

Note: BOT monthly average exchange rate : US\$1: Bt29.66, as of Nov 2010

### *How the data was analysed*

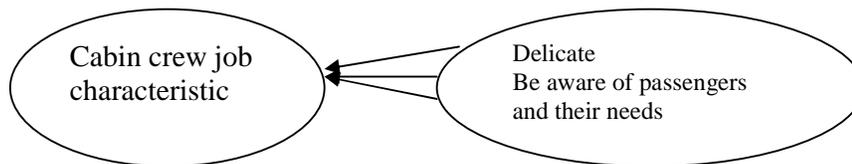
A coding mechanism was utilised. Keywords were selected as references to the interview questions. The following table illustrates the link between questions, findings and keyword selection methods. This method of operation also greatly facilitated the analysis, and so provided further insights. Once the keywords had been selected, it became easier to examine findings and proceed to the analysis of each category, starting from the organisation’s culture, job and personal characteristics, company policies, and then moving on to the gender and cultural issues. The following is an example of the analysis.

**Table 6.6: Example of how the research analysis and findings were conducted**

<b>Interview question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Keywords</b>
Do you think the cabin crew job is suitable for women or not, and why?	I think it's suitable because it needs to have a delicate touch. When we work, we have to be aware of passengers and their needs. Sometimes they do not say, but we have to notice. Women are gentler than men.	Delicate Be aware of passengers and their needs Gentle

In the table, three keywords are selected as being important cabin crew job characteristics (references to the interview question). Moreover, these keywords are also related to female characteristics.

**Figure 6.5: Case One**



### **Observation**

The use of in-flight observation enabled a closer look at cabin crew behaviour in flight mode, in order to answer the research question as to how national culture influences employee and organisational behaviour. This research question reflects on the individual's interaction with others, which again can be investigated through observation where its manifestation is embedded in crew-passenger interaction. According to Sanger (1996), there are differences between seeing and observing. They are divided only by the aspiration to perceive. If the actions we are engaged in are significant to us, we slip into the gear of seeing and engage in observation. Sometimes, observation falls foul of the same logic. We look where we expect to find, rather than opening ourselves to any possibility that might appear. A major difference between seeing and observing is that the observer takes steps to counteract the inbuilt biases we all possess. The method that is used to counteract bias has to do with the

instruments of observation. Naturalism explores cultural understanding, context and assumed realities. Sanger (1996) suggests that observation can be made by looking at the collected evidence, and seeking to discriminate between the significance and the insignificance of that evidence. In this case, it demonstrates a cultural interplay which can be observed through its manifestation between cabin crew and passengers. Decisions about significance may be made before an observation takes place, and the evidence is then selected and collected. The problem of the observer missing significance tends to grow the more we try to take in, as the variety of signals reaching our minds increases, and the more selective we have to be in order to make sense of them. In this case, the observation was conducted aboard aircraft. I played the role of passenger on flights into and out from London. Passenger capacity is approximately 300 on a B747-400 aircraft. The flight time is 12 hours. With the permission of the airline's management, I observed passengers' participation on the aircraft. However, I made no interference with either cabin crew or passengers. The observation was carried out in general terms, such as of activity on the aircraft and so forth. Drawing on Robson, (1993), the dimensions of descriptive observation are presented in Table 6.7.

**Table 6.7: Observation objectives**

Theme to observe	Explanation
Actors	The relevant details of the people involved <u>Specific content:</u> cabin crews
Activities	The various activities of the actors <u>Specific content:</u> service on the plane
Objects	Physical elements <u>Specific content:</u> interaction between cabin crew and passengers
Acts	Specific individual actions <u>Specific content:</u> interaction between cabin crew and passengers
Events	Particular occasions <u>Specific content:</u> interaction between cabin crew and passengers/special occasions
Time	The sequence of events <u>Specific content:</u> frequency of actions such as non-verbal communication
Goals	What actors are attempting to accomplish <u>Specific content:</u> passengers' need satisfaction
Feelings	Emotions in particular contexts <u>Specific content:</u> positive/negative reaction towards passengers
Space	Layout of the physical setting <u>Specific content:</u> the aircraft environment

My discussion of the analysis and findings begins with descriptive observation. The observation describes what happened on the aircraft during the two flights London–Bangkok–London. This is to generate an overview for the reader. I then move forward to a deeper detailed analysis, which begins with a description of the aircraft space. This detail is needed to provide the background and environment of the aircraft because an observation needs to capture all angles, not just the subjects and their activities. The aircraft environment is considered to be important because passengers cannot get out anywhere and have to remain in their seats, so it is considered to be a closed environment. What follows is the crew’s behaviour, which was observed on both flights. In terms of company policy, the observations illustrate the link between policy and reality on the ground (or rather, on the plane). Such links and modes of conduct could be observed and recorded in flight, even though the actual crew were different on each flight. The analysis then focuses on activities and particular interactions within specific situations.

First contact was made through the cabin crew centre in Bangkok. The observation did not specifically involve anyone directly. It was conducted from the point of view of a passenger on board the aircraft. Its purpose was to draw a portrait of the conditions of interaction and the role of the cabin crew. Representing the backbone of the observation, the data will be presented in the following order:

- 1) Description and analysis of the aircraft environment
- 2) Description and analysis of the actors (cabin crew)
- 3) Description and analysis of the activities
- 4) Description and analysis of the events

Such observations gave me the opportunity to explore actual cabin crew behaviour whilst they were engaged in their work roles. In order to fulfil the research objective, an observation was put in place in order to investigate surface acting in practical terms. This further enabled an investigation of the interaction between emotions and verbal and non-verbal communication, an important aim as such interaction is the result of two interacting forces, namely individual values and organisational culture as stated through policy formulation.

### ***The dimension of descriptive observation***

There are some general terms that need to be considered, such as time and space limitations. In relation to time, there was a limited flight time within which cabin crew had to fulfil their tasks. This factor might have affected the cabin crew's performance and interaction with passengers. Any example of such evidence depended on passenger capacity and flight-time limitations. These could affect the cabin crew's workload and work stress, which could have an effect on performance. Moreover, another factor that had to be considered was the limitation of space on the aircraft, such as seating, meals, lavatories and so forth. These factors could be directly connected to research problems and difficulties to be overcome. The environment was an aircraft where the cabin crew were the subjects being observed. This can be related to the research question in terms of positive surface acting. The activities of the cabin crew on the aircraft were observed in some specific circumstances such as when there was a need for special care or a special event. This revealed implications of caring from the passengers' point of view. A natural scene was enacted throughout the flight, including the time and frequency of the actions. The goal of the cabin crew was to provide the service to the passengers' satisfaction, and feelings (such as emotions) and facial expressions were observed throughout the flight.

Thus this observation gave me the opportunity to explore cabin crew behaviour and conduct through their interaction with passengers. This revealed the combination of individual strategies towards passengers with roles that had been reinforced by company policy. In order to fulfil the research objective, an observational methodology was put into place, in order to investigate surface acting in practical terms. An investigation of the interaction between emotions on the one hand and verbal and non-verbal communication on the other was important because it is the result of two emphatic forces. In the first part, the research design begins with descriptive observation. This is to generate an overview for the reader. I then move forward to a deeper detailed analysis, which begins with a description of the aircraft space. This detail is needed to provide the background and environment of the aircraft because an observation needs to capture all angles, not just the subjects and their activities. The aircraft environment is considered to be important because it is a closed one. What follows is the crew's behaviour, which was observed on both flights. This is to investigate any emerging patterns that might have been emphasised by the

company, even though the crew were different on each flight. After this we study the activities and particular interactions within specific situations. First contact was made through the cabin crew centre, Bangkok. The observation did not specifically involve anyone directly. It was conducted from the point of view of a passenger on board the aircraft. Its purpose was to draw a portrait of the conditions of interaction and the role of the cabin crew.

### **Reflections on research undertaken and practical difficulties**

Throughout the research, I continuously reflected on my role as a researcher and why I had been inspired initially to conduct the research. As previously mentioned, I have a deep interest in and passion for the airline industry as a whole. From a personal point of view, throughout my career in the airline industry, travelling around the world has been one of the great benefits. Travelling has kept my eyes open to reflect on cabin crew behaviour on different airlines. I could not help noticing their behaviour and their reactions to passengers on the plane. I felt that there was a link between my role working for several companies in the airline industry and my role as a researcher, which blended well together. One good thing was that my work experiences were not with Thai Airways, so I had no bias or favour towards the company, and thus I could look at the company objectively as a researcher. I could see things more clearly from the cabin crew's point of view because my subject interest was in airlines and culture. The next section will discuss my self-evaluation and critique of the research conduct in the different methods.

### ***Content analysis***

A problem arises when there are differences between research design and research conduct in reality. The passenger service manual provided by the airline company was the key document analysed in detail. The manual examines the organisational structure and the service encounter that cabin crew are expected to undertake. The manual could also be applied to any other airline in the world, but the key question for this research was whether and how it was applied in the specific Thai cultural and social environment. Do the cultural norm of and belief in seniority and power distance greatly influence work behaviour and conduct? The advantage of content analysis is that it is very suitable for the study of organisational culture, as it shows cultural beliefs and values in the organisation. However, the disadvantage of content analysis

is that it solely examines the actual documentary text, and how it is applied in practice may be a different matter altogether, since employees may or may not follow the stated rules and regulations. So whilst the content analysis of company documents was useful and essential for this study, it could not be relied upon exclusively, and further research approaches and analysis were needed in order to evaluate its effectiveness.

### ***Interviews***

Although the questions did not have any negative implications for the company, it was sometimes difficult to ascertain whether the interview responses were genuine and truthful, since the interviewees were all employed by the organisation and might be reluctant to give a negative opinion of the company they worked for. Both quantitative and qualitative methods have strong and weak points, e.g. the effects interviewers may have on the validity and reliability of the data. The charge of interviewer bias has been levelled particularly at non-standardised interviews. Active commitment to a particular perspective during the interview may affect the results. But it is easy to overstate this problem. What is described as interviewer bias can more correctly be described as interviewer differences, which are inherent given the fact that interviewers are human beings and not machines (Robson, 2011). He point out that social scientists are universally dependent on data collected by oral or written reports and these are consistently subject to the same sources of error and bias as data collected by interviewers. The benefits of the qualitative method allowed me to explore in-depth data. The advantage of the qualitative approach is that it is appropriate for exploring a national culture study.

### ***Language***

The first problem is the assumption that language is generally a good indicator of thought and action. Attitudes and thoughts are assumed to have a direct influence on behaviour, and language is presumed to be an accurate reflection of both. The relationship between attitude and action has to be empirically tested in all cases, so that collecting information about people's attitudes is only one part of any study concerned with explaining or predicting behaviour. These problems are one of the reasons why multiple-method studies are desirable, where we can combine attitude measurements with direct observation to confirm whether people actually do what

they have told you they do. It is hardly a revelation to note that people sometimes lie or elaborate on the true situation to enhance their own esteem, to cover up discreditable actions or for any of a whole range of reasons. In this case, I attempted to break the ice by using an informal strategy and creating a relaxed environment in order to create an informal interview. Translations into English were carried out for all of the interviews because the interviewees were not comfortable using the English language, although all had English proficiency. The difficulties of maintaining concepts and meanings were taken into account. Hence key expressions where the translation risks losing some of the implicit meaning were kept in the original. Cross-cultural research is susceptible to problems when interpreting interview responses. It is often difficult to establish an equivalence of meaning in work involving translation, especially if the material is attitudinal. To ensure the correct interpretation had been made, the first two transcribed interviews were shared with a fluent English and Thai speaker, who listened to the original tapes and read the translations. Once these two transcripts had been approved as accurate, I continued with the translation and transcription of the remaining interviews.

#### ***Time available with cabin crew***

Because the job of cabin crew is to travel frequently, it was difficult to make the necessary appointments. An appointment had to be made one month in advance, after the cabin crew roster had been distributed for the following month's destinations. Many overseas calls were made in order to arrange appointments. However, it was also unpredictable, as in one month's time the appointments might have been forgotten. When the appointment time approached, a reconfirmation had to be made and the time schedule set up.

#### **Conclusion**

Throughout this methodology chapter I have tried my best to reflect on my research. I have identified the overall research approach in relation to ontological and epistemological concerns, and I have reflected on the choice of research strategy, which is a case study. I have also reflected on the data I sought to derive from each method in relation to my research objectives and how it was analysed. I have tried to present a critical evaluation of the three methods, which are content analysis, semi-structured interviews and observation.

To summarise the first five chapters: I have reviewed empirical studies firstly of ‘the constructing culture’, which consists of values and beliefs; secondly, the ‘national culture’; thirdly, culture and gender roles in the airline industry; and fourthly, airline cultures. In this methodological chapter I have tried to focus on gender and the role of culture. The questions that had emerged were how traditional gender roles and traditional Thai cultural values and gender characteristics might influence cabin crews’ behaviour, and to what extent traditional Thai culture has an impact on organisational culture as expressed in expectations of individual and collective conduct as manifested in company policy. The literature has informed the methodology by giving me a background in cultural theories and Thailand’s sociocultural circumstances, and in why cabin crew behave in a certain way. In summary, this chapter has raised a number of issues relevant to the social interaction process that require further examination at a broader level. We have the issue of employees’ perceptions and attitudes, in relation both to the airline and to the rewards and benefits provided by the company. Another objective of the study is to examine the broader impact of Thai culture on company policy as well as upon employees’ work-related interactions. Amongst cabin crew there is also the perception that, contrary to the negative view of some, the airline sector offers good rewards and benefits. Data from the interview questions shows the full extent of the issue to be addressed. The secondary data derived from company documents, namely the training manual, has been verified by its use around the world. Similarly, it can be asked how the behaviour and conduct-based policy can be applied in a practical context. Thirdly, the adaptation from theory into practice, according to my observation, appears to be reactive. The question is to what extent the company is able to progress in positive interaction. Together these issues, when examined more broadly and in greater detail, give an appreciation of the effort necessary to promote a genuine national culture. It reflects upon experience and think about their personal motives. The following chapters will present the findings on the main theme from the research: first, cabin crews’ job characteristics, which involves social skills; second, the traditional gender roles, cultural values and beliefs that inform their behaviour.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **Secondary Document Findings**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines official documents and company reports outlining corporate policies and strategies, with special regard to employee behaviour and performance at work. This is to establish what is required and expected of cabin crew in particular, in the pursuit of their allotted tasks and in their interactions with passengers. Such expectations are then linked to both corporate culture within the airline company and the collectivist nature of Thai national culture. The analysis focuses on the following key aspects: what does Thai Airways expect of its employees, in terms of achieving corporate goals and demonstrating appropriate behaviour and skills? To what extent do these expectations explicitly or implicitly reference Thai national culture, norms and values, gender roles and spirituality?

Hence it is necessary first to explore at the organisational level the factors that might have an impact on employee performance. We need to examine not only rewards, benefits and the like, but also the more subtle effects of the harmonisation of rules and regulations linked to individual self-concepts, which helps to create an authentic response from employees. The document analysed in this chapter is the Passenger Service Manual that cabin crew follow while onboard the aircraft. The document is believed to create crewmembers' personal vision, promote good service and increase passengers' satisfaction. The document consists of general administrative matters, rules and regulations, knowledge of the aircraft, passenger service, safety procedures and cabin crew duties. Cabin crew are supposed to carry the manual aboard the aircraft on each flight, as the procedures outline the company requirements and rules. This chapter also demonstrates the relationship between company policy and national culture in terms of religious background and gender norms. This has implications for the organisation in terms of behaviour and conduct where these are part of the national culture. I examine the concept of the ideal cabin crew from the company's point of view, which may serve as a strategic resource for the organisation. I go more deeply into duties and responsibilities, and examine management through the gendered embodiment of cabin crew members, followed by management through bureaucracy. Then I summarise the findings about managing from within, followed by the influence of national culture on management practice and managing through

company policy in a section concerning the relationship between employees and company policy. I then discuss management through positive verbal and non-verbal communication, followed by factors in the relationship between the employee and company policy, before moving on to the conclusion.

### **Concept of the ideal cabin crew**

This section is related to the concept of the 'ideal worker'. This refers to implicit and explicit assumptions about the sort of people who best fit employers' expectations. The ideal worker is not only constructed according to specific skills and behaviours, but is often implicitly or explicitly assigned to a particular class, age, ethnicity or gender. Analysis of the passenger service manual reveals how company policy constructs 'the ideal cabin crewmember' in relation to these socio demographic characteristics. It is necessary to explore this issue at the organisational level, because it might be beneficial to organisational performance outcomes and the reduction of conflict in cross-cultural management. This will be undertaken by using a secondary analysis of the company's policy for behaviour and conduct. The purpose of this policy is to affect individual behaviour and conduct. The conceptual framework was introduced in the methodology chapter (Chapter Six). The data findings will be clarified in this chapter under the primary heading of behaviour and conduct-based policy. The key themes have been identified in relation to behaviour and conduct: Thai national culture, norms and values, gender roles and spirituality through general principles, duties and responsibilities, rules and regulations.

These three core issues reflect the research question in terms of how company policy influences employees' behaviour and how cabin crew members ensure passengers' satisfaction. This discussion explores the relationship between internalisation and externalisation that is embedded in company policy. This might affect performance outcomes. In the first part, the discussion begins with the elements of the ideal cabin crew for Thai Airways. The keywords encompass the desire to serve, the 'extra touch', attitudes and passenger contact. These reflect the ideological attitudes of the individual, and national cultural norms in attitude and behaviour will also be explored. The 'internalisation' embedded in organisational culture relates to the use of traditional power, where emotion is controlled in order to conform to group norms. It is necessary to investigate how documented evidential factors can turn into practice,

and this will be done in the next chapter through an analysis of the semi-structured interviews and observations. Then follows a discussion of the duties and responsibilities which reflect superiority and management control, and which in turn relate to implied legitimate power, where authority is controlled through top-down management (Hofstede, 2001). Finally, rules and regulations will be considered. The rationale for any investigation of discipline consists of many performance behaviours which are concerned with self-awareness and social skills, possibly leading to positive surface acting, embedded in company policy and the authenticity of the individual. Moreover, conversation and non-verbal communication are emphasised in the company policy. This implies a relationship between positive performance outcomes/surface acting and positive non-verbal communication. The three key themes – general principles, duties and responsibilities, and rules and regulations – allowed me to identify behaviour and conduct-based input from the company, including individual characteristics as output, in the semi-structured interviews. The balance of two emphasised forces (company and individual inputs) suggests an outcome of positive surface acting. The next section will discuss the key theme of duties and responsibilities by using a coding mechanism. These key themes and the keywords from the secondary document analysis reflect cultural issues, particularly Thai national culture.

### **Duties and responsibilities**

These excerpt have been selected to reflect the organisational structure. The structure of in-flight service reveals a duplication of functions throughout the organisational hierarchy. The keywords used, such as ‘plan’, ‘formulate’, ‘evaluate’ and ‘administer’, help to prevent any miscommunications that might occur, and take into account duplications in job descriptions.

‘Perform and fulfil any mission or task assigned by the executive vice president’(Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM 1.2, p.1).

**Table 7.1: Duties and responsibilities according to the passenger service manual**  
(Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM1, pp. 7–16)

Example	Key acts
<b>In-Flight Service Department (DQ)</b>	<b>DQ comprises four departments:</b> In-flight equipment planning and control In-flight service standards and quality control Cabin crew administration In-flight catering planning and control
<b>In-Flight Service Standards and Quality Control Department (QQ)</b>	<b>QQ comprises four departments:</b> In-flight services procedure planning In-flight services quality control In-flight services data analysis Special services coordination
<b>Cabin Crew Administration Department (QV)</b>	<b>QV comprises four departments:</b> Cabin crew utilisation Cabin crew regulation and discipline Documentation services and coordination In-flight safety standards service and welfare

Thus the performance of each task still implies the involvement of management, from senior down to junior. It also involves many organisational functions. The key point is to demonstrate the organisational structure. However, for some functions the hierarchical level and duplication of duties are demonstrated in the manual. It can be seen that the level of control and supervision is determined by class, starting with First Class, going onto Business Class and then Economy Class. For some duties concerning the VIP areas an experienced cabin crewmember is needed, and serving in those areas means that the cabin crew member has been promoted to a senior level.

This finding is supported by Hofstede’s claim that promotion is attained through levels of seniority in countries using high power-distance control. This demonstrates that hierarchy and supervisory responsibility are duplicated and involve many levels of control. This can cause management and communication problems within the organisation, as employees do not recognise where they should go if a problem emerges. The next theme (rules and regulations) derives from management who have the authority to impose specific rules and regulations. These are observed by all staff in their own areas of work (Thai Airways International, 2010).

The following table illustrates company rules and regulations in terms of disciplinary action. This can provide a reflection of power and authority within the organisation, which is related to how the company reinforces rules through managerial power and an authoritarian management style.

**Table 7.2: Discipline** (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM2, pp.1–2)

<b>Key Acts</b>	<b>Example</b>
Devotion to duty	Staff shall devote their time to the company business
Performance of duties, honesty, impartiality, dedication	Staff shall perform functional duties with honesty, impartiality and dedication
Loyalty, performance, support, promotion, protecting the interests of the firm	Staff shall perform assignments in a proper manner as direct by superiors
Performance at work	Staff should not give false statements to superiors
Performance of assignments, behaving in a proper manner	Staff shall keep uniforms neat and tidy at all times
Unity, cooperation, coordination among staff, maintenance, enhancement of work functions	Staff shall be well-groomed and courteously behaved while travelling with ID-tickets
Neatness, appropriate, appearance, obeying, superiors, taking work responsibilities seriously	Staff shall be neat, appropriately well-groomed, as well as obeying proper and legal orders of superiors in the assignment
Not engaging in disobedience toward superiors	Staff should not engage in disobedience toward superiors
No quarrelling or fighting	Staff shall not take part in quarrels or fighting whilst in uniform
No false statements	Staff shall not give false statement to superiors
Neatness, tidiness	Staff shall keep the uniform neat and tidy at all times

***Devotion to duty, honesty, impartiality, dedication***

Devoting oneself to one's duties implies being dedicated to the organisation, as one's performance accomplishes the functions needed to provide the service and carry out practical duties. This can be linked to the gender role, where women have decided to devote themselves to the organisation. Especially where the nature of the job involves long hours away from one's family, the balance of work and family is taken into account.

***Loyalty, performance, support, promotion, protection of the interests of the organisation***

Cabin crew performance and loyalty to the organisation are emphasised repeatedly within every function. This encourages conscious loyalty to the organisation. As a result, employees have a sense of responsibility towards the organisation.

***Performing assignments in a proper manner***

It is interesting that the cabin crew's job is not carried forward to the next day, which means that once the flight has landed there is no ongoing work for the cabin crew. Apart from the functions that they have been assigned, the display of a positive and proper manner during interactions with passengers is also taken into account. 'Staff shall perform assignments in a proper manner as directed by their superiors' (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM2, p.1). In this example it is interesting to note that the phrase 'as directed by their superiors' implies an authoritarian order where seniority influences the performance of junior ranks.

***Unity, cooperation, coordination among staff, maintaining and enhancing work functions***

Unity implies integrity and a working together where coordination among staff is important in order to support functions such as teamwork. These rules illustrate the cultural norms and values of a nation where the environment and people are important factors in work performance. The nature of this job involves interaction with work colleagues and passengers. Teamwork is an important issue for this type of job, and reflects awareness of team spirit as an important part of the airline culture.

***Non-engagement in disobedience towards superiors, quarrels or fighting, or making false statements***

In statements from company policy such as the ban on disobedience towards superiors, quarrels and fighting, or making false statements, the phrase 'do not engage in disobedience towards superiors' provides an interesting parallel with Asian thought, where being disobedient towards superiors would be judged inappropriate behaviour which might lead to disciplinary action. This can be linked to the paternalistic management style, where listening to and following orders is related to

positive performance. Arguments, quarrels or fighting are judged inappropriate. This is supported by Hofstede's (2001) findings, where Asian people were seen to keep their feelings inside. Again, obeying superiors implies complying with, carrying out and conforming to orders from staff at a higher level, which reflects the hierarchy within the organisation.

### **Managing through gendered embodiment**

#### ***Being neat and appropriately groomed, embracing work responsibilities***

A neat and appropriately groomed appearance represents for cabin crew the recognition of how important this is for the job. Therefore self-presentation represents the female image, which also reflects the nature of a job where the majority of the staff is female.

#### ***Staff should be neat, tidy, well groomed and courteous***

Repeatedly the above details represent a focus on the surface appearance and presentation of cabin crew: 'Staff shall keep uniforms neat and tidy at all times. Staff shall be well groomed and courteous while travelling on ID tickets' (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM2, p.1). It can be seen that the company image is an important factor. The unity and positive image of the company can be enhanced by the appearance of cabin crew.

**Table 7.3: Public confidence** (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM2, p.12)

<b>Key acts</b>	<b>Example</b>
Gaining public confidence, being dependable, giving a good impression, good flight personnel conduct, always remembering, public interest, being in public view, acting in an appropriate manner	Public confidence in an airline is highly dependent on the impression made by the flight personnel's conduct. Therefore flight personnel should always remember that they are an object of public interest when on or off duty and when in public view. They must act in an appropriate manner at all times.

Cabin crew have been trained to make a good impression on the public. This might explain the value which people give to the industry, as they have a positive attitude towards airline jobs. However, this might be seen as merely surface interaction as far as being in the public eye is concerned.

The individual's role is very important in this respect. It represents the company image and can lead to an increase of personal self-esteem, which can be encouraged by the public. Moreover, a positive appearance can also improve the personal esteem of the individual. Positive personal conduct can improve self-esteem and appearance. The following paragraph demonstrates that uniform and appearance play a vital part in passengers' first impressions. This important aspect of contact with the public can make a big difference to passengers' recognition.

### ***Uniform and appearance***

#### **Uniform**

Cabin crew are the front-line members of our airline. Therefore your presentation in uniform is crucial in creating a good impression for the public. The uniform that you wear is a very important part of the image of Thai Airways. It is very important that you wear the uniform correctly and look after it properly. The concept behind the uniform is 'Thai touch, world class, high trust'.

#### **Appearance**

It is necessary that cabin crew appear in public with healthy complexions. The complexion should be free from acne or other types of dermatitis. It is important that good basic skin care be observed, and that a good complexion be derived from a healthy mind and body. It is advisable that cabin crew should acquire knowledge of basic skincare from a specialist in order to maintain their best complexion. (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM2, p.51)

Emphasis on professional appearance can gain the attention of the public, and leads to customer recognition and awareness of the company image. Uniform and appearance are taken into account within the rules and regulations to which all cabin crew have to adhere. It has been emphasised by the company that personal conduct and individual reaction have the greatest influence when gaining the attention of the public. A further explanation is given in my chapter on the semi-structured interviews, where it is clarified why individual contact particularly gains passengers' attention as

regards Thai identity. The question of uniform identity can illustrate individual, organisational and national identity.

## **Reflections of spirituality**

### *Attitude*

This is concerned with service quality, as the company proposes the impression to be made on passengers through a combination of quality and excellent service. It also takes into account the fierce competition in the airline industry, where service is a necessity which can influence passengers to become regular users. According to the manual, the duty of cabin crew is to give the best possible service to every passenger according to company policy, so the following rules for good service should be observed:

Although giving service comes naturally to some people, there are certain fundamental points which must be observed by all THAI personnel, since prospective passengers judge the airline by its employees.

- Smile often. A nice warm smile is inviting to passengers and immediately instils confidence in them.
- Treat passengers courteously and with respect, in recognition of the passenger as an individual, trying to remember the passenger's name during the conversation and to use it thereafter. This gives the passenger a feeling of importance.
- Be tactful, diplomatic, and listen attentively to a passenger's problems. Think before answering and try to give a satisfactory explanation.
- Make eye contact and smile in every interaction with a passenger.

Be reliable and make the passenger feel confident. Do not make commitments that cannot be honoured. Remember that the employees represent the company's image.(Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM5, p.1)

The next subsections analyse keywords around the notion of 'attitude' as part of the behaviour and conduct-based policy.

### ***Being natural***

The airline focuses on a natural self-presentation, which is related to a positive self-concept and attitude at the individual level. These attributes must be seen to be displayed by employees at some point in order to enhance employees' behaviour and to maintain positivity. The factor that influences and maintains positive behaviour is company policy. Consequently, this implies a use of coercive and traditional power, where the consistency of positive attitude needs to be controlled by a superior.

### ***Fundamental points must be observed***

The term 'fundamental' means basic, elementary and essential, and this implies being in control and not stepping over the boundary. At the macro level Thailand has a long history of the paternalistic management style, where people are seen as family members. This can be linked to the organisation level, where employees are viewed in a paternalistic way, and are treated accordingly. This demonstrates the relationship between paternalism and traditional power within the company. It can also be observed in the love for Thailand's royal family. The following paragraph illustrates key examples of employees' attitudes to company behaviour and conduct-based policy. This is related to the research question in terms of how company policy influences employees' behaviour and achieves the state of positive performance. These key acts have been confirmed through the triangulation methodology in observation and semi-structured interviews.

#### **Desire to serve**

Cabin crew should maintain a desire to serve all kinds of people of all races. They should always be alert to passengers' wants and needs even after long hours of duty, whether on normal flights, during delays, or when experiencing other irregularities. They must LISTEN to passengers and show interest in their problems. Discrimination of any kind against passengers will result in disciplinary action. (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM5, p.1)

The key phrase 'desire to serve' was derived from the secondary document; this illustrates the key acts and examples of behaviour that cabin crew have to follow. This keyword reflects the behaviour and conduct that arise from company reinforcement. It is interesting that key acts reflect behavioural conformity through individuals at the organisational level. The term 'desire' implies aspiring to, craving and longing for,

reflecting a willingness from within. This suggests an individual, personal characteristic. A desire to serve means that the relationship between the individual and her attitude towards her own career is a positive one. Hence a positive attitude emerges from this concept of the self – towards one’s career, and towards the company. Moreover, the desire to serve also reflects the female gender role, where nurturing interactions are emphasised, such as taking care of, serving and looking after. The moderating variables of a positive attitude can be derived from upbringing and religion, and can be emphasised within training and development.

### ***Maintain***

The company uses the term ‘maintain’, which is a synonym for ‘carry on’, ‘continue’ or ‘nurture’, reflecting a consistency of individual behaviour. The importance of fairness to all kinds of people is a priority, and any unfairness is a serious fault which can lead to disciplinary action. The phrase ‘discrimination is a serious offence’ (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM4, p.1) is emphasised to ensure positive interactions, in order to maintain equality in terms of service to all. The implication of this policy is that there should be no bias or negative attitude towards passengers. This could have an effect in both positive and negative ways. In terms of the research outcome, it can be applied to the reduction of intercultural interactions. Moreover, the result in disciplinary action reflects coercive power where the threat of punishment promotes compliance – notions derived from Weber’s theory of bureaucracy (Weber, 1947). The belief in interpersonal and social processes within the bureaucratic mindset can provide bureaucracies with explicit rule systems, playing a critical role in maintaining social attitudes and governing employees’ behaviour (Weber, 1947). Hence an embedding of company policy might influence the cabin crew’s positive performance outcomes.

### ***Alert to passengers’ wishes and needs***

Being alert implies action which is attentive, careful and lively, with an emphasis on attentive. While on board, cabin crew’s reactions and responsiveness to passengers’ wishes and needs have to be offered, and clarification of these reactions represents the level of passengers demand for service on each occasion. This implies the personal and social competence of the cabin crew, especially their social awareness, which in this case is concerned with all service orientations. Thus the emotional and attitudinal

aspects of service orientation are a core issue in social competence. Further evidence will be provided in the next chapter.

‘They must LISTEN to passengers and show interest in their problems’(Thai Airways International, 2010,PSM p. 1). According to my findings, the term ‘listen’ identifies three roles:

- 1) The role of the female gender in a collectivistic society, where the wife has to listen to her husband, as he is the main source of income.
- 2) The collectivistic perspective of people protecting their own privacy.
- 3) Good communication and interaction skills, revealed in the display of interest in passengers’ problems.

Moreover, part of the managed form of internalisation is self-analysis, which includes self-reflection –putting up a mirror to oneself. The reflection of the self is a reaction to the self-perception involved when we ask ourselves if we would like others to treat us as we treat them. This also reflects the company image.

### ***Extra touch***

They should also provide good service between meals and during ground stops. The ‘In-Between Meal Service’ is not actually advertised in detail, and is therefore considered something extra which encourages passengers to return to THAI. The important difference between THAI and other airlines is the extra touch, such as circulating newspapers and magazines, taking time for a friendly chat, and keeping cabins and toilets spotlessly clean. SHOW THAI CHARM AND HOSPITALITY. SMILE. (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM5, p.1)

The keywords ‘extra touch’ are part of a general principle in which all employees are expected to participate. Cabin crew should consider it as giving something extra which encourages passengers to return to the airline. This illustrates one of the key issues of this personal touch or ‘extra touch’ which is emphasised through behaviour and conduct-based policy. The ‘extra touch’ is the special interaction in terms of communication that makes a difference to others. It implies a good heart, an appreciation of feelings, and any other positive impression that is called ‘that extra touch’. The ‘friendly chat’ implies a personal touch, whereas the formal role of the

job is presented during the flight. The personal touch implies an informal manner used in order to create friendship. It is a reflection of the hospitality which differentiates this airline from others. An example of the evidence will be discussed in my chapter on observational findings. This implies that social awareness and social skills are emphasised in individuals' characters. The strategy of the personal touch is reinforced by company policy and individual characteristics. This recognises the idea of social, psychological competence, where the personal touch can break down the formal social status between cabin crew and passengers.

***Show Thai charm and hospitality with a smile***

It can be seen that these are individual and national characteristics. This shows the cultural identity of a country where social norms and values influence individual behaviour. However, these characteristics are also mentioned elsewhere, such as by Goffman (1971), who implies that emotional labour is involved. This is also stated in Tyler and Abbot (1998) in terms of cabin crew and their personal characteristics and feminine perspectives. Thus hospitality implies friendliness and a warm heart (sincerity, actions from the heart), which are related to the characteristics of Thais. Moreover, non-verbal communication, in this case the smile, represents and is the symbol of Thailand, stereotypically 'the land of smiles'. Hence hospitality in the form of a smile implies a smile from the heart. These characteristics of the individual have also been found in similar research, such as the Chinese survey module (Minkov et al., 2013): contentedness, personal steadiness, keeping oneself disinterested and pure, tolerance of others, harmony with others, and kindness. Moreover, some characteristics are partially similar to those mentioned by Schwartz (2006) such as openness to change, inner harmony, self-transcendence and broadmindedness. However, there are some differences in terms of gender variables, since this research focuses on the female gender. In the Thai case, this might be related to both individual and traditional power, where an interaction is needed in order to have control in some circumstances.

***Smile often and smile warmly, instilling confidence in them***

Again, an emphasis on positive non-verbal communication is encouraged through good attitude, as well as the 'extra touch' mentioned earlier, in giving hospitality with

a smile. The application of a positive attitude is reinforced in every part of the policy, without the need to deny individuality.

‘Prospective passengers judges airlines by the employees’ (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM5, p.2).The company sees individual proficiency as an important tool for retaining customer loyalty in the airline business. This positive non-verbal communication is a major facet of social skills, consisting of personal and social competence. The evidence is discussed in my chapter on observational findings.

### ***Treat passengers courteously and with respect***

To correspond to a positive attitude, the term ‘treat’ in this case means behaving towards passengers in a courteous way. The concept of service in Thai culture is such that it is considered a joy and a pleasure to serve. Courtesy and respect are implicit in Asian culture, where women are seen as soft and gentle. Respect is a fundamental part of paternalism, and includes being a good listener.

‘Treat passengers courteously and with respect in recognition of the passenger as an individual’ (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM5, p.2).The recognition of passengers as individuals is seen as an icebreaker, leading from a formal to an informal interaction. This includes giving ‘that extra touch’ where the employee has time for a chat with passengers. These ‘touches’ can pre-emptively reduce conflict, as passengers see the cabin crew as approachable.

‘Remember passengers’ names during a conversation. This gives the passenger a feeling of importance’ (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM5, p.2).

A need has clearly been identified in terms of how important it is for the company to be focused on passengers. The tactic of remembering passengers’ names is an important message for employees to remember.

### **Managing through company policy**

#### ***Be tactful, diplomatic, listen attentively to passengers’ problems***

Part of the attitude emphasised in the company policy is being tactful and diplomatic, and listening attentively to passengers’ problems. ‘Tactful’ and ‘diplomatic’ mean being careful, considerate and polite where there is a requirement for individual

proficiency. Listening attentively to passengers' problems again supports the policy of being a good listener, discussed earlier in this chapter.

***Think before you answer***

An emphasis of 'thinking before answering' clearly suggests emotional concealment, helping staff not to overreact in some circumstances. Emotional control is an important issue within the service industry.

***Do not make a commitment that cannot be honoured***

According to this finding, cabin crew are asked not to make commitments that cannot be honoured. Again, trust is important. Rules and regulations are also important. Although female characteristics can be used, drawing on the idea that 'the passenger is always right,' rules and regulations still have to be followed. Adaptability has to be efficiently applied in various situations when a customer demand is refused by cabin crew. An acceptance or refusal technique has to be used.

***Employees represent the company image***

Another company strategy is for employees to represent the company image. Image relates to appearance and presentation. In this case, employees are a reflection of the company, which can be related to its public image. Therefore, employees' reactions are very important and can have an effect on passengers' perceptions:

- Cabin crew should maintain a friendly but businesslike attitude towards passengers and show alertness and initiative by acting on suggestions and helping to remedy complaints.
- Courtesy and sincerity must be shown when serving passengers and the public without being overly attentive to one individual. Helpful responses must be given to questions asked.
- Conversations with passengers are to be carried on quietly but discreetly, avoiding loud laughter and boisterous discussion. Every effort should be made to address passengers by name; otherwise, remarks should be concluded with 'Sir' or 'Madam'.
- The attitude of the cabin crew should make the passengers feel welcome on board. It is the same attitude as that of a good host or hostess.

- Self-analysis is often the best way to improve our communication with passengers.
- Cabin crew should analyse how they approach passengers and ask themselves if they would wish to be treated in that manner.(Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM5, p.2).

***Maintain a friendly but businesslike attitude***

The company asks cabin crew to maintain a friendly but businesslike attitude. There is a clear distinction between the public and the private self, although individual characteristics can play an important part in airline work. This includes being alert and showing initiative, which are important, as explained earlier.

***Acting on suggestions and helping to remedy complaints***

Another important issue is complaints from passengers, which can cause a reduction in passengers' loyalty. A positive reaction such as acting on suggestions and helping is encouraged in order to remedy the complaint, and would be a helpful response related to the positive individual characteristic identified (calm).

***Courtesy and sincerity without being overly attentive***

Part of the company strategy is to offer courtesy and sincerity without being overly attentive. The importance of sincerity without being overly attentive implies an authenticity which comes from within and is sincere.

***Conversation carried on quietly and discreetly, avoiding loud laughter and boisterous discussion***

A reflection of Asian philosophy has been seen throughout the policy. The strategy of quietness and discretion implies a concealing of emotions, as mentioned before. An extrovert use of open non-verbal communication, such as loud laughter or boisterous discussion, does not equate with the typical Thai woman, where women are expected to be shy and keep their feelings inside. This and other attributes of Thai women are emphasised in the policy.

***Address passengers by name, use 'sir' or 'madam', make passengers feel welcome on board***

Earlier analysis mentioned addressing passengers by name in order to make them feel important. Moreover, the use of 'sir' or 'madam' clearly identifies the respect cabin crew should show to passengers. The process of making passengers feel comfortable on board includes giving a warm welcome, which is part of hospitality.

***Managing through positive verbal and non-verbal communication***

An emphasis on positive non-verbal communication is another major issue for the airline service. 'Every interaction' shows the frequency of this positive non-verbal behaviour (the smile). Again, individual proficiency is an important consideration.

***Giving a satisfactory explanation***

According to my findings, part of the attitude is also an emphasis on satisfactory explanations that can be clearly understood, as good communication is very important. The concept that 'the passenger is always right' implies the need to always give a satisfactory explanation. A good and reasonable explanation is needed, especially if a negative response has affected passengers.

'A good cabin crewmember always tries to make contact with passengers. Contact is very important for service on board' (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM5, p.3). 'Contact' means connection and communication. It implies a positive interaction with a 'good' cabin crewmember, including positive communication, both verbal and non-verbal. Social interaction is discussed in my chapter on the semi-structured interviews.

***Disembarking and embarkation procedures, leading to positive first and last impressions and good contact opportunities***

'How well we carry out the boarding and disembarking of our passengers will lead to a positive first and last impression. The embarkation procedure is the first and one of the best contact opportunities.' (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM5, p.3). A positive first and last impression must be taken into account. It is presumed that a first impression from embarkation can be lasting. Once passengers receive a positive first impression, their perception of the cabin crew will remain positive until

disembarking. Hence the company should put a lot of effort into embarkation. The best communication, both verbal and non-verbal, leads to the best contact with passengers. An expression which is soft and gentle can reduce a prospective conflict with a passenger. This emphasis on positive communication can be linked to other cultures too, such as in Chinese philosophy, where the belief is that a soft and gentle approach can soothe emotions of frustration or anger. However, another important issue to consider is time. As the flight time is limited and the environment is dynamic, positive first and last impressions can be maintained due to the timing. It is presumed that positive self-presentation is achieved at the level of internalisation and is included in the nature of the job. Cabin crewmembers do not tend to carry on in the same way once the flight has finished. This is supported through evidence from semi-structured interviews, where time and character reinforce each other.

***Offer a sincere greeting, smile in a warm and friendly manner***

‘Cabin crew should offer sincere greeting, smile and wai with the word ‘sawasdee’ at the door and in the cabin, in a warm and friendly manner’ (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM5, p.3). Sincerity implies authenticity, which needs to emphasise individual characteristics and positive emotions that are related as positive feedback to passengers. Greeting passengers with a smile, in a warm and friendly manner, is already instilled in cabin crew characteristics.

***Assist passengers, and give special consideration to families with children, the sick and the disabled***

Assist passengers with the stowage of their hand baggage and guide them to their seats.

Give special consideration to families with children, the sick and the disabled.

Be available in the cabin, especially during delays.

Bid genuine farewell to passengers when they disembark.

Give the ‘wai’ and personally thank our passengers for flying THAI.

Whenever there is an opportunity, address passengers by name, especially First and Royal Silk Class passengers. (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM5, p.3)

The terms 'assist' or 'help' are emphasised frequently in the policy. It appears that not only providing good service but also being willing to assist passengers is taken into account. This way of behaving makes passengers feel that they are important and being taken care of. This can make a difference in terms of service quality in comparison with other airlines.

***Be genuine, give a 'wai' and personally thank passengers***

Another emphasis on sincerity focuses on non-verbal communication (the 'wai' and the personal thanks). Genuine reactions, both verbal and non-verbal, are encouraged in every action by the cabin crew. This includes personally thanking customers, which implies having a perception of people as needing to be related to. This is a factor in Asian philosophy, where relativism is seen as an important part of social norms and values. Once an informal reaction has been embedded in cabin crew behaviour, a friendly and genuine reaction can be used with positive effect, earning passengers' loyalty and encouraging them to come back and use the airline again.

The following paragraph illustrates the conversations that cabin crews should conduct, including the use of positive non-verbal communication. This may be a reflection of positive surface acting, which is investigated in the next chapter.

***Communication and the cross-cultural context***

**Conversation**

Direct contact essential, language polite.

Speak clearly, distinctly and fluently.

Use 'Sir' and 'Madam' to all classes of passenger, and address Business Class passengers by name.

Avoid using airline slang or technical terms.

Never argue with passengers.

Any conversation or expression in the presence of passengers or in public must be polite and relevant to social etiquette, culture and custom, following the training and manuals. (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM2, p.15)

***Direct contact is essential, language should be polite; speak clearly, distinctly and fluently***

It is clearly understood that verbal communication is important for this kind of work. English proficiency is also an important factor in communication with passengers. Although cabin crew members are not native English speakers, interaction using both verbal and non-verbal communication is a crucial factor in passengers' satisfaction. Politeness can be shown in various ways to show respect to passengers.

***Use 'sir' and 'madam' to all classes of passenger and address Business Class passengers by name, avoid using airline slang or technical terms, and never argue with passengers***

The respect shown by using the terms 'sir' or 'madam' to passengers constitutes a positive surface interaction with them. However, addressing Business Class passengers by name implies that they are more valued customers than those in Economy Class, and hence to be treated with greater respect. The phrase 'never argue with passengers' implies the supportiveness of the company towards passengers and that 'the passenger is always right.' The best reaction is to 'listen' and 'keep your thoughts to yourself', which relates to the Asian perspective that listening is the best solution to conflict. Other actions relating to passenger contact (smiling, making positive non-verbal communication) are also taken into account.

### **Conclusion**

Three themes have been identified in company policy in relation to the research objectives. The aim is to explore the relationship between deep and surface acting that is embedded in the policy, and which might affect performance outcomes. My analysis of the secondary document as data has shown that the following issues lie at the core of the organisational management's conduct-based policy:

- 1) Paternalistic management style;
- 2) Traditional power related to respect, involving obeying and listening to superior authority
- 3) Bureaucratic/vertical management control.

These two issues of positive thinking and self-reflection, which again reflect Asian culture and religious backgrounds. Moreover, positive non-verbal communication and traditional gender role might be part of the personal characteristics of an individual. These characteristics are regarded as personal competence and underlined by

management control. These results might realise the research objective related to productive performance through positive surface interaction.

Paternalism, traditional power and bureaucratic/vertical management control all play an important role. According to these findings, the organisational hierarchy controls employees' behaviour and conduct. However, there are many hierarchies within the organisational structure. The study shows that there is a need to control behaviour. The power distance used might be generated in the form of seniority levels and consultative decision styles. This might give an indication to management and HR of the balance needed between the power distance and the control of power given to employees.

Authority can be defined as a formal position of power. It is inferred to be legitimate power, since command and compliance are legitimised by its use in pursuing collective goals. However, this power will not be able to satisfy the management unless it conforms to an individual's positive intention (Hofstede, 2001). A content analysis of the passenger service manual has shown that the behaviour and conduct-based policy are related to individual characteristics. This is in accord with Thai national culture. Harmonisation corresponds perfectly with both individuals and the organisation, since it emphasises the national culture.

Moreover, the rewards of power, especially extrinsic rewards, are also influenced by individual behaviour and conduct. In terms of the organisation, apart from authoritarian management styles, economic power resources such as money are also emphatic motivational forces and become the means of acquiring rewards. An explanation is given in the next chapter from the individual's perspective, and is related to the secondary document analysis.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **Research Findings:**

#### **Semi-Structured Interviews and Observations**

##### **Introduction**

This chapter examines the findings of the semi-structured interviews and field observations in order to answer the following research questions: to what extent does traditional Thai culture interact with organisational culture, and to what extent are behaviour and conduct-based policy related to spirituality and traditional Thai values?

The semi-structured interviews reveal cabin crew members' beliefs and values, and how crew deal with passengers in order to achieve a positive performance outcome. In order to fulfil the research objective, it was also important to investigate performance outcomes in reality. This chapter also therefore considers the research question concerning how national culture might influence employee and organisational behaviour (organisational perspective). The field observations were undertaken partly in order to provide a means whereby performance outcomes could be tested against stated organisational objectives. Such field observations include body language as well as interactions between cabin crew and passengers. Examining verbal and non-verbal communication and taking into account the role of personal emotions has been crucial in evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of company policy in regard to cabin crew-customer relations. At the same time, it has provided a means of assessing the company's attempts to maintain and promote a specific organisational culture in tune with Thai culture

The discussion also focuses on female ego goals as subconsciously related to individual need satisfaction. Thai cabin crew who work in a female environment tend to achieve female ego goals by balancing their career, money and family. Hence their social and personal wants might fit their need satisfaction. The presentation of the findings begins with an introduction to the research setting. First comes a discussion of the nature of organisational culture within Thai Airlines, followed by a description of the required and actual skills and characteristics of cabin crewmembers, together with an account of how such crew went about problem-solving. Next my findings are presented regarding how work practices are affected both by traditional female gender

roles and by Thai and Buddhist practices, this being a key research concern. This is linked in the analysis to wider academic debates on gender roles and the impact of national and regional cultures. Finally, the relationship between need satisfaction, motivation and rewards is examined.

### **Understanding airline organisational culture**

It is important to be acquainted with organisational culture within the airline industry, which is considered to be different from other industries, e.g. in its working hours. According to my interview results, the majority of respondents think that the airline industry is different from other organisations. The differences can be separated into the areas of emotion, age, gender, nationality and occupation. These results support Smith et al. (2015) who proposes that demographic variables have an important causal influence on a variety of organisational outcomes. Nations provide a culturally significant way of identifying groups of people who experience similar socialisation experiences from childhood to adulthood (Hofstede, 2001; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Smith et al., 2015).

We assume that people who get on the plane are different, have different emotions and different occupations. This includes gender and age... It is an environment that includes many types of people; for instance, we have many couples going on their honeymoon. Of course, their holidays start by getting served well by the cabin crew. Other people fly for business reasons, and others to face sad situations such as a funeral. So our behaviour in the cabin should be different from that of a waiter or waitress in a restaurant. The customer would still be the same and have the same emotions. This is the difference in airline work, catering for different ages, different genders, different nationalities and different emotional needs, all gathering in a small space to be fed and served. Because it is so different, we have to be capable of many things. Not everyone understands the service industry, but it is dependent on the passengers themselves being satisfied with our service. Some get frustrated when boarding a plane, which other organisations don't have to handle. There is no fixed time pattern, because time differs from city to city. (Interviewee 8)

The aircraft can be the arena of disputes within a very limited space, and that limitation can influence behaviour and interactions. The difficulties can be separated into three main issues. The respondents state that time is a major factor. In terms of timing, the dynamic dimension is considered. Working time varies, and country rotation is a dynamic. Regular office hours are not applicable. Moreover, the time zone of each country varies, which affects one's way of life and time spent with family etc. It appears that within this organisational culture, the modular nature of the job is also important. Once a flight is finished, there is no stress to carry forward. The time limitation of the job can itself create a positive performance and lead to passenger satisfaction.

***How time and space constraints impact on the way passengers are treated***

From an observational point of view, we have to bear in mind that the limitation in terms of space is very important due to the restricted environment of the aircraft. This can affect the behaviour of both passengers and cabin crew. For passengers, space limitations, including seating arrangements, can cause discomfort. For cabin crew, having to serve food and drinks in a limited space can increase stress. The airline service is concerned with making passengers feel physically and mentally comfortable. If the design of the aircraft, such as the seating, makes the passengers uncomfortable, cabin crew can use the tactics of being pleasant and friendly to ease this feeling.

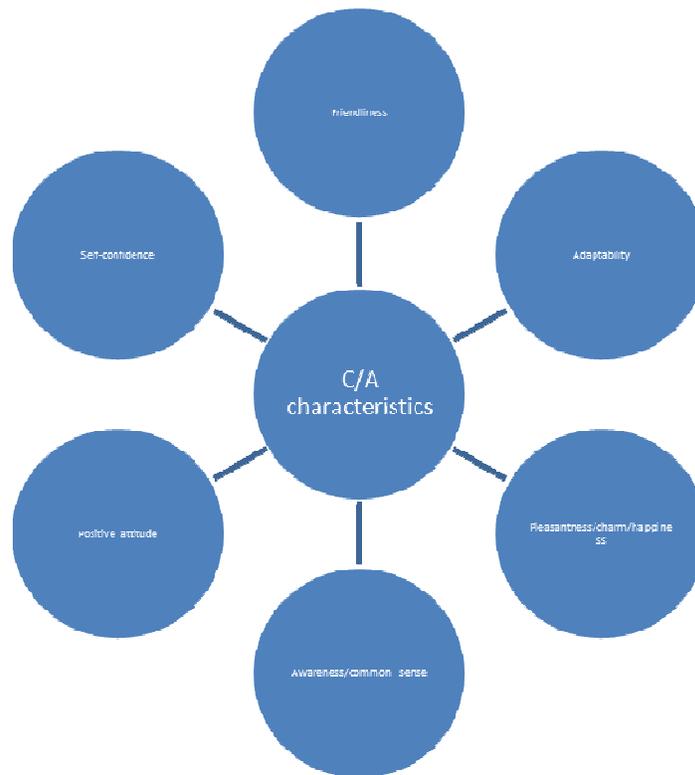
Once you step onto the plane, there are two cabin crewmembers greeting passengers with a smile and wearing traditional Thai clothes, made of silk. Their first greeting is a smile and 'wai', which is the traditional Thai greeting. The hands are put together and one bows with respect. Once I see a warm welcome and a smiling face, I smile back. (Observation)

It can clearly be seen that physical limitations can be overcome despite one's emotions (in this case, stress), whether this is because of the capacity of the aircraft (i.e. the aircraft being full) or the limited space: 'The space is a little limited. I feel that the seat is not quite as comfortable as it could be, as it is a bit too small' (Observation). Positive demeanour and emotions are still required from the cabin crew. During my observation on the return flight from Bangkok to London, the flight was fully booked, including seats given at the gate for standby tickets. When it was

boarding time, passengers were boarded a row at a time. Therefore the standby tickets had priority for a seat in the first row of Economy Class, which are assumed to be more comfortable seats. Whilst this demonstrates some of the benefits of being on standby, it also indicates the manner in which cabin crew have to be proactive in their attempts to place passengers at ease. Moreover, in the case of standby passengers who were seated to the fore of the aircraft, this gave the opportunity for cabin crew to greet them in the traditional Thai style as part of the boarding procedure, and so to implement company policy concerning promoting a positive and distinctive image of the company in line with traditional Thai culture.

### **Cabin crews skills and characteristics**

It is important to investigate work and personal characteristics, to enable a better understanding of the nature of the job. This might lead to further research initiatives into professions with similar characteristics, for instance in the hotel or other service industries.



**Figure 8.1: Cabin crew skills and characteristics**

### *Adaptability*

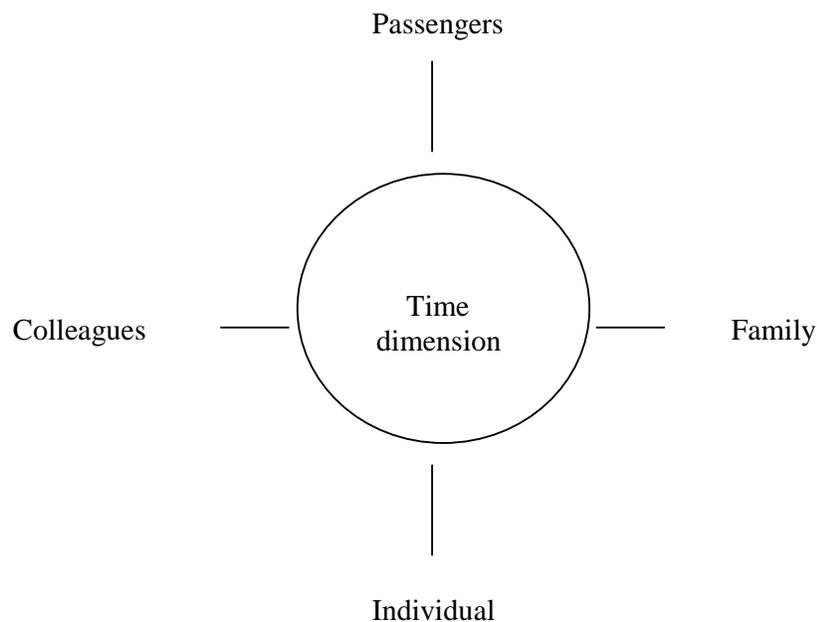
In terms of the conceptual framework and the dimension of adaptability (Figure 8.1), the majority of respondents agreed that adaptability was important, for the following reasons. The cabin crew's job involves having to face many kinds of people (passengers and colleagues). Each country has its own culture, so it is important for the crew to learn about and understand each country. All these points are considered to be very useful in themselves in terms of the competence of adaptability. This adaptability is needed on each flight, as the rotation of colleagues is uncertain, and crew rarely meet the same colleague more than once every two years as the work rotation varies so much. Also the passengers are obviously different on each flight, even on the same route. Therefore the competence of adaptability is considered to be very important. From this analysis, I see that adaptability prevents cabin crew from being too affected by external stimuli such as negativity from passengers. They are thus able to handle the demands of the job smoothly; they can shift priorities and adapt their responses and tactics to suit the circumstances. They are also able to be flexible in how they view events. The findings show that adaptability is one of the major characteristics needed by cabin crew. They have to adapt not only to passengers from around the world, but also to colleagues, as their working schedule is rotated. They need to be flexible. Furthermore, their routine in their personal lives has to be flexible too, because of working in shifts and therefore having different working hours than other people. The competency of adaptability gives cabin crew the ability to change according to the environment.

The adaptability factor is acknowledged as an environmental adjustment. The ability to understand an individual's nature is considered an adaptability competency. The rotation of passengers and colleagues, both impressive and non-impressive passengers and colleagues, contributes to this ability. In relation to adaptability and conflict, it appears that adaptability includes exactly the same factors as conflict control. These can be classified as the following: time, relationship and adaptability. It is presumably recognised that the airline sector is different from other organisations. The implications of the findings suggests that time is the main factor in this difference. Therefore these time restraints can be shown to affect individuals' ways of life, relationships with passengers, colleagues and family, and work tasks.

It is different in terms of our way of life, don't you think so? The job characteristics are also different, especially the times, as we have less sleep. People who work office hours have fixed times, working from 7am until 4.30pm. But we have to adjust our times. When most people are asleep, we have to go out to work.(Interviewee 5)

This time dimension has a major effect on the adaptability needed for individual performance and good relationships with others, both inside and outside the organisation, which is related to individual ability. This is composed of social skills and the adaptability competency within time constraints. Figure 8.2 illustrates time dimension and interconnections with others. Regarding passengers, the interconnection with passengers is related to the group dynamic. Flight times and passengers' nationality are varied, depending on the destination and flight roster, and including emotions and reasons for travelling. Regarding colleagues, flight rosters are rotated. Interconnection with colleagues is important, as teamwork is a factor of the work task. Regarding family, time changes and working hours mean that time spent with the family is different from that of employees in other organisations.

**Figure 8.2: Time dimension and interconnections with others**



According to my observations, the sequence of events reveals the dynamics of a set routine job. The major airline objective is to give passengers satisfaction by providing a good service, as has been discussed in the secondary document findings in the previous chapter. The individual crewmember is a key component in this strategy, involving the tactic of not showing negative or other emotional feelings. This partly relates to Asian culture, where feelings are kept inside, but is also a key feature of company policy. Another fact was that the crew did try to deliver the best service to passengers in order to achieve high customer satisfaction. This is a reflection of the company policy, whereby cabin crew have to offer passengers the best possible service. A conversation I overheard while the cabin crew were on duty stated: 'This is the best I can do for him, and I can't do anything more than that, so hopefully he will be alright.' This sentence illustrates the compromise and kindness needed in the service provided by cabin crew. The problem of limited time means that cabin crew have to operate under very difficult time constraints. The service nature of the job is to meet with passengers' satisfaction. A calm individual is a crucial part of the strategic interaction, in order to reduce conflict and maintain positive communication with passengers.

My observational field notes also reveal positive acting, where the intention of maintaining positive non-verbal communication and individual interaction was emphasised: 'Whilst walking through the cabin, they kept smiling all the time, even with their eyes. If passengers stopped them, they would bow slightly and listen to what they had to say.' However, the question of how genuine this is must be considered. The answer to this question goes back to national culture, where this behaviour is emphasised as culturally authentic. It is therefore in effect natural behaviour:

One other asset we have is that we easily forget slights, easily forgive, even if we feel very angry at the time. If the other side finally feels satisfied, we feel happy again. If they don't feel angry anymore, we are glad. We are not easily offended. This is one of the points that passengers like, we smile and are cheerful, even if we do not speak good English, as we have this strength, which is Thai charm. (Interviewee 10)

This also includes Thai national culture and Thai Airlines' corporate policy, where a positive attitude and self-reflection dictate the boundaries of individual reactions.

Although company policy is taught as a priority, I do not think that it is fully emphasised to a concentrated degree that is meaningful to both C/As and the company, therefore, because I believe it is important, there needs to be a requirement for measuring these results so that these self-reflections continue to show positive results. These positive results are not instituted by company management, but rather they are maintained by personal C/A needs and motivation.(Interviewee3)

### ***Teamwork and social skills***

Most of the respondents agree that social skills include giving that 'extra touch', e.g. talking to passengers. This can be compared with the comments of half of the respondents, who mention that they are mostly concerned with human relationships and trying to understand people. During the interviews it emerged that cabin crew feel they should be able to influence passengers by using their skills of persuasion. My observational data reveals that the work structure of this dynamic environment reinforces cabin crew members' performance of excellence, because the job is a self-ending, time-constrained one. I observed that time was a factor when crew were carrying out their job. The tension between the limited time and the tasks to be done encouraged cabin crew to accomplish their jobs efficiently. Due to the limited flight time and the fullness of the aircraft, it was crucial for staff to display and maintain positive reactions (smiling and so forth) at all times. After the night-time segment of the flight, the morning routine was begun again. Cabin crew started to walk around, and all the toilet compartments were cleared and cleaned, ready for passengers' use. The major activities of the morning were service duties, such as serving meals. Priority was given to special meals. A positive appearance was still in evidence among the cabin crew. A repetition of service (serving food, routine work) appeared frequently during the observation.

To conclude this section, the implementation of company policy in regard to in-flight service delivery relies heavily on human relations and interactions, and specifically on the use of social skills by cabin crew in order to carry out the kind of strategic social interaction envisaged by the airline, in line both with traditional Thai culture and with

good work practices. The next section examines how such strategic interactions take place within the context of the work team itself, as well as in staff-passenger interactions.

### *Activities*

Although they had worked through the night, the crew still looked nice in the morning. All the routine work had been done. Once the meals had been served, they again served hot drinks. An hour later, they removed all the dishes and started to distribute the immigration forms.(Observation, London–Bangkok)

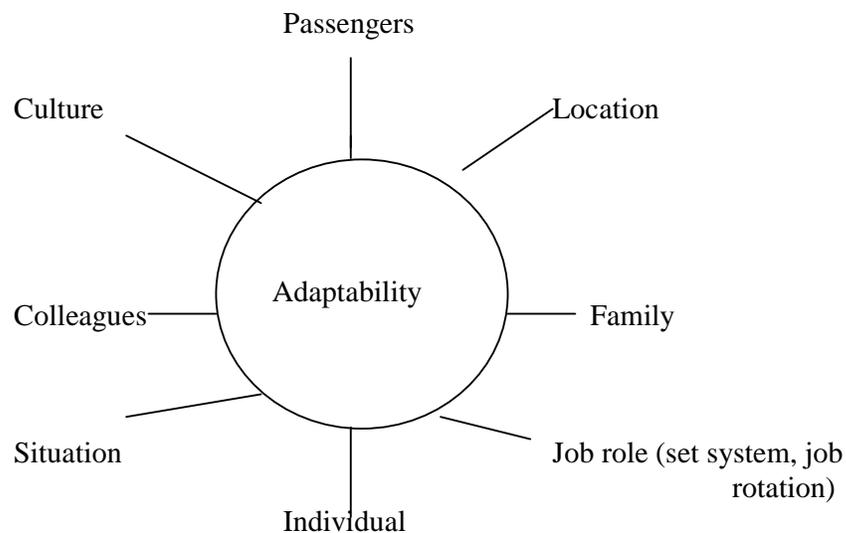
My observational data reveals that dealing with passengers of many different national origins has some implications for training: for example, English competency; social skills, such as understanding the basic requirements of all passengers; strategic interactions, such as entertaining their wishes and comforts in a soft and gentle manner; and individual characteristics, such as maintaining a sense of control and confidence when managing relationships with passengers. Hence the kind of service provision envisaged by Thai Airlines can be said to involve the use of social skills and human relations as key components of strategic interaction.

The interviews show that teamwork is very important in the job, because of the following factors. Tasks must be finished quickly: a good example of this is kitchen duty. Staff have to cooperate to prevent work overload. Assisting each other helps to create good teamwork, as this kind of work needs unity, due to the restrictions of flight times and space limitations. According to the interview results, there are generally between six and ten cabin crewmembers per flight, depending on how full the flight is. Hence a good relationship with colleagues is needed to create a good working environment. For instance, if there is a problem with a passenger that one crewmember needs to deal with, another crewmember can assist by taking over another job. At this point the training is considered to be very important in order to maintain the same standard of delivery within the service. The main strength of a cabin crew is teamwork, because of the nature of the job, and cabin crew have to be active and enthusiastic in participation because each crewmember will have his/her own duties.

There is one sentence mentioned, that we all eat together because we are on the same plane, sleep together in the same hotel, even if we died we would die together because we are on the same plane. So we should love each other, don't be selfish because it's not going to make things better. Yes, there always is a briefing before the flight about this, because some people would forget after they have been working for a while. (Interviewee 10)

On each flight the crew should create a team identity and show commitment to their jobs by building model team qualities such as respect, helpfulness and cooperation. Cabin crew carry the company's reputation, so it is important for them to work well as a team in order to reach the company's goals. This dimension of adaptability is clarified by the following diagram.

**Figure 8.3: Dimensions of adaptability**



These dimensions (Figure 8.3) reflect the competency of adaptability within timing constraints in a dynamic environment. This implies that social identification is underpinned by two dimensions, namely time and adaptability. Moreover, it is related to the conceptual framework in terms of the individual self-construal output and positive behaviour, emphasised by both individual and company input. These two main dimensions, extrapolated from the interview results, are important in differentiating theoretical approaches to the self. A biased process, or internalisation, is associated with both dimensions. Therefore the interview results have demonstrated

that self-identification creates and expresses both self-identity and social identity where social attention is emphasised. Self-awareness can be maintained within these time dimensions using the adaptability competency factor. When talking about positive behaviour, the desire may be for the positive image to be constant, where time factors or the situation demand it. In the same context, characteristics of the airline industry, such as set systems and jobs not being carried forward to the next day, necessitate cabin crewmembers' roles being switched to different situations, different clienteles and/or different cultures, with positive interactions remaining due to their competency of adaptability.

Adaptability within self-identification is constrained by the characteristics of the job itself. A given situation can reinforce the adaptability competency. Common sense is another factor in solving problems in certain situations. This is related to the 'let go', where wisdom can help one to find a solution to the problem. My data suggests that common sense also comes from experience. Another important factor in a cabin crewmember's skill is language. As the language used might not be the crewmember's native language, the use of non-verbal communication is also taken into account. For cabin crew, spoken language combined with non-verbal communication is a part of the strategic interaction. It is important to investigate cabin crew skills, as they show the relationship between individual and social characteristics and the attributes needed for the job.

Actually, it's not difficult to impress your passengers at all. Sometimes, if we talk to our passengers, it could open a new relationship and it is certain to increase their positive feelings about the C/A and the company, make them feel good and put them in a good mood. Then it would be easier to solve any of their problems, should a conundrum arise. In order to be considerate of another's feeling, we offer them as much as we are able, especially Indian passengers, such as offering them a can of Coke, or asking them whether they would like some more. I am sure that they would be very pleased. If we converse with them, often, even for a Thai or foreigner, I am certain that they would prefer this. (Interviewee 1)

According to the interview results, social adaptability is seen to be an important factor in these skills, and includes understanding human relations, social awareness,

understanding society's demands, understanding the characteristics of different nationalities, understanding people, knowing how to deal with service users, knowing how to speak appropriately, and associating correctly with other people from different countries. The inclusion of language skills is also necessary as these are considered to be more important than experience. Nonetheless, experience is also an important issue. Experience entails an understanding of the different possibilities involved in having social interactions with others. Strategies to calm passengers' emotions and reduce levels of negativity can be learned with experience. However, experience is based on various considerations, such as one's age and time in the job. Cabin crewmembers who are responsible for First Class passengers would have more experience in this area. Their positive interactions with passengers happen automatically, reflecting their working experience. This is illustrated in the following interview quote:

I think experience helps us know how to deal with passengers. We should know how to speak appropriately and calm down passengers if they are feeling angry. This should come from experience rather than skills. Cabin crew who serve First Class will know a lot about this. They will know instinctively how to deal with people. (Interviewee 8)

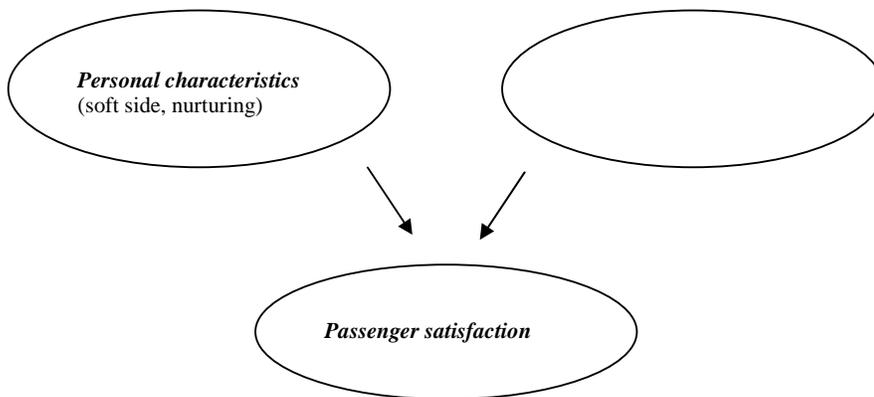
From the research data it appears that the majority of the job characteristics can be divided into service interaction, female characteristics, self-presentation, caring, and interconnection with passengers. In relation to female cabin crew, the specific characteristics of females are an important part of the service interaction, and this can be identified as the 'soft-side' factor (Vitasek et al., 2010). The soft side in this case appears to be a balancing of personal characteristics with the subconscious, where the traditional gender role is emphasised. The solution to personal and job characteristics is to connect the job function with input from one's personal character, thus creating a positive result in terms of passenger satisfaction. The dynamic environment, the service industry and self-presentation are taken into account.

Thai people are like this...anything you want, they always smile. Thai people have a good heart. When passengers complain about this and that or need more to eat, we go to the kitchen and we find something for them to eat. We would think if they fly three to four hours, what are they going to eat then?

Although we might feel annoyed or dissatisfied in the kitchen, we will give them what they asked for. This is being Thai, we are good to foreign people, no matter what. If you don't order food on their flights, they would be annoyed and would say no. (Interviewee 16)

It is interesting to note that the root of the service interaction is assumed to be a female responsibility, where a nurturing environment and character would fit the job characteristics. Correlations between these two perceptions are related to relationships and adaptability to social interaction in certain situations. The findings indicate that there is an extremely strong relationship between three factors: time, relationships and adaptability.

**Figure 8.4: Relationship between passenger satisfaction, personal and job characteristics**



According to the interview results, job characteristics are mainly involved with service interaction where it is dealing with positive emotion. In relation to gender and service satisfaction, adaptability, 'let go' and common sense are related to positively expressed emotion and emotional intelligence. As Mattila et al. (2003) state, gender-based expectations are linked with learning how to control negative emotions. However, this brings weaknesses in its wake. If these characteristics are supported by company policy, if a cabin crewmember were the victim of sexual harassment, what would be the company procedure to deal with that situation? One of the company policies is that the passenger is always right, and the company relies on cabin crew members' common sense and adaptability in difficult situations.

I think there are both good and bad points. It's good in terms of service and also we should keep it inside. We should not show dissatisfaction to passengers by using our emotion. We have to be patient. But it doesn't mean that we have to be patient all the time. If it comes to a difficult situation such as when passengers talk or subject us to sexual harassment. We don't have to be patient in everything, it depends on the matter. (Interviewee 13)

### **National culture and the traditional female gender role**

To gain a better understanding of traditional gender roles, the interviews dealt with the following questions: what is the definition of the traditional gender role? How do female characteristics relate to passenger satisfaction? Can they reduce role conflict? What is the relationship between gender and cross-cultural factors in the airline industry? These questions were asked in order to investigate the relationship between individual self-perception and performance outcomes (research objective three). The interview results show that the most significant factor in the traditional female gender role is gentleness –followed by kindness, cheerfulness, warmth, helpfulness, and not expecting anything in return, which all show a slight decline in proportion. From interviewees' perceptions, gentleness can be demonstrated through smiling and greeting, and my findings show that the greeting on Thai Airways is warmer compared with other airlines. According to my data, it is commonly agreed that appropriate behaviour depends on the occasion or situation, which is different from other airlines.

Self-reflection, offering sympathy to others, there is none of these words in the dictionary. Anything we can help we should help, not expecting anything in return. This is our kindness, which is different from the Japanese, to be considerate of others' feelings. The Japanese is like a pressure not to express. Japanese do things in accordance with duty, like the manner in the society, and not expressing from their hearts. (Interviewee 10)

Gentleness and softness become benefits in terms of passengers' on-board experience when compared with rival airlines: 'Gentleness, "wai" (greeting in Thai).The personnel are softer than our competing airlines, and stress attention to detail in comparison with our competition'(Interviewee 6). The characteristic of compliance shows softness and kindness which are considered to be genuine. Training by the

company and the way the interviewees were brought up come together and result in them being considerate of others' feelings. Another non-verbal method of communication, i.e. smiling, is also taken into account. Non-verbal communication, i.e. smiling 'from the heart', is considered important: 'Smile, politeness, gentleness, and a service that passengers feel that they are expressed from within the individual, and the love for this service position' (Interviewee 5). This shows that smiling is another important issue compared with other countries.

The feelings of concern and caring for others are shown to be important. In relation to sympathy for others and self-reflection, it can be shown that many respondents take these qualities into account when involved in passenger service. This can change one's manner of handling people, paying more attention to their needs within the industry. Further examples of self-reflection could not be explained in English, such as the word 'nam-jai' (loosely translated as 'sympathy'). It is a contribution that goes beyond the call of duty.

For myself, I am concerned with serving. If passengers communicate a simple request, we C/As attempt to fulfil their desires immediately, provided we carry these articles aboard the aircraft. If their request cannot be fulfilled, then we quickly offer them an alternative suggestion, and hopefully they are pacified and impressed with our service. (Interviewee 2)

The interview results show that if there is anything the crew can help with, they do not hesitate to do so. Their assistance is offered without any expectation in return. This is called kindness, and it is considered to be different from the Japanese version. The Japanese are considered to be under more pressure not to express feelings, and to behave in certain ways in accordance with their duty, whereas kindness is a consideration of others' feelings. Another important point about kindness is that it is easier for Thai people to learn how to forgive and forget, even when under pressure and receiving negativity from passengers. Not being offended by other people's attributes, and feeling good when passengers are happy, are other qualities that passengers like. This might be a part of the cause and effect of the 'let go'. Moreover, positive non-verbal communication such as smiling and cheerfulness are found to impress passengers. The 'let go' is an additional factor in the traditional female gender role, and will be explained in a separate section.

Positive attitudes are created through individual cognitive thinking, and through the national culture (Compton & Hoffman, 2013) where females are represented as soft and gentle, as explained in the semi-structured interviews:

Company policy stresses Thai softness and politeness, which is at the core of our company's reputation concerning our positive feeling towards and how we treat our passengers. In addition, we maintain that our passengers are always right, and whatever they require, we will attempt to obtain it for them. (Interviewee 4)

We are soft and gentle to our passengers, could definitely reduce conflict, which means that the problem may not be solved completely, but it can certainly reduce the tensions that it created. (Interviewee 1)

Because Thai people are more polite and gentle, our human nature exudes our natural behaviour in reducing human disagreements in the aircraft. Therefore, if C/As communicate with senior people or passengers, we retain our frustrations inside, in order to comply with a simple request. (Interviewee 2)

According to my observational data, offering, distributing and serving represent the main service duties of cabin crew. Priority was given to special-meal passengers, such as children or vegetarians, which is a work practice evolved by the cabin crew. Serving is a traditional female characteristic, symbolising the gender role of the housewife (Hancock & Tyler, 2009). It also includes interaction with passengers, where social skills are needed. For instance, whilst the welcome drinks are part of the company's hospitality strategy, actually serving the drinks was hard work, especially because the flight was fully booked. Yet even then I observed that the cabin crew still kept smiling. This showed their competency in terms of having patience.

### ***Appearance***

It cannot be avoided that gender is related to appearance. The appearance of the cabin crew has to be neat and tidy. The wearing of traditional dress represents the Thai nation, and colour, design and make-up are part of the strategic interaction between cabin crew appearance, in terms of positive acting, and the gaining of passengers' attention. This is shown in a positive appearance: 'The way they wear make-up is bright and colourful; all items matched with their dress' (Observation, London–

Bangkok). To look good can make an individual feel good, and as women are concerned with beauty, this also implies a positive appearance. It is interesting at this point to note that appearance can boost a cabin crewmember's self-esteem, even though this service industry can produce tension because of the expectations of an authoritarian management style. Again, an emphasis on appearance leads to a positive impression. As a smiling, soft and gentle manner is shown towards passengers, conflict can be reduced in this first phase of interaction. This reinforces my policy analysis regarding first and last impressions, relating to individual interactions.

In terms of their appearance, they looked neat and tidy. Their hair had been tied back properly, but there were no fashionable hair accessories, only normal hairclips. As to their characteristics, they looked good and smiled most of the time. They looked very feminine, but looked confident.(Observation)

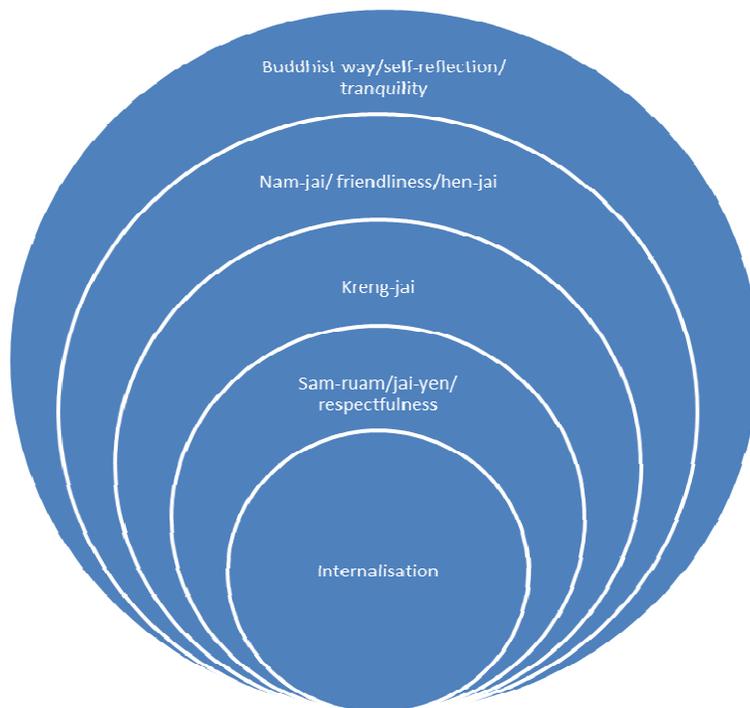
As discussed by Hochschild (2012), women's attractive appearance can be an important part of the service. Women are more likely to be sexually harassed than men. Although women perceive their feminine role and their appearance as part of their work requirements and emotional labour, there is evidence of sexual harassment occurring (Konrad & Gutek, 1986). On the other hand, using skills and abilities that are based on gender differences might create a standardisation of the skills and job characteristics needed by both genders. As a result there is support for the need for unisex characteristics. The results of a study into the 'let go' support positive psychology (Compton & Hoffman, 2013), although the argument derived from this is that this will work only when the time is dynamic and limited.

### **National culture and spiritual cultural values**

In order to investigate the relationship between individual output and performance outcomes, I examined how national culture influences employee behaviour (the individual perspective) and organisational behaviour (the organisational perspective). It is interesting that in a cross-cultural environment, bias can be created due to the different perceptions of varying cultures, which might be affected by organisational and performance outcomes. Thus in this research setting spirituality, love and kindness had been introduced into the workplace (Fry et al., 2011). My respondents agreed that conflict can be reduced by spirituality, love and kindness; some respondents agreed that this can have an influence in reducing conflict: 'The charm of

this culture commonly places restraints on displays of emotions in reducing the results of conflicts amongst our passengers, rather than permitting arguments to escalate to be covertly observed by the public' (Interviewee 5). In relation to Thai characteristics, some respondents agreed that gentleness, friendliness and a soft manner can reduce conflict. These characteristics can be referred to as traditional female gender roles. This characteristic is considered to be an important one because the company cannot compete with others in terms of aircraft technology. These characteristics have been put into practice explicitly because the characteristics in themselves are positive. Being natural is considered to be a natural characteristic. 'Primarily, Thai C/As are taught since early childhood not to become violently and emotionally involved, because this measure can only cause further despair' (Interviewee 10). An example of using spiritual values is that when faced with difficult passengers, the crew still carry out their service without any complaint; this is considered to be different from other cultures, whose strategies may not include understanding passengers' feelings. This level of understanding (trying to sympathise with passengers) is considered to be on a par with being natural.

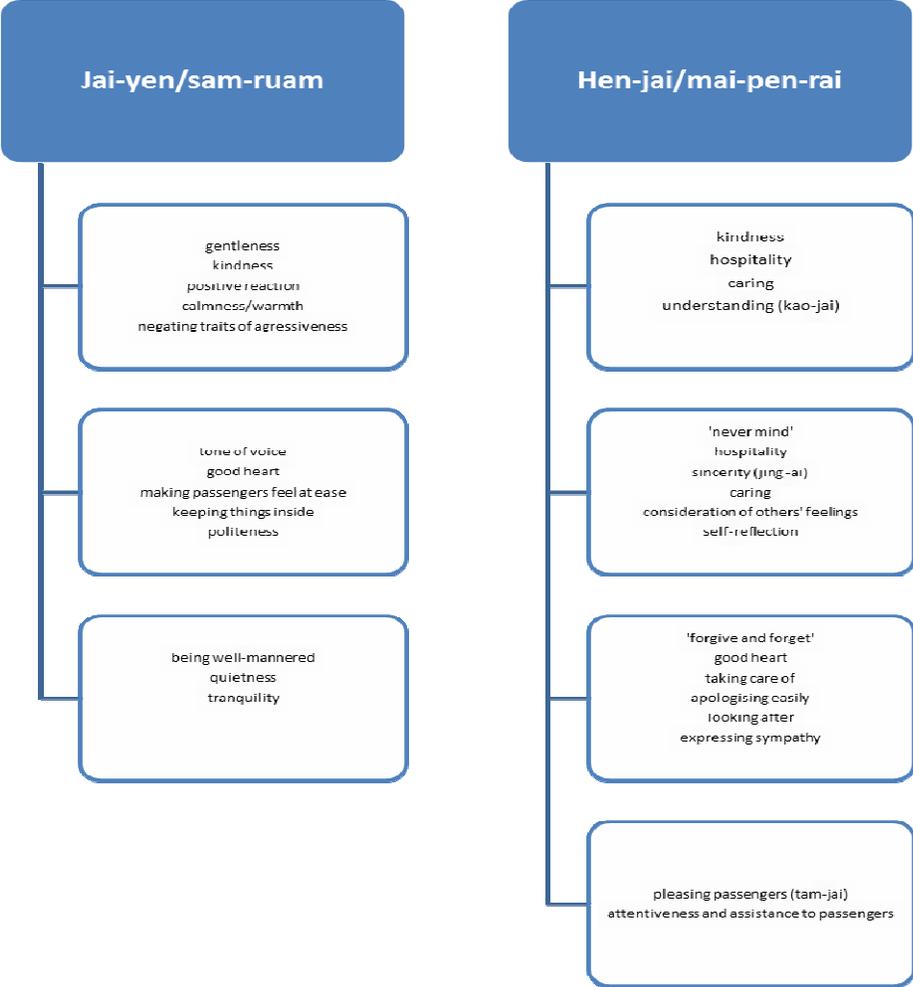
**Figure 8.5: Internalisation**



There are six concepts in the Thai language which apply to Thai rules of respect:

- Kreng-jai, which is usually interpreted as consideration (Cooper, 2005). Thai people are considerate and adjust their behaviour so as to give peace of mind. In Thailand the person who is being considerate in a social relationship exchange is inferior.
- Bunkhun is a form of gratitude which relates to social hierarchy and status.
- Hai-kiad is the way to treat people gently and respectfully by avoiding confrontation and criticism of others (Thanasankit, 2002).
- Nam-jai is love and kindness to others without expecting anything in return.
- Hen-jai means sympathy, other-reflection (as opposed to self-reflection) and willingness to listen and Sam-ruamrelates to self-control (similar to the British 'stiff upper lip') (Thanasankit, 2002; Andrews & Siengthai, 2009). I used these as keywords related to Thai values to categorise my data.

**Figure 8.6: Spiritual values**



In relation to positive acting, these interview results support the literature concerning Thai culture. First of all, we need to understand the ingredients of Thai culture and values. Thai values such as sam-ruam, kreng-jai, jai-yen, 'keep it inside' (implying the control of a superior) and nam-jai are constantly emphasised in the findings.

The striking qualities where culture commonly places restraints on expression in public are specifically observable in Thai culture. In the airline industry, new C/As are trained to be not only attentive to their passengers' impulses, but

also to quickly resolve an altercation that may escalate into a conspicuous and audible incident. (Interviewee 11)

Jai-yen is having a cool heart and considering your own emotions. Nam-jai is love and kindness to others without expecting anything in return. Another finding about Thai values is the giving of respect(hi-kiat). This is also implied in the Thai word 'krenng-jai', which is usually interpreted as 'consideration' (Cooper, 2005). Thai people are considerate in their feelings and adjust their behaviour to live peacefully with others: 'Thais commonly place restraints on expressions of emotion in public, because since childhood the entire Thai populace have been nurtured to restrain their angry emotions and show the "happy face"' (Interviewee 12). In Thailand a person will consider themselves inferior in any social relationship. This has a lot of implications within the hierarchical Thai system regarding status and respect (Cooper, 2005).

It is noticeable that these words mainly start or end with 'jai', which means 'heart' in Thai. This is a very important point, because it implies that doing things from the heart is important to Thai values and also reflects the spiritual way of living. Moreover, my interview findings reveal that character traits and job characteristics seem to be related, especially in the context of social interaction. With the growing concern for controlling impressions, self-presentation becomes a self-conscious decision (Baumeister et al., 2003). Therefore the term 'authenticity' can be analysed as a key element of the interaction, called 'freedom of action' (Heidegger, 2000). The majority of respondents demonstrate the characteristics of an authentic person understood as someone who takes responsibility for freely chosen actions, which represent an internal standard of the self. At the macro level, cultural consequences arise from social structures and social practices. People tend to look outward towards their peers, and upward towards authorities, in terms of conducting their lives, and this is applied at the micro level in an organisation. The way we look at the world has implications for our relationships (Nisbett, 2004). As Nisbett shows, the way people look at their peers and the people around them can create more informality in their relationships. The interview data reveals a relativistic perspective, where the mind concept has shifted from the external to the internal relationship. This is linked to sincerity or authenticity, where personal relationships create positive reactions from

passengers. 'If C/As communicate with senior people or passengers, we retain our frustrations inside, in order to comply with a simple request' (Interviewee 2).

### ***Thai values: jai-yen/sam-ruam***

In Thailand, jai-yen/sam-ruam means 'calmness'. In Thailand, the majority of people are Theravada Buddhists. Jai-yen is the way to avoid unpleasant situations. As Buddhists, people try to avoid a confrontational approach. As Thais, they do not show strong emotions in public. Anger is considered to be bad manners, and there is an effect of loss of face, which is an Asian dynamic. In my findings, these keywords represent internalisation and self-control. These are universal characteristics and can be applied to other nationalities where people have a spiritual belief in love and kindness. This can be adapted to organisations. Another significant Thai phrase is 'mai-pen-rai', meaning 'never mind', 'let it go'. This also relates to the Buddhist way of letting things go, as a central Buddhist concept is uncertainty.

Another key point from my findings is female gender characteristics which are soft and gentle, including conformity, compliance and nurturing. It can clearly be seen that many of the respondents (such as respondent numbers 1 to 2 and 4 to 8) agreed that this traditional gender role could reduce conflict (i.e. change a serious situation into a less serious one) and dissatisfaction (negative feelings). Moreover, the majority of respondents agreed that positive reactions become a natural response. Positive reactions can be separated into positive interactions (charm, gentleness, showing care) and positive non-verbal communication (smiling). Saying 'sorry' and 'thank you' appropriately, keeping negative feelings inside, complying with requests, treating passengers well to make them feel better or to give a good first impression, and listening to passengers' problems are all part of the strategy to reduce conflict and lessen troublesome situations. Self-identification is related to positive reactions and positive thinking. At the macro level, self-identification can be formed by the social norms, beliefs and values of national elites in a country where the influence of the social norm is important. This can be referred to as geographic thought (Nisbett, 2004) where attention is paid to the influence of peers and the environment. Therefore

one's self-presentation is influenced by these factors within the characteristics of the job, including female characteristics.

Thai people smile easily. For me I think Thai charm is gentleness. I had never realised this until I started work and compared our way to other countries.

Thai characteristics are gentler than others. Our gentleness, nice and soft, is better than others. The soft touch of the Thais is better. At first, I didn't know that. But now I am flying with a Chinese or Korean airline, I can feel that we are different from others. (Interviewee 8)

The results also support gender-specific literature suggesting that women are more expected to be front-line service providers who support the customer, and real-life customer experiences appear to confirm that gender stereotypes are integrated into customer expectations regarding good service (Hall, 1993). Women are socialised into making the most of the interpersonal aspects of their relationships, thereby contributing an important part of the process (Jorgensen, 2006). The results also support the theory that Asian cultures usually place restrictions on expressing emotions in public (Argyly, 2011). As a result, the variety of satisfactory emotional displays might be considerably smaller in Asian than in Western workplaces. On the other hand, the degree of difference in gender roles among cultures could account for any gender-based differences. Positive expressions are influenced by people's personalities and self-concepts, their goals, the situation and the audience (Baumeister, 2012). Compared with the male gender, positive expressions are more expected from the female gender, as these imply a soft side, as well as being expected by being embedded in company policy. At the same time, a positive demeanour as part of one's self-presentation can elicit a positive reaction from the audience. A positive expression, in this case surface acting, is influenced by a combination of cabin crewmembers' personalities (the traditional gender role) and their goals, i.e. extrinsic rewards (opportunities to see different cultures and receive free plane tickets). However, the situations vary in terms of place and time, and include passengers from different cultures. Most of the interview respondents supported viewpoints derived from ancient philosophy, such as the notion of the two opposite forces of Yin and Yang as well as the Buddhist teaching that a negative reaction can be decreased by positive reinforcement. This process of change is focused on balance and harmony. As a result, Thai values promote positive interactions related to an acquiescent style

and to the social construct and long-established systems of social interaction and communication.

However, there is a weak point in Thai values, as they arguably imply a passive personality under the control of an authoritarian management style. The acquiescent style obviously means that one is easily controlled, which in turn can be a good point in terms of management in the organisation. The results of my research might support Tyler and Abbott's (1998) theory of panoptic management, where managerial power ties in with employees' beliefs and creates behavioural conformity. Another factor in the traditional gender role is that it might contain universal characteristics, as it is a reflection of female characteristics around the world. Another major issue that cabin crew have to deal with is flight delays. This is one of the main topics when cabin crew interact with passengers. However, during my observations there was no incident where any aggression or conflict from passengers arose. Passengers saw our delay as just a result of circumstances, as could be seen by the applause given for the captain and crew on landing:

Once the plane had landed, there was a big clap from passengers at the back. After the aircraft was properly parked, the cabin crew gave priority to Business Class passengers disembarking, then Economy Class. There were cabin crew standing at the front door to say goodbye, using Thai posture (sawasdee) and smiling at all of us. (Observation, London–Bangkok)

Applause from the passengers implied gratitude for a safe landing by the captain. The farewell, using 'sawasdee', would be the last thing passengers would see on disembarking the aircraft. Again, smiling was emphasised as the last impression. These impressions of smiling softness and gentleness would influence passengers to return and use the service again. On the flight from Bangkok to London an emphasis on safety was demonstrated through the safety announcements. During the serving of food etc., an emphasis on Thai culture was made through the video Thai hospitality was illustrated throughout the media presentations, during which welcome drinks were served, showing the hospitality of the people. Positive reactions reflected the positive feelings engendered, including first impressions (Hanson, 2012). Other interesting issues were the examples of Thai culture and heritage provided along with

the friendly welcome: ‘Where on earth you can find happiness, happiness in a friendly welcome, happiness in a cultural heritage...’ (Observation).

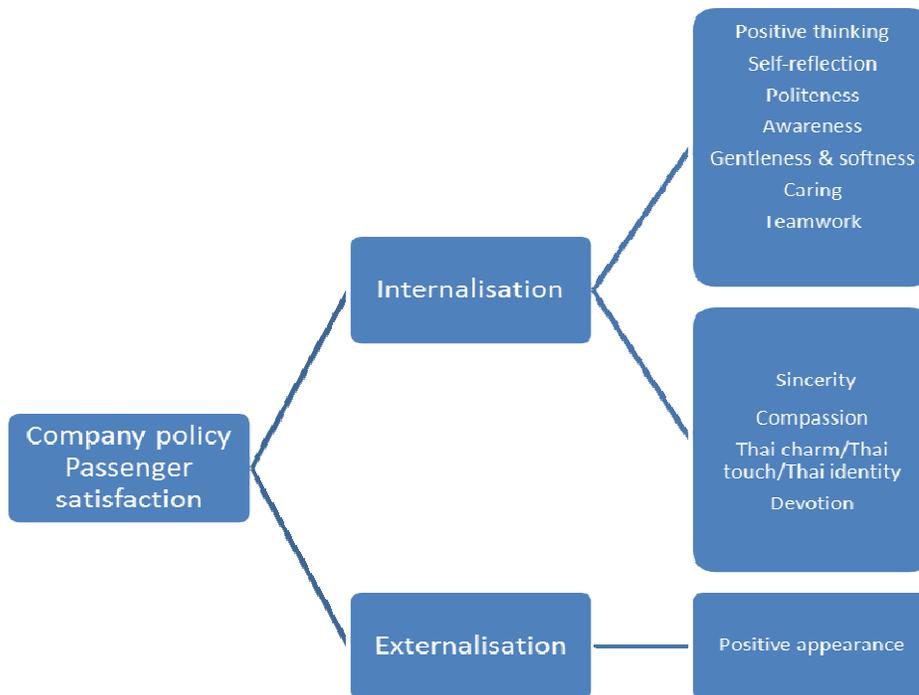
An emphasis on individuals in terms of traditional gender roles was seen frequently during the flight. As soon as there was a request from a passenger, the first action of the cabin crew towards the passenger was to listen carefully, which gave the implication of respect. Gestures, facial expressions and smiling all encouraged a positive reaction. This was a reflection of the traditional gender role which was also categorised in the semi-structured interviews. The data shows the kindness (self-possession) which is one of the Thai cabin crew’s characteristics. Observational data reinforced the findings of the semi-structured interviews in terms of defining traditional gender roles:

For me, I think it is hospitality. The kindness that is displayed by every Thai C/A is usually much more than what is required, but we care and are concerned about them. Such as if they get on the plane, we know that they might feel lonely and they need us to take care of them. And when we do it, the reaction would be positive. (Interviewee 3)

## National culture and company policy

Figure 8.7 outlines my analysis of the company policy.

**Figure 8.7: Company policy analysis**



The interview question about how company policy relates to positive feelings and self-reflection within the cabin crew service reflects the behavioural factor established in the secondary data analysis (company policy). This answers the question of how behaviour and conduct-based policy relate to a consistently positive attitude and positive self-reflection (individual self-construal/organisational perspective). Employees' opinions on this issue are reflected from a practical point of view in the following circumstances:

- 1) Positive feeling and self-reflection, emphasised by company policy, come from religious beliefs and values; or
- 2) The individual perception of cabin crewmembers is composed of being positive and self-reflective to others, due to religious background, where this

has been taught as a right. This is emphasised by the secondary data (i.e. the passenger service manual).

The sense of unity, positive thinking and self-reflection comes from the training. Evidence of the sense of unity is seen in the cognitive behaviour of the cabin crew. One interviewee explained that they all have meals together because they are on the same plane, all sleep in the same hotel, and even if they should die in a crash, they will die together because they are on the same plane. So they feel they should care for each other, because being selfish will not make anything better. Some respondents believe that this is important, and therefore the company has taken these issues into account as a first priority, reinforcing them frequently even when time is short, to instil a sense of unity, which leads to good teamwork. If the work itself is not just finished once the flight is over, but other cabin crew can assist colleagues, which is considered helpful in creating good relationships within the team. These three factors –the sense of unity within the team, positive thinking and self-reflection –can all help with passenger satisfaction, and are indeed reinforced by company policy and training.

In relation to passenger satisfaction, the company also emphasises that the passenger is always right, so whatever they want, they will get. The company try to focus on the truth that if there were no passengers, there would be no cabin crew either. Moreover, there is also direct input from a supervisory level, such as the purser, before the flight, in order to emphasise the need for passenger satisfaction, and for sympathy and self-reflection from the crew. In relation to positive thinking and self-reflection, some of the respondents agreed that positive thinking could help to maintain passenger satisfaction, not only in the airline industry, but also in other organisations: ‘As a significant measure, our company policy is to be devoted to our passengers, in entertaining their desires and comforts in a soft and gentle manner, which is also an optimistic reflection of the Thai C/A personality’ (Interviewee 11).

Internalisation is the core issue of company policy regarding positive feelings towards passengers (see Figure8.7). The company includes this in the training from the outset. ‘The passenger is always right’ is emphasised in the company policy for cabin crew conduct. Assisting passengers as much as they can is one of the core demands on employees. My findings suggest that internalisations such as compassion, positive

thinking and awareness should be put into practice in every organisation where HR is a factor. An issue to consider is how to maintain positive thinking and increase it in the group. People should have positive goals and the intention to be positive. In Asian countries, group work particularly influences people's behaviour and interactions. Self-reflection is also emphasised through the training. One should treat others as one would like to be treated oneself, unless there is a situation where cabin crew are treated badly, such as being verbally abused or receiving negative non-verbal communication from passengers. In these cases there would be a thinking point in the crew's strategic interaction as to whether they should keep things 'inside' or report the matter to a higher level. Nevertheless, my results show that a consistency of positive attitude and self-reflection can be put into practice. These are strengths in terms of both spirituality and self-reflection, and are needed due to the nature of the job (i.e. it is about interaction with others).

Yes, positive thinking and self-reflection have been taught since we did our training. If we would like people to do something for us, we have to offer them something first. It's about getting treated the way we treat the passengers. This is one of the lessons that have been taught from the beginning. (Interviewee 16)

The interview question on company policy and how it is related to the Thai CA personality reflects how the company has drawn the core values from the Thai personality and put them authentically into action. Hence the core policy is already tied in with individual characteristics. My interview results showed that the majority of respondents agreed that the company emphasises policy and regulations, whereas the policy itself emphasises the 'Thai touch'. According to the interviewees, the 'Thai touch' has been created as a new policy within a policy. It is concerned with Thai identity and Thai culture, and is shown to passengers when greeting them (wai), because 'wai' signifies a greeting from the heart. This non-verbal communication (wai) is thought to show respect. The lower the head goes down to meet the thumbs, pressing the palms together and holding the fingers upwards, the more respect it shows towards the recipient. This gesture, accompanied with a smile and a soft manner, has been seen to be another core issue in company policy. The results can provide a subconscious message to other nationalities in terms of positive non-verbal communication and respect for others. These findings are in line with work presented

by Gudykunst (1995), who devised a theory of the ways in which apprehension and uncertainty manipulate communication with strangers, both within and between cultures. He proposes that under conditions of increased uncertainty avoidance, a greater formality towards strangers occurs. My findings, drawn from the interview responses, show that the company is trying to emphasise the soft and gentle side which is a part of the Thai touch. All the gestures, such as not lifting things over people's heads, show Thai manners as well as the way Thais behave and their gentle communication. In terms of personal appearance, there are a lot of regulations detailing cabin crews' personality, uniform and so on. Cabin crew should look neat and tidy.

Now they are much concerned with the Thai touch, which is soft and gentle. Behaviour like putting things across people's heads is prohibited, and using feet to point is considered bad manners. In a good society we need good manners, the way we behave, the way we talk should be nice and soft.  
(Interviewee 4)

The context of positive thinking and self-reflection comes from ancient philosophy, where the balance of life and harmony with nature are embedded in the social conscience (Nisbett, 2004). In the same context, negatives can be resolved by positives. Opposites, contradictions, change and different cycles were understood through an appreciation of nature, the rural life and simplicity, giving meaning to the universe through the links between nature and human affairs (Nisbett, 2004). The conceptual framework represents these core values of company policy, although individual characteristics are also taken into account. This company policy is based on ancient philosophy, where social recognition is embedded, as shown in the example above. The effectiveness of employees' behaviour, as explained by this interviewee, is reinforced by a company policy underpinned by ancient philosophy and embedded in social recognition.

Definitely, this is the basic idea of cabin crew training, from when the company started business until I started work. This is the core of having positive feelings towards passengers. Passengers are always right, and whatever they want they will get. It doesn't mean that we have to offer everything they want, but it means we can offer passengers certain things up to

a certain level, such as cars, money etc., we can't give them. But if they want anything within our capability, we will offer it to them. (Interviewee 8)

The interview results indicate a consistency of positive self-presentation relevant to the existing concept of the self in various situations, such as relating to passengers and different cultures. This is due to the consistent emphasis of both policy and individual characteristics. Furthermore, an emphasis of the policy that is embedded in the company ethos is the 'Thai touch', where non-verbal communication is seen as an important factor i.e. smiling, courtesy, making passengers feel that they are important, taking good care of passengers (hospitality) and not saying no to queries immediately. The Thai touch has been divided into seven categories where positive reactions emphasise individuals' characteristics. When the individual's characteristics and self-concept are reinforced through the daily routine, plus the company's reinforcement, positive reactions can be seen in the performance outcomes, leading to passenger satisfaction.

#### ***Positive thinking, self-reflection and the individual***

The self-reflection we practise leads to sympathy for others, for which there is no word in the English dictionary. Foreigners (fa-rang) do not understand the word 'nam-jai' (sympathy). They would think that sympathy alone is enough, and you don't have to offer more than this, but we would feel that it's not enough. We feel we should give more. Anything we can do to help, we should, whilst not expecting anything in return. This is our Thai kindness, which is different from the Japanese way of being considerate of others' feelings. The Japanese are under pressure not to express feelings. They do things in accordance with duty, in the manner of their society, and do not express their emotions. But we have this thing called Thai charm, and a sincere smile. One other asset we have is that we easily forget slights, easily forgive, even if we feel very angry at the time. If the other side finally feels satisfied, we feel happy again. If they don't feel angry anymore, we are glad. We are not easily offended. This is one of the points that passengers like, we smile and are cheerful, even if we do not speak good English, as we have this strength, which is Thai charm. (Interviewee 10)

These interviews demonstrate the manner in which employees use positive attitudes and self-reflection, as laid out in company policy, and apply them to conduct and behaviour in the work situation and in their work practices. Obviously, a positive attitude and positive self-reflection are the opposites of a negative attitude and negative self-concept. From an Asian point of view, people have both a dark side and a bright side, positive and negative; therefore the causes of conflict can be reduced through harmony.

I think self-reflection helps us to treat others as we would like them to treat us. Understanding that people are more than just paying customers. Understanding that a passenger might be a son or daughter who has just left home, leaving his/her family for the first time. Seeing more than what is just on the surface. (Interviewee 16)

The nature of an airline business is mostly concerned with interactions between people. The individual's competency is an important factor in fulfilling passengers' satisfaction needs. Behaviour and conduct have been emphasised by respondents as important in terms of positive reactions. Therefore, training in these areas is provided from the outset, and emphasised again before a duty starts. The limitations of offering this kind of service should be considered in comparison with other airlines, due to the company's emphasis on excellent service. This understanding is consistently reiterated by the leadership. The Thai touch is also emphasised by the service industry. The definition of the Thai touch from the company point of view is: gentleness and softness; making passengers feel that they are important; taking good care of passengers (hospitality); not refusing a passenger's request straight away or saying no immediately. These positive reactions are embedded in cabin crew behaviour. The belief that two opposite forces can reduce role conflict has been applied. If passengers display negative reactions, cabin crew can deflect those reactions with positive ones. This can reduce even intense negative feelings. Good performance and good appearance become secondary. Social recognition and identification have been emphasised within each function of the airline sector. This can clearly be seen in the historical cognitive background, where social harmony is essential, and enables the crew to be aware that relationships are a vital part of social interaction.

If you met cabin crew who were not smiling, what would you feel? You would not feel satisfied, would you? It creates a conflict from the beginning, even before any conversation. The first feeling would be dissatisfaction because you would feel unwelcome. It is very important to keep our feelings to ourselves and conceal our dissatisfaction. Even if we face a situation that is not good at all, we have to keep it inside. Obviously, if there is a very badly behaved passenger we can report him/her to the boss. We must not express any negative emotion in the first place, because if they see smiling faces, passengers feel more satisfied. Some people are angry if we are not smiling, and they may try to find the reason. They would ask for this and that. Hmm, they just want us to be friendly to them. (Interviewee 8)

Another example:

Actually, it's not difficult to impress at all. Sometimes when we talk to people, it starts a relationship. It makes them feel good and therefore they will be in a good mood. They will be considerate of one another's feelings. Or we offer them as much as we can, especially on Indian flights, such as a can of Coke, or we ask them if they would like some more. They are usually very pleased.(Interviewee 10)

When private cognition, under the aegis of authenticity and relativism, is emphasised by social cognition, which is structured by cultural consequences, then interaction can become positive. My results suggest that consciousness and positive interaction can be applied to practice regarding the time dimension and the dynamic environment. An explanation of time dimensions will follow later. The following section will discuss gender and cultural issues which reflect traditional gender roles, positive acting and Asian culture.

According to the semi-structured interviews, one of the company regulations is not to display any negative responses to passengers from the start. Cabin crew are trained to be calm and patient. Therefore, an important factor for the company is recruitment and selection, where candidates are screened in terms of their personality, i.e. non-aggressive features, patience, positive thinking and the understanding of others, which all have to come from within. Once a cabin crewmember has received training, they will learn more with experience. In terms of training, the results show that it is

important to learn how to keep feelings inside, as this is considered to be very important within the service industry. This should be a part of primary training. Moreover, learning how to create a positive feeling, and learning to forgive and forget, including showing kindness to passengers, has to be considered important. Another reason for considering how important passengers are is that cabin crew will get a higher salary for a more excellent service. Standardisation has been set up by regulations. Tests are carried out before candidates are selected. The committee considers all the criteria as to whether the candidates are suitable for the service industry or not. However, some respondents believed that cabin crewmembers could reveal their internal feelings as long as it did not exceed the company's boundaries. These respondents believed that company policy was itself a boundary that helped the employee to follow the task and achieve the goal. As long as it does not overstep this boundary, staff can reveal their deep acting (the real them).

To summarise, what crew members feel and how they react depends on individual characteristics and company policy. As far as company policy is concerned, my interview respondents generally agreed that it could have an effect regarding both deep and surface acting. It appears that they believe that the theme 'the customer is always right' is a major factor in the airline service. The company always emphasises that passengers are 'the boss' and staff should not say no to them: 'In addition, we maintain that our passengers are always right, and whatever they require, we will attempt to obtain it for them'(Interviewee 4).

Some of the interview responses reflect psychological factors of individual self-control, underpinned by 'keeping feelings inside'. The ability to relate to others can be put into practice in this way. Half the respondents agreed that cabin crew are able to ignore what they feel inside. This has to be replaced with a positive presentation which is a result of keeping feelings within. However, it is sometimes difficult to control feelings and not express negative emotions. With the company policy emphasising 'the passengers are always right', cabin crew would be wrong to show any kind of negative emotion towards passengers. So the best solution is trying to resolve any problems quickly. A quarter of respondents generally agreed that company policy could have an effect regarding both deep and surface acting. My results show that during their first year in the job, cabin crew members do not have enough experience to be able to react immediately. The basic training helps staff to

learn how to resolve a problem when passengers are angry or frustrated, and what the strategic reaction should be. However, it becomes quite clear that it is not only in theory that work strategies can be learnt. Cabin crew must learn how to deal with certain practical situations too, and thus gain experience for the future. They learn from dealing with different kinds of passengers and using different tactics for different cultures, and there is not a formula to follow, as this is real life: 'Passengers are always right. If we realise that, we will try to avoid conflict as much as we can. If there is any problem, it would be a big issue for us. For myself, I will always keep things inside. When I feel angry, I won't express it' (Interviewee 1).

Being calm and friendly includes smiling. The way that Thai women smile is different from other women in other countries, *because it comes from the inside, and the major difference is that we understand, or try to understand.* A Thai cabin crewmember tries to be understanding of passengers on board. If passengers want something, we will offer it to them. We would notice if something was wrong. It is assumed that other airlines do not have this. (Interviewee 10)

One of the key issues revealed was positive non-verbal communication, which can be investigated through observation. On the other hand, receiving an opinion from an interview is also crucial, as it reflects individual self-control, whereas positive non-verbal communication is already a part of positive interaction. Questions about matters such as how non-verbal communication links to self-presentation were put to the interviewees. The results show that non-verbal communication is very important. Negative facial communication, such as cold eyes or a stiff face, can play a part in passenger dissatisfaction. It is necessary to avoid or conceal dissatisfaction as it can be the beginning of conflict, and it is facial expressions that are easily noticed. Some cabin crew felt that this was important for interactions between people from different countries. These responses indicate that conflict can result from first impressions, such as positive or negative non-verbal communication. This can create dissatisfaction as passengers feel unwelcome, which is obviously an important issue. Positive non-verbal communication such as a smiling face can create a positive first impression for passengers, as can the crew being friendly and showing the personal touch.

This is very important. If you meet a cabin crewmember who shows an unhappy face, how do you feel? You would feel dissatisfied, wouldn't you? It could start a conflict even with no conversation at all. The first impression is dissatisfaction and passengers would feel unwelcome. We have to keep our feelings inside, conceal our dissatisfaction even if we feel unhappy or unimpressed by passengers who react negatively to us. We have to keep it inside. Obviously, if there is misconduct from a passenger, in some cases it could be over the limit, and you should report it. You do not have to express negative emotion in the first place. If people see a smiling face, they feel happier. Some people feel upset if we are not smiling, and they could try to create a problem for us. They may ask for more service than usual. Hmm, they just want us to be friendly. (Interviewee 10)

This semi-structured interview extract shows that non-verbal communication is an important part of cabin crew interaction. The Thai touch, such as pleasant facial expressions and smiling, implies care and concern. This is related to emotional expressions when dealing with others. A feeling of care for others and self-reflection produces positive self-control. An emotional expression is a communication between internal and external intentions, but how can it be genuine? If the internal and external intentions are both positive, the evoked response to others will be positive. A neutral process would imply inner experiences which are the norm in the national culture and become positive non-verbal communication, as in Thailand being 'a land of smiles'. The interview results show that positive non-verbal communication, as a part of company policy, is called 'the Thai touch'. However, in terms of communication style, everything depends on social context. In this case, it is a context in which the power distance between cabin crew and passengers, as well as that between cabin crew and the organisation, is a legitimate power where reward power and legitimate power are an important part of the social context. Moreover, a person's inner self, governed by the norms of their national culture, affects cabin crew interactions. This might also be a result of the motivations and values reinforced within the cabin crew's work environment. This will be explained further in the section on motivation. Culture plays an active role in the use of emotional expressions, and this is the norm in any pattern of non-verbal behaviour.

According to the observational data, the first reaction that passengers experience once on board makes the first impression. The positive reactions discussed above reveal this to be friendliness. As already mentioned, body language has much to say about human interactions in commercial contact situations (Albrecht & Zemke, 1990). Smiling faces reflect the Thai national culture (Carlzon, 2001). The traditional Thai way of greeting, which includes bowing, implies respect. These expressions of respect, friendliness and warmth can make a big impression on passengers.

Once you step onto the plane, there are two cabin crewmembers greeting passengers with a smile and wearing traditional Thai clothes, made of silk. Their first greeting is a smile and 'wai', which is the traditional Thai greeting. The hands are put together and one bows with respect. Once I see a warm welcome and a smiling face, I smile back. (Observation, London–Bangkok)

This suggests that positive non-verbal communication is one of the most crucial factors in conflict reduction. First impressions can be lasting. The traditional greeting ('wai') represents the power or legitimate power of passengers in relation to the cabin crew. Alternatively, it shows respect towards the passengers (Carlzon, 2001). The suggestion is that a repetition of positive non-verbal communication implies respect (bowing) and friendliness (smiling) (Ajahn, 2014). The way staff smile, even with their eyes, shows the authenticity of the traditional gender role. Therefore listening to passengers demonstrates an Asian cultural characteristic, where people keep feelings inside and listen to others instead. This can be linked to the conceptual framework, as non-verbal communication is a part of individual acting that is emphasised by company policy, and by individuals themselves. Furthermore, cabin crew-passenger interaction implies legitimate power, where an action such as bowing (implying respect) is a way to reduce any conflict.

According to my interview results, informal communication with passengers whilst serving is helpful in order to create a personal touch. If cabin crewmembers are able to do this naturally, it means a more pleasant journey for both passengers and cabin crew. Informal communication is needed, i.e. asking passengers whether they are going on holiday or on a business trip, and this is the 'extra touch'. However, it has to be understood that if a flight is fully booked and the cabin crew have a lot of work to do, they may not have the time to give this personal touch. Nevertheless, that 'extra

touch' will always create higher passenger satisfaction. 'The most significant policy of my company is focused upon "Thai touch"; in other words, how does our company convey these simple traditions to our passengers, such as the Thai greeting (wai), which, if sincerely imparted, delineates a welcome expressed from the heart of each Thai C/A?'(Interviewee 10).

As a result of the national culture, it is the norm for individuals to respect others, especially people whom they see as important. Again, this implies legitimate power behind the scenes, where cabin crewmembers value passengers as important people whom they have to respect, in terms of their social and cultural beliefs. As the slogans confirm, 'People make the difference... People are our most important resource... The frontline people are really the ones who make us or break us'(Albrecht& Zemke, 1990, p.37). It can clearly be seen that individual strategic interaction is an important resource in any service industry. In this case, surface acting needs to include positive non-verbal communication, the extra touch (personal touch) and also a good appearance. Peters and Waterman (2012) point out the crucial importance of staying close to customers. By this they mean learning in intimate detail what really counts for passengers. Some of the most dismal failures of organisations can be traced to losing contact with customers at a time when customers' needs and motivation were changing (Peters & Waterman, 2012). On the Bangkok–London flight I observed that individual interaction was used as a strategic part of non-verbal communication. A warm smile, softness and gentleness, and the Thai greeting all encouraged positive interpersonal reaction:

All cabin crew wore Thai dresses which were made from Thai silk. They all had smiles on their faces and greeted passengers in the traditional Thai way, which is called 'wai'. Their make-up gave them a professional appearance, and matched their dresses. Their posture as they performed the Thai greeting was soft and gentle, including the warmth of their smiles. (Observation, Bangkok–London)

Part of all cabin crewmembers' skill is the use of language, and in this case English was not their native language. There is therefore the possibility that non-verbal communication has to be implemented much more, in order to allow better understanding between cabin crew and passengers. Moreover, the respondents agreed

that verbal communication, e.g. speaking gently, could reduce role conflict to a certain degree, as could the use of non-verbal communication, e.g. a friendly smile, which is equally important. So it can be seen that both verbal and non-verbal communication can bring about the reduction of role conflict with passengers. An example of this is that anger might be exacerbated if one were to try to solve a problem by using anger in return, so crew have to find a way round it by using positive non-verbal communication to calm the situation. Here a smile can help. Compromise and common sense give the ability to be flexible in certain situations, which can lead to the solution of problems.

I think it helps directly. If passengers are angry and we respond aggressively, the argument will be never ending. We need to be someone who speaks nice and softly. This will make passengers feel a lot calmer and they will be able to communicate. We can show our Thai characteristics; we are not serious. We always smile, which is usually helpful. (Interviewee 1)

### **Reflection on and discussion of internalisation**

Positive thinking and self-reflection apply to internalisation. Internalisations that people carry within have an effect on their attitude and behaviour – in this case, as my results show, this can be emphasised through company policy, and by the cabin crew themselves due to their religious beliefs. On the other hand, positive thinking and self-reflection (treating people the way we would wish them to treat us) can be universal. It can also be adopted by both genders and by any organisation. However, when cabin crew regularly face depressing situations such as heavy workloads, complaints and so forth, can positive thinking and self-reflection still be achieved? The answer goes back to the ‘time’ dynamic and the nature of the job. As Becker (2000) says, customer roles and expectations are based on service recovery. This means action designed and implemented to alter the negative perceptions of dissatisfied customers. This will involve a real-time context of service provision, and unforeseen or uncontrollable external factors. Positive thinking and self-reflection can be used to redeem a difficult situation. It is noted that Yin-Yang has been used in this situation. A negative reaction has been replaced by a positive one.

## **Cultural and collectivistic characteristics**

In relation to previous research, keeping things inside is one of the major criteria which identify a collectivistic culture. Extrapolating from my research results, the good points of Asian culture, where restraints are commonly placed on expressions of emotions in public, could be applied to other industries where there is a similar organisational culture. The majority of my respondents agreed that Asian culture (keeping things inside) is appropriate to this kind of job. Not expressing dissatisfaction can reduce arguments. However, keeping things inside can be seen as both a strength and a weakness. My results show that as a strength it is considered to be appropriate for this kind of job, since it is better to apologise to passengers in the first place. Occasionally, in certain situations that place pressure on any member of the cabin crew, such as sexual harassment, this should be reported to a superior, not kept inside. The best thing is to try not to antagonise passengers by showing any kind of negative expression or dissatisfaction. The type of service offered is considered to be different from that in other services, such as restaurant work, because cabin crew need to face so many different types of passengers. It helps to learn basic psychology and nurturing skills, including first aid. The crew have to learn how to help passengers, always with service in mind, and hence they need appropriate training.

Many of my respondents agree that Asian culture (keeping thoughts inside) is appropriate for this kind of work, due to the nature of the job being concerned with social interaction. Social harmony is a major ancient philosophy and is reflected in human behaviour.

We will attempt to avoid *all* unpleasant confrontations with our passengers. If there is an apparent problem with a passenger, then it must have been a large issue. For myself, I always attempt to retain my frustrated feelings inside.

When I am angry, I will not express these feelings in public. (Interviewee 1)

As Nisbett (2004) says, the social structures and sense of self that are characteristic of Easterners fit hand in glove with their belief systems and cognitive processes. The socio-cognitive system, where Asian social structures and practices have a habit of focusing on the social world and a need to attend to social relationships, may have extended to focus on relationships of all kinds (Nisbett, 2004). Eastern philosophy is related to collectives – the village and the family. Easterners are less concerned with

issues of control over others or the environment than with self-control. Within social groups, any form of confrontation is discouraged, such as arguments or debates. My interview findings support Nisbett (2004), who recognises that Easterners' social structures and sense of self fit hand in glove with their belief systems and cognitive processes. Again we refer back to collectivism as, within the social group, any form of confrontation, such as an argument, is discouraged. There are other theories that support this finding, such as the social identity theory, which is concerned with well-being within a group context, and Boyle et. al.(2015) social needs theory, which details feelings of inclusion within larger collectives. The self is related to positive acting, where negative feelings have to be controlled. Moreover, it has been identified by my respondents that social skills are very important in this service industry: 'Cabin crew should have human relations such as when we talk to passengers while we are serving, it will be a great trip. Or asking auntie whether she is going for holiday or she's travelling by herself. It's called "extra touch"' (Interviewee 1).

My interview results demonstrate that the competency of adaptability is identified by the majority of respondents. Therefore, in the Asian context, the nature of this work is focused on teamwork, with an ancient philosophy embedded in the social context. This fits into the culture of a job where teamwork and role interaction are important.

### **The relationship between need satisfaction, motivation and reward strategy**

This research looked for female work-life balance and its subconscious relationship to individual need satisfaction. Thai cabin crew who work in a female environment tend to balance their career, money and family so that their social and working lives can fit in with their need satisfaction. One of my research objectives was to see whether female need satisfaction, motivation and reward could be incorporated within female cabin crew's overall needs satisfaction. Employee commitment to the organisation has to have a positive performance outcome, and this might be valuable for other international companies to realise when focusing on their reward strategies. The interview questions involving reward strategy were: how does 'reward power' relate to the cabin crew's work performance? What are the rewards and benefits for the cabin crew, and which are their favourites? What is the company reward strategy? These questions might lead to a better understanding of reward strategy in the airline sector. It was clear in my results that the majority of respondents agree that rewards

and benefits are related to work performance. As a result of the rewards and benefits that the company provided for its employees, i.e. free flight tickets and bonuses. It appears that either the company provides good benefits or it does not. What did interview respondents say about this? They said that the company provides a good benefit and welfare system to employees. However, a minority thought that rewards and benefits were not directly related to their work performance. It depended on individuals and the general cabin crew attitude to maintain a positive approach. It appears that indirect factors, such as maturity, self-confidence and further development, also influence performance. The majority of respondents prefer to travel around the world and see different places, which is related to their motivation. The benefits they most appreciate are the free tickets. Due to the Thai economy, it is difficult for middle-class people to go abroad for holidays, so getting free tickets is a real motivation for this kind of work. Some respondents said they were happy to see different cultures so that they could achieve a greater perception of people from around the world. It is interesting that there are also many indirect benefits, such as improving behaviour and conduct in one's social life, and improving one's appearance. The majority of respondents agreed that a thank you letter from the company or passengers could influence their motivation as much as a wage increase. However, an indirect reward strategy has also been taken into account, i.e. the feeling of happiness from providing passenger satisfaction, learning to listen to passengers and being willing to help.

### ***Need satisfaction***

The interview questions addressed how need satisfaction is related to female ego goals, lifestyles and motivation. As mentioned before, these are related to cabin crew performance and their motivation to maintain a good balance between work and family. The respondents indicated that career progression was a major factor in their need satisfaction. At the same time, the balance between work and family was seen to be an important factor for half of the respondents. There is a relationship between time management and this balance between work and family. Other important factors are money and travel, which can affect well-being, i.e. having a comfortable life and therefore being happy and relaxed. This may be related to leisure and work theory as detailed by Guerrier and Adib (2003), as it is the result of freedom, release and fun. The results show that job security and extrinsic rewards such as money are important

for satisfied lives. The nature of the job means there is a concern about age and ill health in terms of future employment. Extrinsic rewards such as travelling can give employees more experience, as they will gain more understanding of human behaviour in each country they visit. They can experience any tourist attraction, sample different kinds of cuisine, and see other people's ways of life. This is different to any other job, e.g. banking, where one is mainly concerned with money and figures. When people become part of a cabin crew, they learn many new things, get to know more people and are able to mingle socially with others. These circumstances help to create employees' loyalty to their jobs.

In terms of our career, we can see the whole wide world, see people from different countries and understand the behaviour of each country. We are able to see the tourist attractions, including having good food, and see the way of life of people. But the most important thing is a good salary, which makes our lives so much better. (Interviewee 10)

As mentioned earlier, the need satisfaction for female cabin crew is career progression. However, career progression is based on seniority levels, so it takes a certain period of time to proceed to the next level. Therefore the balance of work, money and family is shown to play an important part in female cabin crew satisfaction. As Murray (1938) mentions, need satisfaction is related to social motivation. The female subconscious has to contend with an acceptance of female ego goals and with the subconscious role of nurturer in the family group. Thus the relationship between personal life and job characteristics (in a nurturing environment) is related to individual female performance. This can be boiled down to personal benefits or the extent to which it serves the person's goals and values (Schlenker, 2003).

I think it is possible to have a balance between work, money and family. Because being cabin crew, we have to know lots of different kinds of people, so why can't we know our family, right? How to handle our family? How to handle passengers? If we can handle passengers, we can handle our family. We have to know how to manage time, and how to manage many other things. If we know how to manage the flight, we should know how to manage our

family, especially because we are women. That is very important. (Interviewee 4)

Another related issue in need satisfaction is travel, which is rated as an important factor in cabin crew need satisfaction and can be identified as an extrinsic reward. This shows the importance of reward management in an industry where a cross-cultural environment is the norm. Further ways of seeing different cultures can be embedded in staff cognition. Once the cognitive perspective of cultural differences has been embedded, belief systems can be created from a different perspective, and one's self-concept will be focused on surface value. This might result in a globalised cognitive view of different cultures.

In terms of our career, we can see the whole wide world, see people from different countries and understand the behaviour of each country. We are able to see the tourist attractions, including having good food, and see the way of life of people. But the most important thing is a good salary, which makes our lives so much better. (Interviewee 10)

The thing is, this job gives us a lot, and it is the kind of job that new graduates would like to have. Firstly, they would get flying experience, which they wouldn't get from another company; we can travel, meet lots of people, go to places that we've never been to before, see other cultures for the first time, experience so many things, which is important. But all that is less important than the money or the flying allowance that we get. Once we gain experience, we can improve ourselves or change in accordance with the experiences that we have had. Being cabin crew, we have to have training to learn about food, as well as how to behave, how to conduct ourselves and to think in a way that benefits us. For instance, a new member of a cabin crew may not know how to dress properly, but once they gain experience, their appearance changes accordingly. Their experience could help them reach another social level. I don't mean high society, but I mean a society which knows the rules and opens new horizons. (Interviewee 8)

The economic factor is another important issue, with the potential for financial support for foreign holidays being seen as less important. The price of a flight ticket

and accommodation is the major problem for those who work in other organisations. This could help create different values and social norms.

‘Free tickets, people love free tickets, right? People look forward to becoming part of a cabin crew because they would like to go abroad. If they were just ordinary people, they could have difficulty travelling like this. We are given cheap tickets and can go to many places’ (Interviewee 1). My observation of a standby ticket holder during the return flight revealed the rewards and benefits for employees, such that a ticket with 10% off is provided for all family members (i.e. they all receive a 10% discounted ticket). Another benefit of standby tickets is the opportunity upgrade to a higher class if there are seats available. Extrinsic rewards encourage the improvement of individual performance (Fang, 2011). Effectively, standby ticket holders get priority in the opportunity for getting a better seat.

### ***Lifestyle***

In my research results, the majority of cabin crew agreed that their lifestyle was a relaxed one. Relaxation can be separated into different forms of recreation, e.g. going to the cinema, shopping and exercising. However, the majority of the respondents preferred to stay at home with their families, or just to be at home reading or having a rest. This might be the result of the accumulation of jet lag, lack of oxygen and/or tiredness, which can affect health. On this basis, it can be concluded that the priorities of the cabin crew lifestyle can be separated into relaxation and recreation/spending time with the family.

### ***Motivation***

The majority of respondents saw travelling as one of their main motives for becoming a cabin crewmember. ‘Travelling is an experience that is unique, and this job provides it.(Interviewee no.1)’ Travelling widens people’s experience; the majority of the respondents agreed that travelling influenced their perceptions, through their seeing different cultures and experiencing different places in the world. There is no doubt that many of the respondents thought this was their dream job, and `had done so since they were young. It still is the dream job of many women, considering the salary they receive(equivalent to a management salary) and the fact that it has a higher social position than other, more routine jobs or those with fixed hours. Some respondents

relate their motivation to environmental or family influences, such as having a relative who works for the airline industry, or its perception as very popular in comparison with other jobs. A high proportion of respondents indicated travelling as their motivation for being part of a cabin crew. As mentioned before, travelling can widen one's personal vision and experience. Cultural differences can also influence one's self-concept. Once the concept of others has shifted, and routine behaviour and performance are established, both in an individual's life and in their social life, any negative concept of certain cultures can be eliminated. Although certain contexts and groups of people may not have the same values, this could still become a significant cross-cultural cognitive revolution, with the right timing and adaptability to circumstances. Another factor in motivation is the influence of social norms: people believe this is a dream job for young graduates, compared with other occupations requiring the same degree and offering the same basic salary. The difference is in terms of flying allowances and travel abroad, which are the dominant factors for young graduates who want to explore the world and earn money at the same time. This dimension reflects an important motive for applying for this work. The motive is to benefit the self. This is an important factor in one's approach to oneself in a cross-cultural dimension, as both the private and the public nature of the job are related to the cross-cultural environment. Thus personal benefits and self-authenticity might influence conflict reduction.

It is an experience that other employees won't have if they are not travellers. You can see different things, eat different food, see different people, see different places, and sometimes see places which are not in a travel guide. Sometimes we see unknown places, even in Thailand. I think this is the reward that we get.(Interviewee 10)

These findings support theories of social psychology as derived from intrinsic motivation. This relates to behavioural outcomes and the desire to connect with others. The job itself provides high rewards and benefits. Again this reflects the face values which apply to Asian culture. According to theorists such as Sheldon et al. (2001), need constructs can create an adaptive performance, which leads to adjustment and personality development. This can lead to feelings of well-being. The weakness is that it can cause one to become money-orientated and materialistic. In any social group (in this case, cabin crew), it can cause competition. In light of these

research findings and the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, more discussion of observational data will be provided in the next chapter. This will subsequently lead us back to the relationship between the three methods and the conceptual framework.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has used data from both interviews and field observations to examine the nature of the airline industry, from which the sample is drawn. It seems that there is considerable consistency in the responses of all 16 cabin crewmembers, which suggests that there is an identifiable structure apparent within the sector, with clear evidence being obtained from the observations and semi-structured interviews.

This translates into there being significant intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for cabin crew seeking work which tends to consistently offer good salaries, rewards and benefits, including travel around the world as well as psychological satisfaction, leading to their having a commitment to their jobs (Fang, 2011). According to my observations, the aircraft environment can influence people's behaviour, which can have an effect on both cabin crew and passengers. The limitations of the aircraft can make passengers feel a loss of control due to many factors such as safety, the seating plan, altitude and so forth. As for cabin crew, the tension between the flight time and having a full complement of passengers can influence their behaviour and conduct. The minimisation of conflict has to be taken into account. This includes adhering to company policy where it concerns passenger satisfaction.

Throughout my observations, positive non-verbal communication was seen as the most important factor. This included posture, smiles, greetings and friendliness. Appearance was also a part of the overall impression. Positive non-verbal communication can have an effect on passengers' impressions (Compton & Hoffman, 2013). In terms of people, the most significant strategic interaction was the 'extra touch'. In my observation, that extra touch could apply to any kind of informal communication. This could make passengers feel they were being welcomed with warmth and hospitality.

My main substantive findings were as follows. Cabin crew who were acting in an informal manner related well to their colleagues and passengers. It follows that if cabin crew are not given adequate training, or opportunities to travel around the world

meeting a variety of people, they may not develop the confidence necessary for social interaction. Moreover, cabin crew tended to be satisfied with their working conditions, and this appeared to be linked to their individual characteristics. These findings are supported by comments and answers derived from semi-structured interviews. Comparing the cabin crew's job with other jobs where the controlling factors are similar, such as hotel jobs, the interview results suggest that cabin crew respondents receive culturally generated higher rewards and benefits.

## CHAPTER NINE

### Discussion

#### Introduction

This chapter examines and investigates national societal factors, in particular Thai national culture, and how they affect the airline sector in Thailand. My research demonstrates a variety of factors that need to be considered in cross-cultural studies. The study implements a broad perspective in terms of culture, gender and the individual in different areas of theory and practice. This chapter will discuss the findings in the previous chapter, which provided an understanding of organisational culture; ideal cabin crewmembers and job characteristics; traditional gender roles; power distance; the competency of adaptability; positive verbal/non-verbal communication; spiritual values and self-reflection; motivations and need satisfaction of the female gender.

There are various possible reasons why this airline ranks the highest in terms of hospitality and interactions with others. One possibility is that there is a causal relationship between behaviour-based policy and individual characteristics. This does not mean that other multinational organisations would not be able to adapt to this kind of process. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that employee attitude to company policy tends to be positive. The most favourable scenario is when company practices closely mirror the model of best practice. The key purpose of this chapter is to understand the issues involved in the organisational process connected with the individual as a part of the national culture. In order to investigate these issues, the research focuses on one single-culture study in the airline environment: the cabin attendant sector. The research is focused on employees' experiences within different age groups, and the adaptation of behaviour to align with a conduct-based policy. It points to the significance of national cultural influences at both individual and organisational levels. The conceptual framework presents the process of national and gender-societal factors (individual output) that have an effect on organisational and individual roles. The aim of the conceptual framework, using a secondary data analysis (policy input), is to provide indications of organisational culture, focusing on behavioural factors (i.e. positive attitude and self-reflection). Additionally, the secondary documentation also supports a consistent behavioural outcome

(organisational) from the aircrew. All of the main factors mentioned are, up to a point, mutually effective. Positive behaviours are mirror images of the interaction between cultural-societal variables and individualised conscious and subconscious cognitive processes, whereas it is conventional that a variety of external moderating variables have an effect on the dynamic environment. Primary factors are investigated using assessment and analysis through a grounded approach. This study contributes to the awareness of the relationship between Thai characteristics and universal human characteristics inherent in Buddhist philosophy. Although the traditional gender role is classified as a soft-side characteristic, universal human characteristics such as kindness, compassion, sympathy, joy and serenity can obviously be practised by either gender.

The outcome of the analysis has shown that a practical implementation of a universal human characteristic can lead to a positive result in cross-cultural management. Moreover, the study's contribution is to reveal that when Asian philosophy and Buddhism are implemented in company policy they bring it closer to the ideal of best practice, and appear to generate a positive response from passengers and a good reaction from the employees themselves. This suggests that there should be considerable company input in both theoretical and practical terms, and that the national culture should also be taken into consideration. The triangulation methodology used in this single-culture study set out to investigate it from three angles: an organisational perspective, an individual perspective and a practical perspective. This allows readers to understand the input and output of cabin crew behaviour regarding the conceptual framework. To remind the reader of the research objectives, the primary and secondary objectives have been identified as follows.

***Primary objectives***

- 1) To investigate how company policy influences employees' behaviour in order to achieve Thai Airways' corporate goals.
- 2) To investigate traditional Thai cultural values and gender characteristics to establish the extent to which Thai aircrews' work appears to be influenced by them.

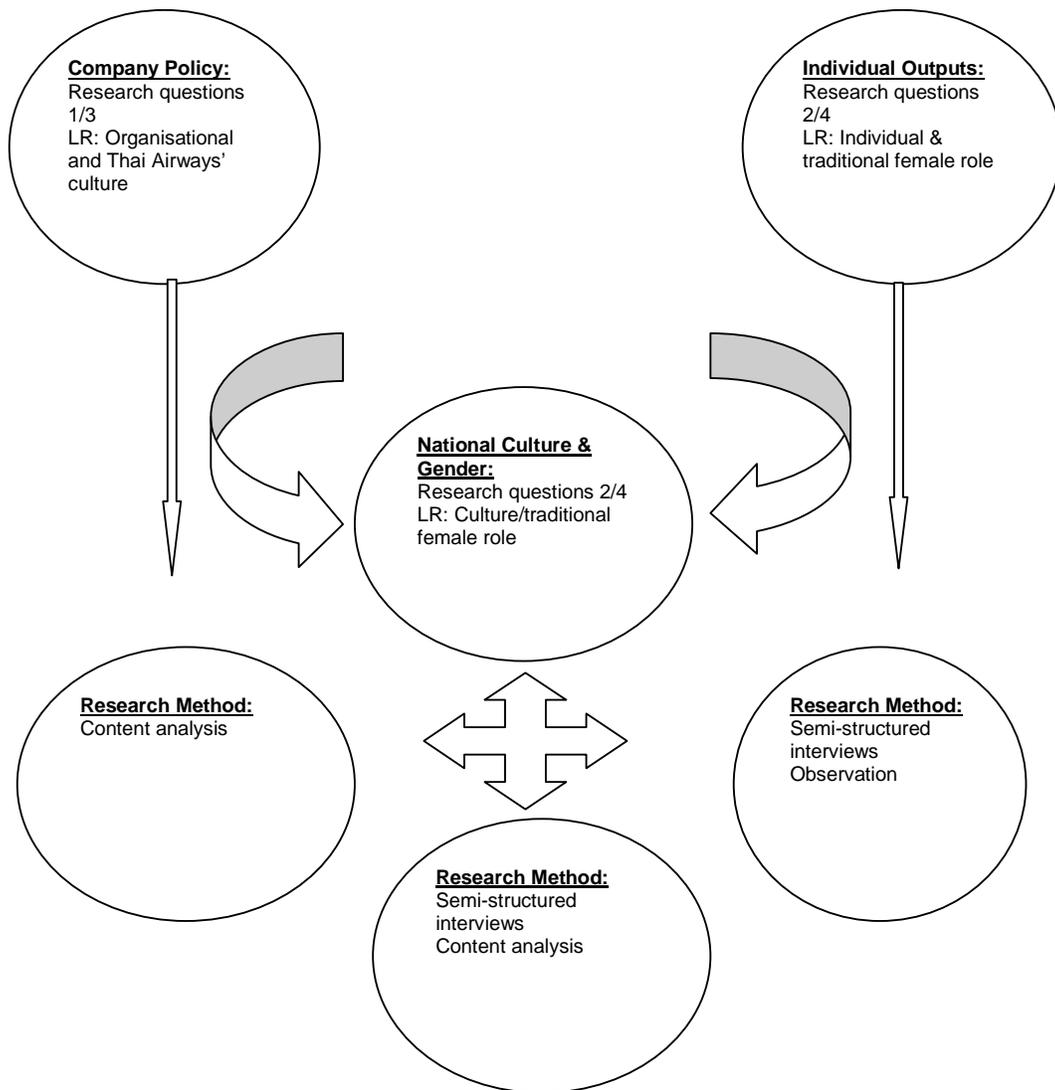
- 3) To investigate the extent to which traditional Thai culture impacts upon organisational culture as expressed in expectations of individual and collective conduct as manifested in company policy.

*Secondary objective*

- 4) To investigate female ego goals as subconsciously related to individual need satisfaction. Thai cabin crew who work in a female environment tend to achieve female ego goals by balancing their career, money and family. Therefore their social and personal wants can fit into their need satisfaction.

A triangulated approach has been used in this research in order to achieve both depth and extensiveness of conceptual understanding, using the triangulation methodology on Thai-specific research. This research considers two perspectives: organisational, and individual interviews. The latter in particular enable readers to understand the input/output of cabin crew behaviour regarding the proposed conceptual framework. In order to illustrate the relationship between the triangulation methodology and the research questions, concept mapping identifies the following areas:

**Figure 9.1: Concept mapping between triangulation methodology and research questions**



To gain a better understanding of the nature of the organisation from this perspective, semi-structured interviews were used, with specific testimony related to the key issues of timing and adaptability, plus the association between cabin crew rotations and their relevant passenger groups. An indication from the grounded approach showed that time was also a key factor in this type of service. This was due to the essentially dynamic environment, where the job functions effectively end as soon as the travel rotation is finished. The concept of a limited rotation is supported by secondary data.

The secondary data makes a clear reference to specific duties. The general principle of this research was to understand more about human interactions as interrelated with the airline sector. Taking the job characteristics into consideration helps to refine the vision and strategic principles in both organisational and individual situations. In operational terms this can help to moderate the tendency for disagreement for the duration of the travel rotation, and to assist conflict reduction.

In the next section the discussion will be outlined. This will give a better understanding of the factors that influence employee behaviour and company policy, traditional gender roles, adaptability, power distance, spirituality, self-reflection and positive verbal and non-verbal communication, which in turn lead to an increased understanding of how cultural variation processes operate in the airline environment. To summarise, a single national culture in the airline sector as a parochial research project can be an example of acculturation, as demonstrated through the triangulation methodology, as follows.

**Research question 1: to investigate how company policy influences employees' behaviour in order to achieve Thai Airways' corporate goals**

Regarding company policy, the research objective is to explore cabin crew behaviour, which is embedded in company policy and could affect performance outcomes. My research has focused on general principles, behaviour and conduct-based policy, passenger contact, attitude, duties and responsibilities, rules and regulations, cooperation, appearance, and the emphasis of company policy. I will now discuss the points that I have discovered.

***Reflection on the factors in the relationship between the employee and company policy***

To reflect on my research, it can be seen that the factors that influence employee behaviour include the organisational hierarchy and the power distance within the organisation, involving national policy, cultural values and the consultative decision-making style. Moreover, the female and individual self also plays a major role in employees' behaviour, as well as in company policy. There are also other factors that influence company policy. These are national policy, social and cultural values, the traditional female gender role and the nature of the job itself.

**Figure 9.2: Relationship between company policy and employee behaviour and conduct**



### ***National policy***

As the national airline, the company represents the Kingdom of Thailand in protecting and augmenting the country's aviation rights, and participates in promoting and developing the tourism industry as a means of generating additional income, both in Thai baht and foreign currencies. The company also encourages its human resources to acquire new skills and attain international standards of professionalism. Thai Airways contributes to the advancement of all types of technology related to the world's commercial aviation industry. Finally, the company aims to play a part in spreading awareness around the

world of the uniqueness of Thai culture, its customs, and traditions. ((Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM)

From a broader perspective, the reinforcement of the national policy to promote the uniqueness of Thai culture makes demands on individual behaviour and conduct. In the company policy it can be seen that any interaction by employees in public view would represent the organisation's and government's attempts to promote the country in the field of tourism, where the airline company is a major part of this service industry. An implied national characteristic has been taken into account.

### ***The influence of social and cultural values***

The influence of social and cultural factors affecting the policy, such as demand and supply of the product, in this case the airline service representing the national culture, has been taken into account. Cabin crew are a key organisational resource and a fundamental part of the service. Accordingly, social and cultural values are seen to influence and to help to develop company policy, which can lead to interaction in cabin crew in terms of surface action. An example of social and cultural values being acted out is the way in which cabin crew treat passengers. Courtesy and respect are embedded in Thai culture (Chompookum & Derr, 2004). Furthermore, it is a common characteristic that Thai people have an ability to keep their thoughts and feelings inside rather than expressing them outwardly (Hofstede et al., 2010). To reflect on my research, the norms established in any given society also affect individuals and reflect the behaviour of the organisation. This can affect the nature of the relationship between an individual and an organisation. According to Hofstede (2001), more collectivistic societies call for a greater emotional dependence of members on their organisations. The level of individualism or collectivism in a society will affect the organisation's members' reasons for complying with organisational requirements. However, within service industries – in this case airlines, where interaction between cabin crew and passengers is the main focus – these reinforcements are also key issues in complying with passengers' requests.

### ***Reflection on the relationship between cabin crew, power distance and authoritarian styles***

The actual power index of 64 from a mean of 57 appears in Hofstede's findings (Hofstede, 2001, p.87). This result is supported by the company policy analysis in this study that there is a high power distance in cabin crew work in Thailand, as shown in the hierarchy of the organisational chart. This implies power, influence, authority and responsiveness from an organisational perspective.

Hofstede's theory has been widely supported (Minkov et al., 2012). My findings demonstrate hierarchy within the organisation, including respect and making passengers feel important. Hofstede's theory of socialisation argues that in countries which contain a high power distance, children are expected to be obedient to their parents throughout childhood. Respect for the elderly is a basic principle of good conduct. This can be related to national cultural characteristics, as the bases of individuality, such as gender norms and religion, are transferred from cultural groups to individuals principally through socialisation during the early years. Moreover, when we talk about power distance, it is obviously important to consider power. According to my findings, power directly affects the use of influence strategies, and might affect the relationship between personal characteristics and the use of influence strategies. By contrast, Gebauer et al. (2010) state that due to the service culture, there is a lack of legitimate, coercive rewards or expert power, so staff may rely on referent power, which means that they will tend to be socially outgoing and friendly to customers. In terms of management implications, the core conduct-based policy of organisational management is separated into the following: paternalistic management style; traditional power related to respect, involving obeying and listening to the superior authority; and bureaucratic/vertical management control. According to Thai Airways, this can be seen in the company policy where there is too much hierarchy in the organisation.

Nonetheless, my interview findings suggest that this benefits passengers, making passengers feel that they are important, and making them feel that they are right. This was also illustrated through the observation that the Thai traditional greeting (bowing) expresses respect, friendliness and a warm welcome: 'Smile often. A nice warm smile is inviting to passengers and immediately instils confidence in them' (Thai

Airways International, 2010, PSM5, p.1). ‘Gentleness, “wai” (greeting in Thai). The personnel are softer than our competing airlines, and stress attention to detail in comparison to our competition’ (Interviewee 6).

### ***Reflection on company policy and female gender role***

The relationship between traditional gender roles and cabin crew conduct is emphasised frequently in the company manuals. The majority of reactions are related to a positive attitude, which leads to positive interaction, including self-analysis, which implies self-reflection. An emphasis on the female gender role appears to account for the first and last impressions the cabin crew make on passengers ‘Make eye contact, smile in every action with passengers. Display courtesy and sincerity without being overly attentive. Offer a sincere greeting smile, in a warm and friendly manner. Be genuine, give a wai and personally thank passengers. Perform assignments in a proper manner’ (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM, p.3).

It can clearly be seen that authenticity by its very nature must be genuine. The focus of the policy is reinforced by positive self-reflection. This is a nod to South-East Asian philosophy, where relativism is related to the mirror image. The Asian point of view is that one should look upwards as well as towards others. The Buddhist religion is related to this philosophy. This Eastern emphasis is focused on by the company policy in terms of having a positive attitude towards everything related to the company itself. The idea of showing respect to others is related to the collectivism of Asian culture.

### ***Reflection on the nature of the job***

The cabin crew’s job can suit a female gender role, where the nature of the job is to engender a nurturing environment (Hochschild, 2012). The combination of the female gender and this job characteristic was found to be a key issue within the organisational environment. My findings and policy analysis reveal three major factors for managerial focus:

- 1) Emotions and attitude;
- 2) Practical issues such as behaviour and conduct, duties and responsibilities;
- 3) Regularities.

However, my research focuses on emotions and attitudes, which can be linked to deep and surface acting. Therefore the relationship between practicalities and regularities is taken into account.

### ***Reflection on company policy in relation to spirituality/internalisation***

These elements are used by the airline to differentiate its service quality from that of its competitors. It is of particular interest when cabin crew make explicit reference to Thai national identity, tradition and culture. Moreover, the three elements – which are internalisation, positive verbal/non-verbal communication and company strategy – can be used in the airline and hospitality industry. Internalisation implies beliefs, attitudes and values, which in turn are a reflection of spirituality, whereas positive verbal and non-verbal communication can be adapted to other organisations.

### ***Positive attitude, self-reflection and policy***

‘There is a training course which teaches positive thinking when handling passengers and this reflects in real life experience as when passengers become aggressive or assertive, they immediately respond to our positive approach’ (Interviewee 5). My triangulation findings reveal that self-reflection is concerned with self-analysis. This includes positive thinking and positive non-verbal communication. According to Compton and Hoffman (2013), the supportive role of positive thinking is now applied to many industries, and this can be referred to positive psychology. Arguably, although positive thinking and self-reflection are considered to be good practice, the negative side is that they can cause depression for those practising them. They may not be able to maintain positive thinking and self-reflection for more than a certain period of time (Compton & Hoffman, 2013). Hence this refers to time factors and job characteristics, which include the job being completed when the flight is over. The policy documentation provides an indication of a concentration for individuals on historical Thai beliefs and values, where social appreciation is immersed in collectivistic values. If such values were taken into account there could be considerable human and financial benefits, predominantly for airline organisations’ productivity and profitability. Therefore, utilising employees’ behaviour efficiently, as evidenced by the interview data, can be seen as a reinforcement of company policy, as there is a basic notion of embedding social recognition, based in part on historical philosophy.

According to the secondary data, self-analysis is correlated with self-reflection, where it acts as both a mirror of the self and a means of increasing performance effectiveness: 'Staff should analyse how they approach passengers and ask themselves if they would wish to be treated in that manner ...Self-analysis is the best way to improve our communication'(Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM, p.8). It can be seen from the observational data that positive non-verbal communication and gentle mannerisms are embedded in the cabin crew psyche, where the 'extra touch' represents an element of self-reflection. Such care and concern is also reflected in the semi-structured interviews and secondary data. My findings demonstrate a level of truth in the statement that employees' policy-based positive attitude and self-reflection are manifested in practical conduct (Sumedho, 2014).

In relation to this reinforcement, positive attitude and self-reflection are the opposing force to negative attitudes and negative self-concepts. From an Asian sociocultural perspective, people are thought to have both a dark side and a light side, which implies potential conflict (Sumedho, 2014). However, self-reflection can be brought into play as a conflict-reducing and harmony-increasing strategy. My research rests on the argument that the nature of the airline business is mostly concerned with human interaction and profit for the organisation, and individual social competency is an important factor in moderating passenger satisfaction. Moreover, the organisational drivers of individual behaviour and conduct are enhancers of positive self-reaction, and self-construal drivers of individual behaviour and conduct are enhancers of positive self-reaction(Markus & Kitayama, 2010).

It is acknowledged that training procedures may act as facilitators and reinforcers of on-duty behaviour. These positive reactions are embedded in cabin crew responses. The belief that two opposite forces can reduce conflict is applied in practice. If passengers display a negative reaction, cabin crew deflect them into having a positive reaction. This can reduce an intensely negative feeling and change it into a better one. Effectively, negative passenger interaction, when exposed to positive cabin crew interaction, results in a positive performance outcome.

### ***Positive verbal/non-verbal communication***

Regarding positive verbal/non-verbal communication, my semi-structured interview data indicates that positive behaviour is related to the frequency of behavioural experience. This is where behaviour becomes a regular positive action, as well as a personal characteristic governed by a time dimension. This behavioural experience can be construed as positive interaction, based in part on company policy underpinning and emphasising personal characteristics and behaviour: ‘Remember passengers’ names during a conversation. This gives the passenger a feeling of importance’ (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM5, p.2).

There are many theories concerning verbal/ non-verbal communication, such as that of Freitas-Magalhães(2009). His theory suggests that smiles replicate positive surface acting, which is considered a foundation of emotion. In contrast, differential emotion theory does not describe emotion in terms of perception variables. To a certain extent, emotions are feelings and expressions that may result from the recognition of particular physical features of a stimulus, as well as from perception or obligatory meaning (*Jurgen&Kees, 2014*). Overall, this also includes the traditional gender role as a part of positive non-verbal communication, as it deals with the ‘extra touch’, which implies informal non-verbal communication to make passengers feel important. My results reveal a consistency of positive self-presentation such as positive non-verbal communication. The Thai greeting is met with positive reactions, according to my observational data, and this can be related to the existing idea of the self in different situations, dealing with varied passengers and different cultures. This is a result of a consistent emphasis on both policy and individual characteristics. Furthermore, the emphasised and embedded company policy concerning the ‘Thai touch’ and non-verbal communication centres on mannerisms such as smiling, gentleness and amenable behaviour, making passengers feel that they are important, that they are being well cared for, and that the staff do not say ‘no’ lightly.

Once you step onto the plane, there are two cabin crewmembers greeting passengers with a smile and wearing Thai traditional dresses made from silk. Their first welcome is a smile and ‘wai’, which is the traditional Thai greeting, made by putting your hands together, and bowing with respect. Once I receive this warm welcome, I smile. (Observation: London–Bangkok)

In terms of non-verbal communication, emotional expressions and the suppression of negative feelings are major considerations. Positive feelings need emphasis reinforcement, including communication. In Thai national culture, a positive expression is the norm (Komin,1990), which in turn is a reflection of positive non-verbal behaviour. The balance of internal, inner experience and intention is related to national cultural values, where it is taught as self-reflection, which fits in with evoking responses in others (Ajahn, 2014). Cabin crew are considered to have genuine smiles (according to the results of the Best Cabin Crew Award). Their communication style refers to a social context where numerous social interactions are involved. Early experience that is the norm in both national culture and self-regulation leads to emotions which affect attitudes. How can cabin crewmembers' attitudes lead to positive emotions? A composite of the job's dynamic environment and the 'let go' normally results in positive emotions. However, emotional bias and ideological bias can occur once the job has become routine. Cultural norms and values manipulate people's styles of expressiveness (Thomas & Peterson, 2015). Cultural and ethnic groups that appreciate expressiveness would usually consist of people who are more communicative, compared with people in cultural groups that are slow to recognise expressiveness (Ekman, 2008). Cabin crews' intrinsic motivation links directly to social psychology and leisure contact, which in turn lead to behaviour outcomes. Cabin crews' intrinsic motivation is also related to the competency of adaptability (in relation to others).

**Research question 2: to investigate cultural values and gender characteristics to establish the extent to which Thai aircrew's work appears to be influenced by them**

To reflect on cultural values and gender characteristics, drawing on my semi-structured interview results, the objective is to explore the individual self, which is related to consistency of behaviour and conduct-based policy, and to investigate the relationship between individual self-construal output, the traditional gender role and performance outcomes. My research focuses on Asian cultural factors, positive attitudes and self-reflection, the traditional gender role, motivation and need satisfaction. A discussion of my findings follows.

### *Adaptability competency/common sense*

The theory of adaptability competency and common sense is related to emotional competence by Goleman (2015), and to emotional labour by Hochschild (2012), where definitions developed for the emotional competence framework are separated into self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Goleman states that interaction with others depends on levels of interpersonal perceptiveness and skill. Hochschild also states that people who are aware of the emotions of others tend to be social and to associate well with others (Hochschild, 2012). This is supported by the company policy that crew should be tactful and diplomatic, listen attentively to passengers' problems, maintain impartiality, and be friendly but businesslike. Furthermore, my semi-structured interview data confirmed the importance of understanding human beings and the characteristics of different nationalities, understanding people, knowing how to deal, speak and associate with people from different countries, and knowing how to solve problems using commonsense. Above all, positive non-verbal communication such as the 'extra touch' (personal touch) also emerged in my observational data.

Whilst walking through the cabin, they kept smiling all the time, even with their eyes. If passengers stopped them, they would bow slightly and listen to what they had to say. (Observation: London–Bangkok–London)

Cabin crew should maintain a friendly but businesslike attitude towards passengers and show alertness and initiative by acting on suggestions and helping to remedy complaints. (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM, p.5)

In terms of adaptability, cabin crew are capable of handling demands efficiently. They can alter priorities and adapt their responses and strategies to fit different situations, and they are also able to be adaptable in the way they see situations (Hochschild, 2012). My results suggest that adaptability is one of the major characteristics of cabin crewmembers, because they have to adapt to passengers from around the world, and also to their colleagues because their working schedules are rotated and flexible. Also their everyday lives have to be flexible, as they work variable shifts and thus have different working hours to their colleagues. Analysis of the secondary documentation has revealed the importance of procedures and routines, which are clearly identified. The documentation contains all the information involving the flight rotations.

Examples that illustrate the competency of adaptability are integrated into this documentation, including being tactful, diplomatic, friendly and ‘businesslike’, and only making considered responses to customer comments. These examples also provided the basis of my coding to analyse the interviews and observational data.

It has been proposed that adaptability is self-analysing, and self-reflection is effectively mirroring the self (Goleman, 2015; Hochschild, 2012). The following data extract exemplifies such self-awareness: ‘[Crew] should analyse how they approach passengers and ask themselves if they would wish to be treated in that manner’ (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM, p.6).

Another example of adaptability, again drawn from secondary documentation, is ‘passenger contact’ where adaptability is required. By the nature of the business, job functions are to an extent variable by flight and affected by the degree of positive non-verbal communication. Such positive non-verbal communication, both subconsciously and consciously, is partially based on flight schedules, destinations and rosters. Moreover, cabin crewmembers and passengers obviously differ from flight to flight. By implication, there is an inherent degree of human irregularity. My observational data shows that each flight accommodates a different group of passengers and different crewmembers. During the interactive process, for the cabin crew in particular, there will need to be a significant competency of adaptability.

It is different in terms of our way of life, don’t you think so? The job characteristics are also different, especially the times, as we have less sleep. People who work office hours have fixed times, working from 7am until 4.30pm. But we have to adjust our times. When most people are asleep, we have to go out to work. (Interviewee 5)

### ***Implications of South-East Asian culture***

In Thailand there is a propensity to look at organisational configurations (teams, relationships between customers and providers) in familial terms. This is a tendency throughout the East, and can be found in South-East Asia in general. The findings derived from my triangulation methodology suggest an East Asian self-construal, which is based on the need for relatedness, that is, an interdependent self-construal. Havitz and Mannell (2005) support the social-psychological idea that the specific

nature of the self-concept depends on the given culture. This theory is similar to Markus and Kitayama's theory (2010) of the interdependent self, where self-construal implies the ability to relate to others. My own interview data reveal that crewmembers relate to passengers in terms of family relationships –relatives, sisters, brothers. This includes treating passengers courteously and with respect, in recognition of the passenger as an individual, and with respect according to company policy. This was also apparent in observational data regarding respectful demeanour, bowing and listening.

Treat passengers courteously and with respect in recognition of the passenger as an individual. (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM5, p.2)

All cabin crew wore Thai dresses which were made from Thai silk. They all had smiles on their faces and greeted passengers in the Thai traditional way, which is called 'wai'. Their make-up gave them a professional appearance, and matched their dresses. Their posture as they performed the Thai greeting was soft and gentle, including the warmth of their smiles. (Observation, Bangkok–London)

Cabin crew's framing of passengers in terms of family relationships, responding to them as if they were family members, is appropriate to the service industry. It creates an informal relationship with customers, while friendliness and the 'extra touch', as well as showing respect and listening to customers, can create a first impression. Arguably, these perceptions of the passenger-cabin crew relationship or informal relationships can cause a problem with the management's decision-making style. If employees approach superiors in an informal or relativistic way, it can result in unequal judgement or biased perception. At the same time, the notion that cabin crew frame passengers in terms of family relationships and respond to them as if they were family members can cause inequalities in recruitment and selection, as it can lead to a tendency to select people who are known within the organisation, rather than on the basis of their work performance. Thus it can create a culture where, if a person is to be selected, they have to know someone inside the organisation first. Overall, this might have an effect on work performance, and on ways of managing people within the organisation, as well as on performance appraisals, which might create complications in terms of promotions. The system might gain a reputation as one in

which who you know is more important than you work performance. Overall, this would have a negative effect on HR practice in terms of recruitment, selection and performance appraisal (Komin, 1990).

As mentioned earlier, South-East Asian culture has a lot of impact on employee behaviour, in such actions as listening, keeping things inside and working towards a positive behavioural outcome, thus reducing conflict with passengers. This is in line with Hofstede's theory that the country's people are more concerned with others than themselves (Minkov et al., 2012). Moreover, my findings also support Cooper's claim (2005) regarding Thai people. He states that, from young children to adults, Thai people learn respect by behaving in a way that demonstrates consideration for others' feelings, obedience, humility, politeness and respect: 'Primarily, Thai C/As are taught since early childhood not to become violently and emotionally involved, because this measure can only cause further despair' (Interviewee 10). On the negative side, my findings also suggest that this can imply a passive personality when feelings are suppressed. Listening to passengers without responding can cause depression in cabin crew if they are not able to learn how to let go of the negative, and this can cause emotional burnout (Hochschild, 2012).

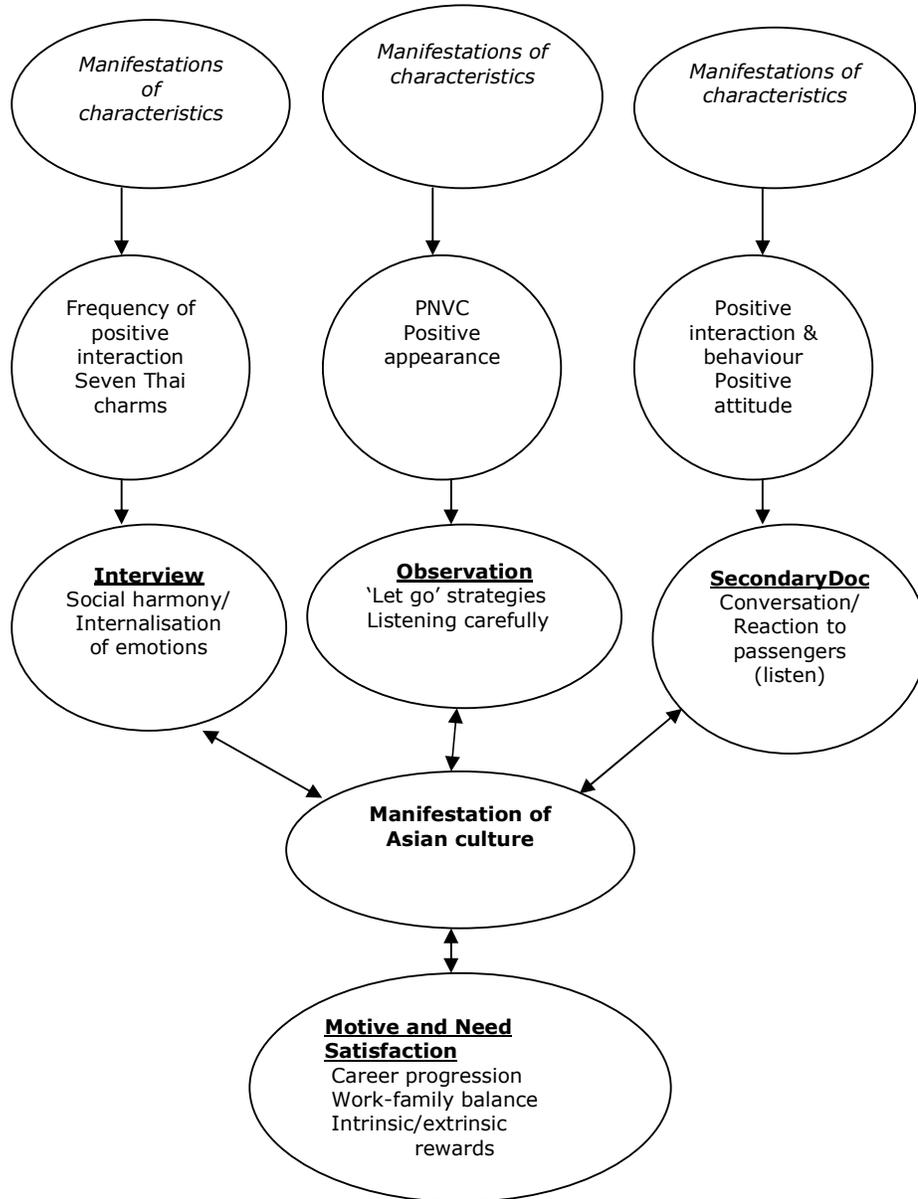
Hence I would argue that the use of women's traditional role will not always be positive; it can lead to a negative result in terms of a passive personality and acquiescent style. When it comes to management decisions, it can also cause ambiguity in decision-making, as no one will be able to decide definitively in a diverse environment where there is a mixture of high and low power distances (Smith et al., 2015). In contrast, the traditional women's role and personality can cause a problem when women enter management positions. This might be an interesting point for future research investigating passive personality traits and power management. This can have an effect on HR practice in terms of recruitment and selection, as too much passivity causing negative side effects might result in HR having to be more concerned with cabin crew personality, needing staff to be neither too passive nor too assertive. Thus although this personality type can fit well within the service industry, it can also cause problems in terms of management. Firstly, career progression to management level might be problematic, in terms of critical thinking or not being able to share ideas with others. Secondly, the passive personality can create problems for decision-making or leadership style (Komin, 1990). Thirdly, career progression might

be limited. Cabin crew who progress to senior levels may be able to work in the First Class service area, but not to progress any higher than that. This might hinder crewmembers when trying to find other work away from the service industry. The associated high rewards and benefits that they had been receiving might make it difficult for them to find any jobs elsewhere.

My review in Chapters Two and Three of literature on cultural theory identified various themes with a cultural focus, and introduced the nature of South-East Asian culture. Thai social harmony is a part of an ancient philosophy which is reflected in contemporary social behaviour, in which internalising emotion is encouraged under certain circumstances (Nuttavuthisit, 2007). This is supported by the semi-structured interview data. The majority of respondents agreed that internalised emotion is suitable for cabin crew work. A level of social interaction is inherent in the job, although the level of genuine interaction may vary, given different national cultures. The respondents agreed that social skills are very significant to the service industry, and in particular to the airline sector. The results also demonstrate that the competency of adaptability is underpinned by the social skills needed to function sufficiently within a generally collectivistic culture. The secondary document analysis offers examples of collectivistic philosophy relating to Asian culture. For example, in the secondary data coding 'Must LISTEN', the term 'listen' obviously identifies the role of the female from an Asian perspective, where the wife has to listen to the husband because he is the main source of income, and the Asian perspective of people having to keep feelings inside (Nisbett, 2004). The approach of expressing interest in passengers' problems reflects a capability for good communication and manifests productive interaction skills (Nisbett, 2004): 'Conversation carries on quietly and discreetly, avoiding loud laughter and boisterous discussion.' (Thai Airways International, 2010). A consideration of Asian values and beliefs is emphasised through the company policy documentation. The phrase 'quietly and discreetly' implies a concealing of emotion, as mentioned before. Extrovert non-verbal communication, such as loud laughter, is not in concurrence with the Thai female's superficial social characteristics (Nuttavuthisit, 2007). Women are considered to be introverted and are socially expected to emotionalise internally. This is anticipated as a mirror image of the policy-emphasised traditional gender role.

From Nisbett (2004) and others, It has been found that there is a relative lack of externalised emotions in South-East Asian cultures. In practical terms, if there is a request from a passenger, the first response is to 'listen carefully'(according to my observational data).In addition, this implies a high level of respect. Also, observable evidence such as gestures, facial expressions and smiling demonstrate a positive reaction. This is one example of South-East Asian culture, where cabin crew are encouraged to listen and think before giving any response to passengers. The implications of South-East Asian culture are illustrated in the diagram below.

**Figure 9.3: Implications of South-East Asian culture**



***National cultural values***

In terms of a national cultural perspective, the cabin crew’s work structuring and coordination helps to achieve a balance by putting individual tasks into a position where they fit into the work system. One’s career depends on individual progress, and there must be a balance between individual needs and those of the national culture (Smith et al., 2013). This supports research objective 3, i.e. to investigate the relationship between the individual output (traditional women’s role). It also supports

objective 4, i.e. the performance outcome, and exploring the relationship between cultural and gender factors, which can identify a framework for future research and which has an effect on operational management. The results show a significant relationship between behavioural interactions and work structuring, as well as with the career system that is needed to bring them together (French, 2015). The balancing of the individual and work structuring that is the norm in the national culture also supports research objectives 1 and 2 in terms of company behaviour and conduct-based policy.

Hofstede (2001) and Smith et al. (2013) raise the emerging question among cross-cultural psychologists as to whether any attention should be paid to characterising nations rather than individuals. Nevertheless, responses at the individual level should be considered in relation to nation-level beliefs and values. The psychology of culture as an academic notion is concerned with individuals in a controlled and basic environment, where researchers can study the influence of experimental manipulations such as individual self-construal, which is the ability to relate to others (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). To reflect on my research, for example, individuals have a specific type of culturally characteristic self-construal or set of values; thus, experimenting with subsequent effects can help us to understand cultural differences in specific self-construals or values at the individual level (Hofstede, 2001). It is essential to find different ways of considering possible environmental effects, treating individuals' cultural adaptations and behaviours as dependent processes where nation-level studies provide such an alternative. This is supported by my research objectives, which set out to investigate a national culture that might influence individual and organisational behaviour. Thai cultural variables consist of interdependent self-concepts and external attributions. Furthermore, cultural variables consist of psychological and sociological variables, where thought, feelings and behaviour are concerned (Markus & Kitayama, 2010).

### ***Traditional gender role and the implications of gender characteristics***

The connection between the traditional gender role and cabin crew conduct is emphasised regularly in the policy. The majority of reactions are related to a positive attitude, which leads to positive interaction, as well as to self-analysis, which implies self-reflection. The emphasis on the traditional gender role appears to be the first and

last impression given to passengers. Self-construal as a concept can be expressed through positive non-verbal communication. In my observational data, positive reactions, including non-verbal communication, were continuously identified:

Once you step onto the plane, there are two cabin crewmembers greeting passengers with a smile and wearing traditional Thai clothes, made of silk. Their first greeting is a smile and 'wai', which is the traditional Thai greeting. The hands are put together and one bows with respect. Once I see a warm welcome and a smiling face, I smile back. (Observation)

Examples of positive non-verbal communication include displays of respect (bowing) and friendliness (smiling). My semi-structured interview data demonstrates the idea that a genuine smile is one where, in lay terms, the smile reaches the eyes. As part of traditional gender values and beliefs, passive listening is also a key element of the perceived South-East Asian cultural capability of keeping feelings inside and listening carefully to others. There is a consequent power-based interaction. As it is understood that in this interaction it is the passenger who holds legitimate power, then by implication, due to both regulations and the national culture, cabin crew are encouraged to show respect through behaviour such as bowing (Cooper, 2005). Operationally it can be argued that an effect of such behaviour is to decrease any conflict and, possibly more importantly, to generate a productive first impression. It may be argued the latter was a cause behind the company's cabin crew being voted among the top ten best cabin staff in 2006–2012 (Skytrax, 2009–2012). This partly reflects the national culture, where it is the norm for individuals to show consideration to others, particularly to people whom they consider important. Again, there is an implication that a relationship exists with legitimate power, because behind the scenes cabin crew evaluate passengers as important people to be treated with great respect and care. However, Nisbett (2004) suggests that the social structures and sense of self that are characteristic of Easterners fit in with their belief systems and cognitive processes. Easterners are connected to collectivism, i.e. the village and the family (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). They are less concerned with issues of control over others or the environment, and more with self-control. Within the social group, any form of confrontation or disagreement is discouraged, such as arguments or debates (Komin, 1990).

To evaluate the concept of the traditional gender role, semi-structured interviews were used to draw out the data. The connection between the self-construal framework and company inputs was outlined earlier. I found that the connection between these factors was also related to the performance-based airline objectives, where Thailand was nominated as having the best cabin staff in the world in 2006 (Skytrax, 2009). Additionally, individual characteristics also form an elemental part of the model. This may be considered from a multinational perspective. On the other hand, in the case of this research, the targeted culture was implicitly that of Thailand. The traditional gender role forms part of an ideal interaction, partly based on cultural background and the fundamentals of company policy documentation. The research results demonstrate that cultural collectivism is an important part of any interaction with social groups, as is relativism, which is an important part of strategic interactions between cabin crew and passengers.

...Should have human relations such as when we talk with passengers while we are serving, it will be a great trip. But the majority cannot do that. If we can do it, it will be great. Such as asking an aunty whether she is going on holiday or why she's travelling by herself. It is called extra touch. But you have to understand that sometimes, when we are on duty, it is very busy. And we would not be in the mood to talk to passengers. Because we have to serve coffee, and so forth, just think this way. If we think a little bit that we are going to talk to passengers, it could lead to higher passenger satisfaction. (Interviewee1)

According to the semi-structured interview data, in terms of personality traits, there is arguably no personality adjustment needed with reference to authentic traditional gender roles and non-verbal communication. This self-identification is connected to positive reactions and positive thinking. At a macro level, self-identification can be formed through social standards, where the beliefs and values of national cultures and social norms are clearly defined. This can be referred to as geography of thought (Nisbett, 2004), where peer and local sociocultural environmental factors are moderating influences. On an individual level, one's personal character will affect one's self-presentation, which in turn will have an impact on the job characteristics. This research considers the traditional gender role or soft-side characteristics as an individual self-construal characteristic (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). Theoretically,

secondary data from company policy focuses on a natural self-presentation, which relates to positive self-concepts and a positive attitude at the individual level. In practical terms, part of the pre-flight briefing instils and reinforces the expected positive behaviour as stipulated in the secondary documentation. This, therefore, is an effect of company reinforcement. In addition, the secondary document also relates to the concept of self and the national culture, through operational behaviour and conduct. Data analysis is inconclusive as to what may be described as the authentic self. The authentic self may be defined as a natural, spontaneous and subconscious manifestation of the self, based on the individual's prevailing national-cultural norms (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). Elements from both the primary (semi-structured interviews) and secondary data support the application of Thai culture-based behaviour coding indicators, such as 'smiling' and other indications of 'hospitality'. The following extract illustrates the concept of hospitality from a Thai perspective. It is helpful to presume that this may be different from a Western airline's operational philosophy, and this in turn is proposed as a prospective subject for later research.

The self-reflection we practise leads to sympathy for others, for which there is no word in the English dictionary. Foreigners (fa-rang) do not understand the word nam-jai (sympathy). They would think that sympathy alone is enough, and you don't have to offer more than this, but we would feel that it's not enough. We feel we should give more. Anything we can do to help, we should, whilst not expecting anything in return. This is our Thai kindness, which is different from the Japanese way of being considerate of others' feelings. The Japanese are under pressure not to express feelings. They do things in accordance with duty, in the manner of their society, and do not express their emotions. But we have this thing called Thai charm, and a sincere smile. One other asset we have is that we easily forget slights, easily forgive, even if we feel very angry at the time. If the other side finally feels satisfied, we will feel happy again. If they don't feel angry anymore, we will be glad. We are not easily offended. This is one of the points that passengers like, we smile and are cheerful, even if we do not speak good English, as we have this strength, which is Thai charm. (Interviewee 10)

Certain characteristics, such as friendliness, genuine cheerfulness and smiling, may be perceived as related to the term 'hospitality'. Such a connection may in turn be

perceived to represent Thailand's national image. 'Thailand is the land of the smile' (Welty, 2005, p.52). Mannerisms and behaviour have to be genuine, without crew being overly attentive. This suggests heartfelt authenticity. This idea is related to the concept of traditional gender-role 'authenticity', identified from my semi-structured interview analysis. Such characteristics may also be related to the concept of the traditional gender role, by implication including non-verbal communication. Moreover, a reinforcement of the traditional gender role occurs through regularly repeated behaviour and conduct. Reinforcement is an element identified by coding terms such as 'courtesy', 'sincerity' and 'attentiveness'. In my observational data, examples of the traditional gender role are shown in positive non-verbal communication, such as smiling, bowing, paying respect, greeting and so on.

My study has revealed that an environmental effect influences cabin crewmembers' behaviour with their peers and colleagues. This goes to research question 3 regarding the individual and their ability to relate to others (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). As a result of the self-construal, positive thinking and self-reflection are utilised in order to create the competency of adaptability when dealing with others (Goleman, 2015). This competency is a result of cultural norms and beliefs, which are adapted through psychological principles. Moreover, this type of job is female-dominated, which can be reflected in social interactions considered to be beneficial in a cross-cultural environment and in a self-construal investigation (Plault et al., 2012). This is supported by literature reviewed in the gender chapter. In fact, women are more likely to be expected to be front-line service providers who support the customer, and real-life customer experiences suggest that gender stereotypes are integrated into customer expectations regarding good service (Hall, 1993). Arguably, women are socialised to make the most of the interpersonal aspects of their relationships, therefore contributing an important part of the process (Mattila et al., 2003).

As indicated in my literature review, service work is characterised by an organisational expectation that demands the 'display of good cheer and the skilled utterances of those providing social amenities' (Mattila et al., 2003, p. 25), regardless of whether these expressions specify the actual feelings of service employees (Kim et al., 2011). To reflect on this, focusing on manifest emotions is important because customers use these emotional hints in evaluating service quality. Previous work shows that customers tend to be more content with service interactions when

employees express positive emotions (Kim et al., 2011). The environment, face value and collectivism (concern for others) are the norm for the staff. Face value also plays an important role in Thai society (Nuttavuthisit, 2007).

Working as cabin crew is a respected and preferred job for females who have finished their undergraduate studies and would like to explore the world. On the basis of my findings and analyses, the age range has been classified into three categories. First there is the group beginning their working life (20–30s) who still enjoy experiencing different parts of the world; second, the middle-aged ranges (30–40s), who usually have started their own families. Both age ranges are beginning to struggle to balance work, money and family, and some cabin crew swap international duties for domestic duties in order to spend more time with their family. Thirdly, there is the more senior age (over-40s), who might be starting either to become management staff or to gain higher positions within the service sector such as First Class cabin crew. This categorisation is supported by Bergman and Gilberg (2015) regarding age groups.

To reflect on women's role, in terms of women's traditional role, the airline sector has a gender-based expectation (Mattila et al., 2003), where the job requires positive emotions and emotional intelligence such as adaptability. My study has provided some evidence to suggest that, although the airline industry is an aesthetic organisation (Tyler & Abbott, 1998) and represents the social-historical symbolism of females from different perspectives, cross-cultural issues should be considered as an example of social relationships and social interaction when considering the airline as a case study. This is a result of women's traditional role being part of service recovery, due to actions designed and implemented to give a positive impression to customers in the airline industry, as passengers' expectations need positive feedback. The real time of this service is dynamic (Albrecht & Zemke, 1990). Cabin crew have the adaptability to control unforeseen external factors and to cope with them (Hochschild, 2012). Passenger expectations are high and people-oriented because of the high power distance, which leads to a high standard of service in the airline industry.

My research also shows that in terms of personal competence, cabin crew are considered to have a drive and commitment to achieve, whereas self-awareness and self-regulation are considered to be a part of personal competence according to Goleman (2015). Crewmembers have to have high responsibility in terms of social

awareness and social skills, especially adaptability (Hochschild, 2012). Service organisations might include emotional intelligence or emotional expressiveness as a principle in the employee selection process, or as a key element in customer service training (Mattila et al., 2003). Such training programmes would provide improvements in employees' recognition of their own service roles, including a greater internalisation of rules of occupational display (Mattila et al., 2003). It is also important to consider cross-cultural issues. The role of culture is necessary in determining customer perceptions as an affective manifestation (Kitayama et al., 2006). South-East Asian cultures usually conceal the expression of emotions in public (Nisbett, 2009); as a result, the variety of satisfactory emotional manifestations might be considerably smaller in Asian than in Western workplaces. However, the degree of differences in gender roles amongst cultures might account for any gender-based differences.

**Research question 3: to what extent do spirituality and traditional Thai culture interact with organisational culture, and to what extent is behaviour and conduct-based policy related to spirituality and traditional Thai values?**

*Reflection on 'let go'/spiritual values*

The 'let go' is the ability to dismiss negative thoughts (Ajahn, 2014). It is a part of spiritual values. It is not new, but it can be used and applied to passengers, customers and/or colleagues in an organisation. It has been taught as a religious perception of some social groups at an individual level. The concept of 'let go' is having an awareness of what is happening and being able to dismiss it, as it is believed that everything is impermanent (Ajahn, 2014). When we expect something and do not get it, there is pain or negativity, which creates despair. The concept of impermanence is similar to that of the dynamic circumstances within an airline organisation. In Buddhist terms, 'let go' is related to the intuitive awareness of impermanence. It is trying to rid the mind of something which is controlling it. It is an ability to see the way things really are. People obsess about all kinds of problems, with doubts, anger, vindictiveness, jealousy, fear, dullness and stupidity as the emotional outcome. These emotions of obsessive minds cause the pain that leads to difficulties in life. It is believed that this continues as long as the mind is obsessed with facts, symbols and

conventions. In practical terms, the understanding that things are impermanent by nature should be applied (Taylor, 2012).

The theory behind 'let go' is that if people fill their minds with too many concepts and opinions, it creates more doubt and hesitation. The way to practice 'let go' is through learning how to empty the mind, and then fill it with values which can lead to a great deal of wisdom (Ajahn, 2011). Again, in Buddhist terms, if you are going to identify with anything, do not identify with mortal conditions. Investigate the mind by considering the nature of thought, memory and sense consciousness, and by being aware of impermanent conditions (Ajahn, 2014). Bring to awareness bodily sensations, investigate pain and consider it as a moving energy, a changing condition, considering all kinds of emotions as illusions. Moreover, an understanding of others should be nurtured, not judging the world according to some standard that we expect. The way we see the world should be that experiences come and go, right and wrong as well as good and bad, with various degrees of intensity (Taylor, 2012). If we compare the 'let go' in Buddhism with psychology, there are some similarities. In psychological terms, Compton and Hoffman (2013) talk about adaptation, which keeps people from being overwhelmed by the external stimuli that create sensations and feelings. They mention that adaptation makes people sensitive to changes in the environment, where survival needs to be accomplished. From my point of view, the relevant 'let go' is one dealing with emotion. Compton and Hoffman (2013) mention that the word 'emotion' has the same basis as the word 'motion', implying that emotion moves through us and drives us. It has a beginning and an end.

In Buddhist terms, we have already mentioned intuitive awareness. However, in psychological terms, psychologists always describe consciousness as the awareness of one's current environment, and psychological awareness is similar to consciousness (Taylor, 2012). It is very interesting that there are similar religious and psychological terms, such as when something happens, we say we have to bring it to our attention. Hershock (2006) defines consciousness as an engagement with something mystifying. However, in Buddhist terms, the belief in impermanence or uncertainty is a focus (Ajahn, 2011). Buddhists believe in cause and effect, which is one of nature's rules. Natural laws establish a connection between the past, present and future. This becomes the result of mind and body interaction. What we thought in the past, even

just one minute ago, will have an effect on the present, and the present thought or action is projected into future thought and action (Taylor, 2012).

In order to understand the interaction of the central factors, and in particular the relationship of human participation with the theoretical model proposed, a variety of service characteristics may be considered as related to the travel rotation. Albrecht and Zemke (1990) explain the idea of service as a product, and outline its characteristics. It is produced at the instant of delivery, and it cannot be centrally produced, inspected or warehoused. The product cannot be demonstrated, nor can a sample be sent for customer approval in advance of the service. The person receiving the service has nothing tangible: the value of the service depends on the recipient's personal experience, and the experience cannot be sold or passed on to a third party. Moreover, if the service is improperly performed, it cannot be recalled. It cannot be repeated: reparations or apologies are the only means of recourse for customer satisfaction, and quality assurance must happen before rather than after production, because the delivery of service requires human interaction, and the receiver's expectations of the service are integral to his or her satisfaction with the outcome.

These factors indicate some characteristics which are related to this research. The characteristics proceed as a part of the analytical framework and also enhance the theoretical foundation of the research. According to my research results, the proportion of adaptability is at its highest when used with common sense in solving a problem in a certain situation, and with the 'let go'. Personal characteristics such as being friendly, pleasant, cheerful, thoughtful, in a good mood and amenable are slightly less related than common sense when compared with personality and self-possession. It must be realised that other factors, such as the observational abilities of the aircrew, stress, degrees of sympathising and safety issues, must also be taken into account, and might be significant for any further research.

The primary job characteristics, as partly identified through interview data, are in particular 'common sense', dismissal of negative thoughts ('let go') and adaptability. The concept of common sense is not new in itself, but for the individual it may be a major consideration in solving a situational problem. Both conscious and subconscious common-sense ability is to a certain extent related to the 'let go', where experience and wisdom moderate problem-solving (Compton & Hoffman, 2013). The

interview results support this contention: 'You should not think too much because you will face many types of passengers. So you have to let go and be happy for yourself. So you will be happy when you work'(Interviewee2).

The airline service constitutes an instant delivery of a tangible product where common sense is one of the key supports in problem-solving. The secondary data demonstrate encouragement and support for individuals, using strategic interaction approaches such as discreet behaviour and diplomacy as a basis for common sense problem-solving. My observational data revealed face-to-face interactions where the service dynamics could not always be prepared in advance. In simple terms, a meaning of the 'let go' is being able to cope with offensive behaviour without manifesting displeasure unnecessarily (Taylor, 2012). 'Let go' also refers to the wisdom and common sense needed in order to create peace of mind and satisfaction in life (Ajahn, 2014). In Asian culture, it is usual to separate oneself from emotional difficulties and their associated pressures. It can be argued that in effect this is a self-based stress-aversion device where a productive conflict-reducing approach is encouraged. Implied emotions, such as anger and aversion, are concerned with dispassion and not depression (Ajahn, 2011).

I recommend that time and job functions should be enhanced by the 'let go' process. For example, the flight rotation duration (time) is dictated by operational conditions. Within this, the job function is also inevitably defined. Unlike almost all other service/travel experiences, neither the cabin crew nor the customers have the option to remove themselves from the environment within these dynamic situations.

'Let go' may not be suitable in all situations. In certain dynamic situations individuals may adopt the 'let go' because they cannot express negative emotions. Specific conditions, and in particular conditional timing and defined job/role requirements, are not conducive to this strategy in practical terms. The lack of 'let go' potentially exaggerates any existing dissatisfaction until the task has been finished within the timing and job role requirements. The 'let go' is also relevant to my secondary data. This data relates to the 'let go' as a result of a positive way of thinking, using positive reinforcement. Behaviour and conduct are categorised in the secondary documentation, where provisions such as the 'desire to serve' are used. This is reflected in characterisations such as 'to aspire to, crave, fancy and long for'. As a

result, there is some indication that the objective of the secondary documentation is to inspire authentic internalised willingness to present, and remain true to, the organisational and behavioural objectives. Ideally, its purpose is to bring together organisational and personal behavioural characteristics: 'Self-analysis is often the best way to improve our communication with passengers. Cabin crew should analyse how they approach passengers and ask themselves if they would wish to be treated in that manner' (Thai Airways International, 2010, PSM5, p. 2).

The interview data also suggests that there is a relationship between 'let go', the dismissal of negative thoughts, and the development of a self-concept and positive career attitude (Hershock, 2006). Furthermore, the desire to serve also reflects the female gender role, where a nurturing interaction is emphasised, such as in taking care of, serving and looking after passengers. Regarding cultural and spiritual values, religious affiliation has emerged in my research as a major influence. It is related to psychological variables such as self-reflection and positive thinking, and is reinforced in practice by company policy and individual interactions. Harmonious relationships with colleagues cause high job satisfaction. In terms of social-identity theory, religious affiliation is also related to collectivism, where optimal distinctiveness or affiliation within a group causes feelings of well-being within the group context (Schwartz, 2006). There is some relationship between Schwartz's values and women's traditional role, such as openness to change (similar to the competency of adaptability), conservatism (tradition and conformity, similar to Thai society, where hierarchy and tradition are involved) and self-transcendence (similar to acting kindly) (Schwartz, 2006).

Schwartz's values are related to women's traditional role in terms of altruistic self-transcendence and biospheric self-transcendence (female-dominant). My research has shown that female self-enhancement is related to female ego goals (Kim et al., 2011). Thai culture (universalism) is related to unity with nature, broad-mindedness, inner harmony, and a world at peace. Buddhism could be applied to the business world by showing people how to cope by using the 'let go' strategy. This has been called the 'dhamma quotient' (Hershock, 2006). An investigation of the mind should be considered. My research has also revealed that 'change' and 'dynamics' are variables of cross-cultural management in the airline industry.

From this point, we can observe that everything changes. This might lead to the possibility of observing how we create all kinds of complexities around the conditions of the moment. My research shows how impermanent conditions such as time, place and culture are related to others. Thought, memory, consciousness, emotion: all of these conditions are changed depending on the above circumstances. These are the starting points for creating a ‘let go’ strategy by investigating the mind (Ajahn, 2014). Letting go is being able to bear something unpleasant and not being caught up with anger and dislike (Ajahn, 2011). People are attached to what they think the world should be, and what others should be like. Letting go is the ability to see the world the way it is, and to accept certain things without being distracted by emotion. Women’s traditional role has been categorised into seven facets which have their equivalence in Buddhism, illustrated in Table 9.1

**Table 9.1 Relationship between women’s traditional role and Buddhism**

<b>Women’s traditional role</b>	<b>Buddhism</b>
Self-possession	Metta (kindness)
Soft gentleness	Karuna (compassion)
Self-reflection	Mudita (sympathetic joy)
Kind-heartedness	Upekkha (serenity)
Positive, natural actions	
Keeping things inside	
Letting go	

It emerges that there is a relationship between these Thai characteristics and Buddhism’s characteristics. Although they form part of Thai women’s traditional role, in Buddhism characteristics such as kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and serenity can be practised by either gender. My analysis has shown that a practical implementation of Buddhist tenets could create positive results in cross-cultural management. As cross-cultural research deals with many cultures, which all have their own biases and manifestations in society, these Buddhist dimensions can be explained as qualities shown through other people, which might lead to an equivalent of deep-surface acting under various time dimensions (Taylor, 2012). The implications of South-East Asian culture should be taken into account in cross-

cultural management. A collectivist concern with others is implicit, because the nature of cross-cultural management is to deal with other people. To narrow the scope, an application of both the East and the West should be made.

My study reveals that South-East Asian philosophy and Buddhism have been inserted into company policy and are close to notions of best practice, appearing to generate positive responses from passengers and an accepting reaction from employees. This suggests that there could be a considerable company input, in both idealistic and practical terms, and that the national culture should be considered too. It has emerged that the dominant factor that has been drawn from the national culture is underpinned by religious belief, but could be applied in practical terms to all nations.

**Research question 4: to investigate the relationship between female ego goals as subconsciously related to individual need satisfaction**

Thai cabin crew who work in a female environment tend to achieve female ego goals by balancing their career, money and family. Therefore their social and personal wants can fit their need satisfaction.

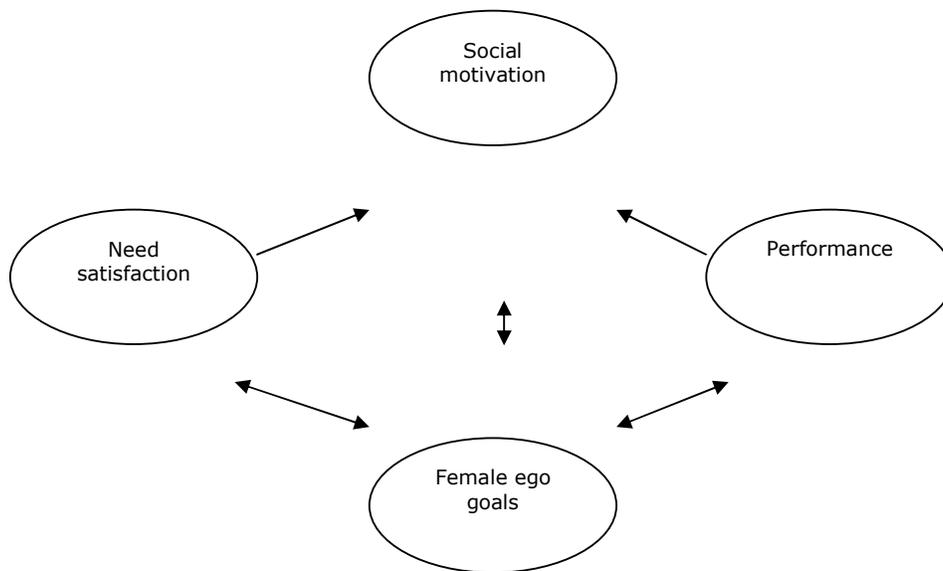
***Reflection on motives and need satisfaction***

My findings support Guay et al. (2010), who say that successfully changing management requires substantial thought and action on related supportive structures and systems. Intrinsic and extrinsic reward is related to employees' motivation, especially in the field of travel, where they come into contact with people from different parts of the world. The discounted tickets that the company offer also save employees a lot of travelling costs. This can influence employees' motivation and help them to enjoy their working lives at the same time. This also supports face value, where intrinsic/extrinsic motivation is aided by feeling acceptance from society (Hofstede, 2001). According to my interview data, cabin crew are able to travel, see the world and see tourist attractions. They will meet different kinds of people, know more people from different countries, and see different ways of life

My interview data supports the idea that female cabin crew's need satisfaction is concerned with the balance of work, money, family, travel motivations and career development. Career development is the major moderator. On the other hand, career development is based on levels of seniority, and it takes a certain period of time to

progress to the next level. Career development tends inherently to comprise a higher degree of power or control over junior cabin crew. From an Asian perspective, a consultative decision style is the norm, and is part of a power-dominant philosophy (Minkov et al., 2012). In addition, need satisfaction is interrelated with social motivation. To a degree it could be argued that female performance is concerned with recognition of female ego goals and women’s perceived nurturing and family roles.

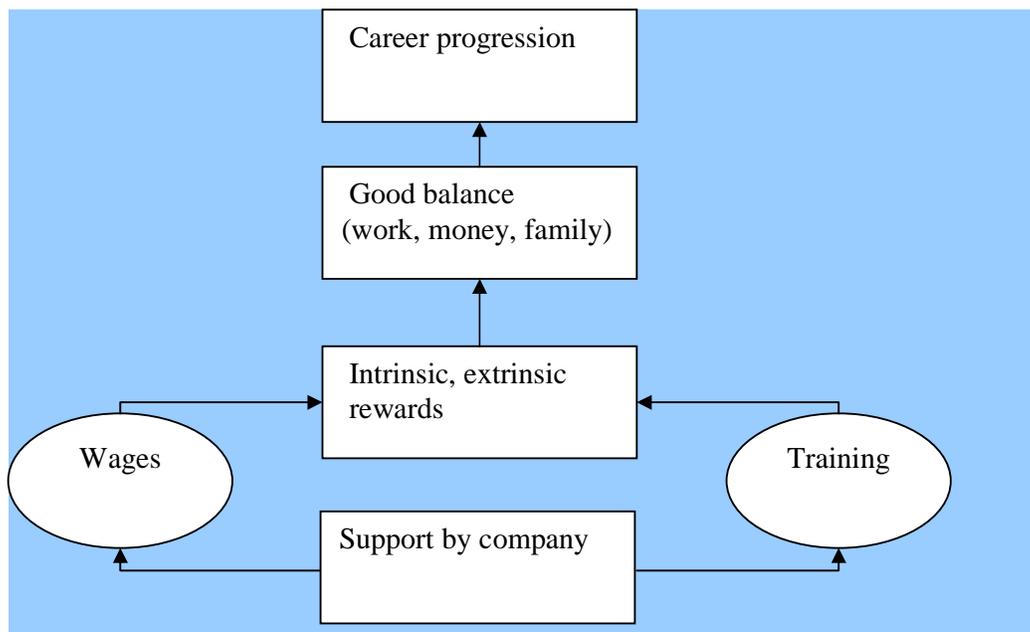
**Figure 9.4: Linkage between female ego goals, social motivation, performance and need satisfaction**



Therefore personal and job characteristics (nurturing environment) are connected to female individual performance. This might imply that personal benefit does to a degree provide the congruence between individual and organisational goals and values. As an extrinsic reward, the opportunity to satisfy a travel ambition is also important. This supports the idea that travel is an important element of reward management in an industry where cross-cultural interaction and perception is inherent. Such a perception helps cabin crew to recognise alternative cultural perspectives. Cross-cultural understanding allows cabin crew to form and adapt self schemas while maintaining a lower degree of conflict between their internalised surface-value self-construal and their principal self-concept (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). Extrinsic rewards are theoretically and practically entailed in secondary

documents and in the nature of the job itself, where the alternation of countries differs depending on the flight schedules. The economic factor is another important matter; the possibility of financial support for a holiday abroad offers much potential. Airfare and accommodation costs are major difficulties for those who work in other organisations. This factor could connect these values and social norms to social beliefs. The average earnings of graduates in Thailand are much lower than cabin crew earnings, which are equivalent to management jobs. This highlights the financial factor where a service job can provide benefits for employees as both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. A management job would be more stressful than one in the front-line service sector, which is self-ending.

**Figure 9.5: Balance between need satisfaction and female ego goals**



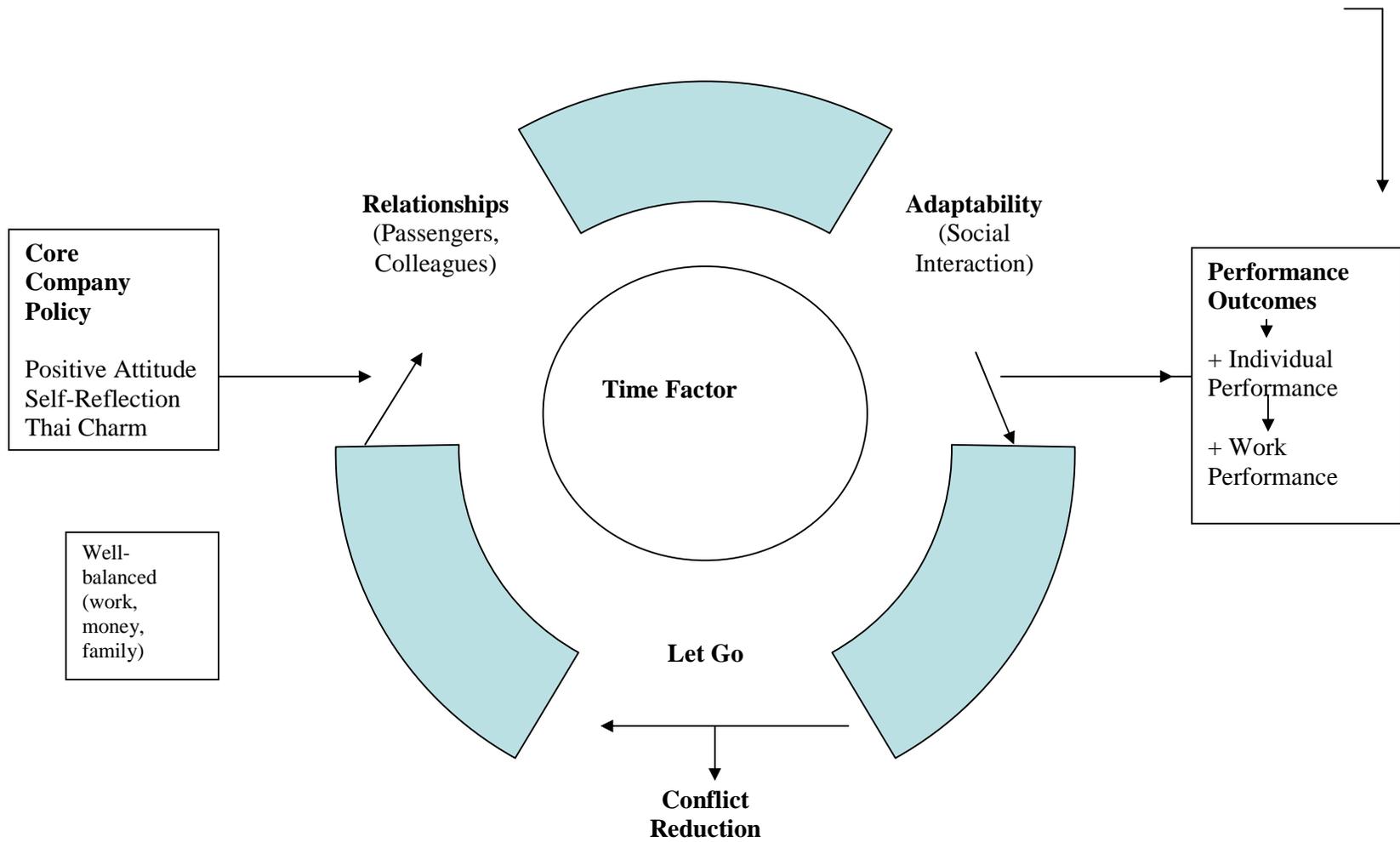
My study has shown that working as cabin crew is an occupation that provides high intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. For extrinsic rewards, we look to economic factors: the average wages are higher than for other jobs. Intrinsic rewards such as travel and free tickets can satisfy the work-life balance (Kim et al., 2011). This reveals the relationship between gender, work, organisation and subconscious individual need satisfaction. Thai cabin crew who work in a female environment tend to balance their career, money and family so that their social and ego goals fit in with their need satisfaction. Again, this reflects social face value, where ample money and travel abroad are considered to be indicative of higher socio-economic levels (Cooper,

2005). A female-dominated environment such as that of the cabin crew necessitates attempts to find a balance between work and family in order to achieve life satisfaction. A variable of life satisfaction is related to face value and socio-economics (French, 2015).

In Thailand, the macro environment influences work and family structures (Wailerdsak, 2008) In terms of individual demographics, the organisational level contains steep hierarchies, female dominance and age groups. Work setting characteristics are influenced by cultural values, evaluation through senior levels, teamwork, and job characteristics related to the specific domain. Age group influences the work-family balance. My findings suggest that cabin crewmembers' need satisfaction (intrinsic and extrinsic rewards) leads to performance adaptation, which incorporates adjustment and personality development (a wider life vision from experiencing the world, personality adjustment) and results in well-being. The freedom of cabin crew once they arrive in other countries leads to contained autonomy, where the desire is to self-organise, experience and behave according to individual needs. This implies a sense of freedom and a needs construct which enhances well-being (Bergman & Gilberg, 2015). Travelling involves inter-correlations of needs constructs in terms of social and face values. Moreover, social needs involve the combination of assimilation (teamwork) and differentiation (freedom and openness to a world vision) (Bergman & Gilberg, 2015).

In the context of comfortable circumstances, other individualistic values, such as individual freedom, personal development, quality of life and relational interdependence (Bergman & Gilberg, 2015), become more significant to individual ego goals. My research suggests that cabin crewmembers' basic need gratification is a result of their psychological needs being met, such as needs for esteem (self-respect, freedom) and self-actualisation, which supports Maslow's theory (Kim et al., 2011). My study has revealed that socio-economic values influence social values: it has been shown that rewards and benefits are a high motivation for female ego goals in terms of cross-cultural experiences (free tickets, travel). This might be useful for those in HR, as long-term employment could be maintained in return for rewards and benefits. There is considerable attraction in terms of supportive rewards and benefits, so reward strategies can be used cooperatively to achieve employee motivation (Kim et al., 2011). This supports the organisational strategic-reward system. Fischer and Smith

(2003) have proposed that management strategies such as reward systems are significant for an organisation.



## **Conclusion**

To summarise the correlation between the three triangulated methodologies, Figure 9.6 recapitulates the research results and discussion in terms of how national societal factors might affect cabin crews in the airline sector with reference to gender and cultural differences.

On the left of the diagram, core company policy is clarified into positive thinking, self-reflection and the traditional gender role as it reflects the Asian perspective. Research objective 1 is to explore cabin crew behaviour that is embedded in company policy, which could affect performance outcomes. Two core company policies emerged from the belief and values associated with religious background and the Asian perspective. The traditional gender role, which is the other policy, emerged from the national culture, where the norm is individual self-construal. So the policy is accepted in itself, with no need for pretending.

In the middle of the diagram there are three core issues, relationships, adaptability and 'let go', which lead to role conflict reduction, whereas the timing is dynamic. An explanation of this core issue has been given in the previous section of this chapter. This core issue fulfils research objectives 3 and 4, where the self and the relationship between culture and gender factors are investigated under the time dimension.

The right of the diagram reflects the secondary objective, where personal variables are the key issues. It has been found that the motivation and reward strategy motivates cabin crewmembers' achievement. This can be a result of positive performance outcomes, in both work and individual performance. Individual performance is the result of various cultural perceptions that the crew experience, so their female ego goals can fit their need satisfaction. However, the balance between work, money and family varies, and depends on age and work experience.

My study has shown that cultural transmission consists of the following focal points, which are supported by Smith et al. (2015). In order to achieve effectiveness in cross-cultural transmission, there should be guided behaviour (by the company policy) and a hierarchical structure differentially transmitted as coherent units. Moreover, there should also be flexibility of mind, replicated through social transmission. Communal sharing, authority ranking, and equality matching all make up social interaction.

Moreover, one must provide independent psychological evidence that would explain the mechanisms whereby such representations are likely to be transmitted in the most appropriate way. In this case, religious belief is applied through cross-cultural transmission. A concept of spiritual values which consists of the positive qualities of love and compassion should be considered in cross cultural management.

## CHAPTER TEN

### Conclusion

#### Introduction

This study has provided evidence of a relationship between the qualitative experiences of employees, the kind of managerial style embedded in organisational culture, and the essential attributes of national culture. One of the key propositions investigated in the study is that national cultural characteristics have an impact on management style and corporate culture, and this in turn affects employee behaviour in the workplace. Significantly, these findings apply to cultures with bureaucratic control and vertical influence, as suggested by Hofstede (2001) and Thomas and Peterson (2015).

In order to answer the research question about how company policy influences employee behaviour and perceptions leading to positive performance and outcomes, it is important to understand the nature of the organisation. Within organisations, Hofstede's dimension, i.e. power distance, plays an important role: organisational hierarchy controls both employee behaviour and conduct. However, too much hierarchy can have a weakening effect in terms of communication breakdown.

My study focused especially on corporate culture, and specifically on airline corporate culture in Thailand, which was chosen as an example of a highly collectivistic, high power-distance society. Thai social structure is the result of traditional power related to respect, involving obeying and listening to superior authorities (Thomas & Peterson, 2015). The structure of the organisation appears to entail a top-down and paternalistic management style (Hofstede, 2001). This study focuses more specifically on cabin crew behaviour within Thai Airways, taking special note of the airline's corporate culture as well as the collectivistic national culture of Thailand. Particular emphasis is also given to the impact of gender roles, religion and social expectations within Thai society and how these impinge on work roles and expectations in the airline company.

Another aspect of my research is its use of a variety of research techniques, providing cross-checks to ensure the validity of the findings. Hence company reports were subjected to content analysis, whilst employees were interviewed about their work

roles and expectations, and I was also able to use my personal observation of workplace practices, thereby providing a triangulation of research data. An example of this is in the discussion of self-presentation, which is composed of face value (Hwang et al., 2003) in a collectivistic country, where saving face arises from others' expectations and results in compliant behaviour in order to gain acceptance. This aspect was investigated through verbal and non-verbal communication. Thai values come from the needs of an individual for face value, the coordination of social interaction in a collectivistic country, and the requirements of the functions of a (highly hierarchical) society.

The nature of the airline industry lies in the interaction between people of different cultures from around the world, which leads to an accumulation of cross-cultural thought. In relation to the research objectives, the following research questions contributed:

<b>To answer the question</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Key concepts</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Methodology</b>
<b>Knowing why</b>	Thai society	Socio-economic status Work-life balance	Motivational logic	Socio-economic data Literature Interviews
<b>Knowing how</b>	Buddhist tradition	'Let go' Self-reflection (Mindfulness)	Technique (Self-maintenance)	Job analysis: documentation Job description: interviews
<b>Knowing who/what</b>	Thai culture	Thai values/ characteristics	Customer interface	Observations Open interviews Company documents

The next section outlines the principal aims of each chapter of this thesis. This is to provide a broader perspective on the research concepts and summary.

### **Principal aims**

As an introduction to my research, I presented the background of the research questions, my research objectives, and my contribution to the fields of culture, gender and organisational practice, including my contribution to research findings and analysis.

Following that, I started with an overview and definition of culture, values and beliefs. I then provided a theoretical foundation and literature review relevant to the research objectives and research questions. The purpose of this was to examine key cultural theory and theorists. After establishing the theoretical foundations of cross-cultural management, I started to look into national culture by providing a background on Thailand's culture and history, including its social structure and the characteristics, values and traditions of Thai people, such as family, authority, seniority and respect. I then introduced the characteristics of collectivistic culture. I also investigated how power, authority and related responses might affect people's behaviour. Thailand is one of the countries that have a high power distance.

Moving on from the review of national culture, I provided a background on Thai women by investigating the family, social and employment structures that were relevant to my research and that might influence people's behaviour. I also covered gender and associated social studies and theories, including the concepts of aesthetic labour, emotional labour and work-family balance. I then moved on to the topic of women in the airline industry, airlines' organisational culture in general, and Thai Airways' culture and organisational structure in particular. To reflect on my research, I discussed my methodology, including its strengths and weaknesses, in order to evaluate its reliability and validity. The benefit of the grounded approach was that it allowed me to gain rich and in-depth data from the respondents. I explained how each method was related: the interviews drew attention to employees' perceptions, in terms of the individual and the organisation; observations drew attention to the manifestation and emotional expressions of the cabin crew; and airline-based secondary data facilitated my understanding of organisational behaviour and national culture, which would be converted into manifest conduct.

After discussing the methodology, I started to investigate the company policy. The findings showed the importance of company input in terms of women's traditional role and South-East Asian culture. I also emphasised the findings from the individuals' perspectives – for example, the adaptability of cabin crew, which was emphasised through general principles, rules and regulations. I also showed how the emphasis on self-reflection and South-East Asian cultural implications were assimilated into behaviour and conduct based on policy. After that, I presented the findings from individual perspectives on the cross-cultural environment, and how

crew members respond to passengers by using the traditional women's role. An understanding of organisational culture enabled a better understanding of the airline environment, the job characteristics and the skills that are needed. The investigation also included women's traditional role, which was embedded in company policy and individual characteristics. Moreover, the reward strategy was also considered. An emphasis on South-East Asian culture was also investigated.

I also discussed my observational findings, which showed a combination of inputs from both the company and the individual. These findings showed that non-verbal communication was a major, positive presentation, and that women's traditional role was emphasised as a factor. Again, the nature of the job (i.e. self-ending) was a characteristic that maintained positive interaction. I analysed and illustrated the relationship between the three methods, which were linked together in terms of the individual (self-construal behaviour), company policy (national culture) and self-presentation (manifestation). As parochial research, the acculturation of a single national culture in the airline sector provided a clear picture of collectivism as the norm in a national culture. My analysis established a link between the three methodologies, which could lead to further research in cross-cultural studies in the future. It emerged that the behaviour of a national culture appeared to be influenced in terms of dominant behaviour, such as women's traditional role; this can be used as a guideline to behaviour and a conduct base for other cultural studies. I will now summarise by presenting my principal aims as questions in relation to my research objectives. I will discuss the main findings of the study and the contribution it has made to theory and practice. Next comes a discussion of the limitations of the study and the research difficulties I have faced. In the final section I suggest further research that might be done on cross-cultural management.

### ***How does Thai culture affect cabin crew behaviour?***

First of all, it is important to recap Thai cultural characteristics, as Thailand is considered to be a collectivistic country. In Thai national culture, children are taught to honour their parents; this is in line with Hofstede's theory of socialisation, according to which children are expected to be obedient to their parents in countries that contain a high power distance. Respect for the elderly is also thought to be a basic principle of goodness (Hofstede, 2001). To reflect on my research, behaviour such as

bowing implies respect for another. Showing goodness, such as providing a higher level of service than passengers expect (for example, serving a meal after mealtime), also reflects spiritual beliefs. From an anthropological point of view, positive verbal and non-verbal communication implies respect, which represents the society's hierarchical categories (Thomas & Peterson, 2015). This respect has been reinforced since childhood, and it shapes cognitive structures and creates consistency with cultural values (Thomas & Peterson, 2015). In the case of the airline industry, there is a consequent power-based interaction. It is understood that in this interaction, it is the passenger who holds legitimate power; therefore by implication, due to both regulations and the national culture, cabin crew are encouraged to show respect to others. The effect of this national culture is also to show consideration for others, particularly with people who are considered important. Again, there is an implied relationship with legitimate power, because behind the scenes cabin crew evaluate passengers as important people to be treated with great respect and concern. Moreover, Thai social harmony is part of an ancient philosophy which is reflected in contemporary social behaviour, in which internalising emotion is encouraged under certain circumstances. The majority of respondents agreed that internalised emotion was suitable for the cabin crew job. A level of social interaction is inherent in the job, but the level of genuine interaction may vary, given different national cultures.

***What is the evidence that Thai cabin crewmembers behave differently from other nationalities' cabin crews?***

Referring to Hofstede's theory of the five basic problems of national culture (discussed in my literature review chapter on culture), the differences between Thai and other cabin crew start from cultural differences, especially in relation to the high power distance. This has an effect on organisational management in terms of structure and hierarchy within the organisation (as can be seen in the chapter on my secondary document analysis). Airlines from Western countries, which are categorised as having low power distance, have a different management style. Cabin crew skills are utilised to provide service quality. The performance-based airline objectives have led to Thailand's nomination for having the best cabin staff in the world in previous years (Skytrax, 2009-2014). From this we can see the difference in terms of performance outcomes. The traits of Thais are considered to be gentleness, self-possession, self-reflection, kind-heartedness and keeping things inside. From a sociological point of

view, Thai cultural history started from an agricultural, non-industrial society where people helped each other in the fields, and qualities such as kindness, cooperation and helpfulness were important for maintaining harmonious relationships. However, the purpose of my research is not to compare Thai staff with other nationalities' cabin crews. There may be some similarities between Thai and other Asian airlines which further research might uncover in the future. Another interesting point that might be different from other airlines is the religious belief that is emphasised throughout the organisation. Such positive thinking is hardly emphasised by other companies, especially notions of self-reflection or self-analysis, as others' main concerns would be for the benefit of the company rather than the employees.

### **Research objectives and contributions**

In order to fulfil the research objectives, my data analysis was divided up as follows:

#### ***1) To investigate how company policy influences employees' behaviour in order to achieve Thai Airways' corporate goals***

This has been achieved by investigating behaviour and conduct-based policy at the level of organisational structure, and then by further investigating at the individual level by observation, in order to measure the input from company policy. The results have shown that not only does company policy influence cabin crews' behaviour and conduct, but so too do individuals' self-construals, which reinforce their positive performances as well as company policy. This will be explained later. This manifestation is reinforced by both verbal and non-verbal communication through rules and regulations, while internalisation is reinforced through positive thinking and self-reflection. These two reinforcements also implicate the religious belief system and Asian philosophy. Affirmation is reinforced through positive self-presentation. The results show the importance of performance based on collectivistic culture.

It is suggested that policy is based on practical actions and is also related to other variables, especially the individual self-construal that is the norm in the national culture. This might have an effect on a macro-level (e.g. national) policy to emphasise and refocus the dominant factors of the nation and put Asian and Buddhist philosophy into practice. This might have in turn an effect on other multicultural companies by picking up the dominant characteristics of the national culture and putting them into practice. Optimistically, the study will be a beneficial guideline for further research in

terms of demonstrating the advantages of incorporating national culture. Moreover, further deep and surface studies on the airline industry might lead to benefits for other industries which involve a similar (dynamic) environment and similar job functions, for example hotel work or tourism, where a cross-cultural environment is also a dominant factor.

***2) To investigate traditional Thai cultural values and gender that can influence organisational and employees' behaviour, and the extent to which their work-related cognitions appear to be influenced by gender and national culture***

Studying this behaviour and conduct-based policy will offer greater understanding for human resource management in other countries, enabling them to focus on their own national cultural levels. This contribution has been made through a detailed account of behaviour and conduct-based policy in Thailand, in order to offer a better understanding of the data relating to the nature of employment practices in the airline sector. In particular, it is significant to focus on the manifest level.

My research might make a practical contribution to a multinational company or to an expatriate who needs to learn a specific culture. In terms of a region-centric approach, there is a need to understand the HR policy of specific countries, and that should be included in the employment practices of multinational companies, where national culture should be considered

***3) To what extent do spirituality and traditional Thai culture interact with organisational culture, and to what extent is behaviour and conduct-based policy related to spirituality and traditional Thai values?***

This contribution was discussed earlier in terms of an equivalence between the input from company policy and that from the individuals themselves. However, my research has contributed to this area by demonstrating that women's traditional role is effective in producing a positive performance outcome. This contribution can be confirmed through other cross-cultural environmental studies, in order to reduce conflict between other nationalities. However, a counterargument may evolve, based on those dimensions which constitute female characteristics. As mentioned earlier in the findings chapter (Chapter Eight), these characteristics can be matched to one of the Buddhist codes of conduct, which is called Promwiharn Four (metta, karuna, mudita, upekkha: kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, serenity). These ways of

conducting oneself are implemented worldwide, as Buddhism's contributions can be practised through meditation and by training the mind through the meditative mechanism. This constitutes a major research finding about how Buddhism can be applied in practice, which researchers might call the 'dhamma quotient'. Significant research could be done into understanding how Thai employment practices might be established as models for HR. Another benefit is to provide a better understanding of Thai management practices. It has been shown that the traditional female role or soft-side approach can be used effectively in a cross-cultural environment. An application of the dhamma quotient might be significant in cross-cultural research. Women's traditional role can also be adapted to deal with other cross-cultural situations.

This contribution is supported by my findings about the relationship between culture and gender factors. Relational self-construal is associated with both gender and culture. The gender aspects arise in countries that have ideals of high femininity and a dominant culture of specific self-presentation, such as Thailand in this case. It might be significant to apply these findings to other collectivistic countries, as such countries will be more concerned with gender in relation to interactions with others. This research contribution is supported by the need to solve the five basic problems of national societies, in terms of power distance, individualism and collectivism as well as masculinity and femininity. Further research might be done concerning both gender and cultural issues in terms of interaction.

***4) Secondary objective: the relationship between female ego goals and individual need satisfaction: Thai cabin crew who work in a female environment tend to achieve female ego goals by balancing their career, money and family, so that their social needs and egos fit in with their need satisfaction***

This contribution supports Maslow's theory that male and female roles have now changed (Kim et al., 2011). An adaptation of the female's responsibility has to be made in order to achieve a balance between workplace and family. At the micro-economic level, socio-economics influence recruitment applications, due to the nature of the high rewards and benefits.

## **Limitations of the study and personal reflections**

This study has been limited by certain factors. In order to investigate some of the limitations of the overall research, further context is needed to identify areas for further research that can be developed from the findings. The research also has implications for management in terms of training, development, recruitment and selection, as well as behaviour and conduct-based policy. Some potential research problems and difficulties have been identified and discussed in the methodology chapters. Some issues are concerned with qualitative data, such as interviews and time available with cabin crews. For example, I found that it was difficult to make appointments with cabin crew from the UK, as they all work abroad between Thailand and other countries. In the end, I chose anyone who was available during the period when I was in Thailand. Female cabin crew were identified as the main respondents for my research, due to the fact that the environment of the airline sector is predominantly female. A dominant characteristic has been identified in terms of female social skills. According to my results, both gender and cultural issues should be identified in terms of self-construal capability. The formula for investigation is the balance between culture and gender, as the research is focused on social capability. This might create a bias in terms of male respondents, but as mentioned, social skills have been identified as a universal characteristic. However, the results have shown that women's traditional role can be applied to the male gender as well as the female, due to the Buddhist religious belief in the 'divine abodes' of kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and serenity.

Although the results have been generated through qualitative methods, there might be the potential for more in-depth data from research involving the three methods supporting each other. Because my research involved a grounded approach, the data-created theory allowed me to explore data in depth and create a relationship between the three methods. Additional studies might identify some of the key issues from the findings by using a grounded approach, containing relevant data which could be formulated into further research.

On a personal level I have learnt many things throughout the whole research process. It has made me think about my interactions with the participants, and I cannot thank them enough for being part of my research. They spent time with me and shared their

thoughts freely and willingly. In my role as a researcher I learnt how to deal with participants, at both cabin crew and senior management level, and how to keep my questions focused. I also learnt about time management, which included arranging interviews across different time zones and finding convenient times to interview cabin crew in particular, who have busy schedules. Reflexivity has made me more conscious and aware of how to deal with participants. All the participants were very kind to me, and very helpful. However, a researcher's beliefs and cultural background, such as socioeconomic status or educational background, can have an effect on the research process in general. After 20 years of living in the UK, I could see the differences between the interviewees and me as the interviewer.

In addition to my work experience in the airline industry, I was granted permission to participate in a cross-cultural management course in Japan for one month, where I started to learn about cultural differences. I then joined the global cross-cultural management programme in Maastricht, where there is an intensive course on culture. The more I have learnt about culture, the more I understand that people are different, and that culture can be seen from anthropological, sociological, economic and psychological points of view (Thomas & Peterson, 2015).

### **Implications for future research**

The research data could be valuable for further research, enabling other analyses of company policies and practices. Although the main policy applies to Asian philosophy and religious belief, it could assist other countries, as it is underpinned by psychological conduct. This provides a potential for further research into the idea of turning religious ideas into behaviour and conduct or interaction with others, and this might be particularly important for developing ideas about globalisation and cross-cultural management in other business organisations.

In relation to the needs of any future research, the first requirement might be to take a grounded approach to other dynamic environments in order to obtain examples of relevant incidents that happen in reality, and to acquire in-depth data from respondents. Another issue for further research would be to investigate other company policies involving multicultural functions based on behaviour and conduct. Particular attention might be given to identifying how behaviour and conduct-based approaches might be developed, and how management might make these operate effectively.

Furthermore, future cross-cultural research might focus on adaptations of religious belief being put into practice, which might be a positive contribution and a benefit to the business sector. Another implication of my study is to continue the research from a global perspective, not just a Western one, which will bring about a global idea of both culture and gender development. In terms of gender, further research could develop the female point of view from different countries.

### **Implications for management**

In terms of management implications, attention could be given to behaviour and conduct training, and to how to develop positive manifestations of authenticity by using Buddhism, women's traditional roles or soft-side applications. Such implications might be monitored through assessments of thought processes. Attention could be given to identifying how such approaches might be developed, through HR practice involving all staff, in order to reduce role conflict. This could enhance employee recruitment, as staff will see how their roles can be adapted in terms of social skills and can lead to role-conflict reduction. It would also be useful for management to focus on behaviour and conduct-based policies in order to promote good employee practice in their individual sectors.

Finally, I suggest that my research can contribute to the formation and development of behaviour and conduct-based policy in cross-cultural companies. Policies should be emphasised that are relevant to the dilemma over consistently positive characteristics. Such policies need to ensure that this is taken into account in a practical way, including at individual and organisational levels. In particular, it has been shown that national culture has considerable influence at the operational and policy levels. My study has revealed social values and beliefs at work in cabin crews' responses, content analysis and observational data. One policy task that could be carried out within other cross-cultural companies is to provide more knowledge of self-construals to others, in order to ensure that cabin crew perceptions contain self-reflection and self-analysis. This might lead to an improvement in both production outcome and role-conflict reduction for others as well as for the individual self-construal. Another HR initiative might be to gather together positive self-reflection, self-analysis and positive thinking and put them into practical terms. In conclusion, the behaviour and conduct-based policy implications of this study emphasise the need to balance individual and

company input in order not to have any overlap. The development and change of employee perceptions can identify role-conflict reduction in others. This is underpinned by the balance between power distance and hierarchy in the organisation. It is anticipated that these research findings will encourage further thought about future cross-cultural evolution by using a combination of Eastern and the Western ideology.

**Appendix One**  
**Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Questions</b>
<b>Company Policy</b>	1) How does the policy of the company relate to positive feelings and self-reflection in the C/A service?
	2) What is the biggest emphasis of your company policy and how is it related to Thai C/A personality?
	3) What is Thai charm?
<b>Female Stereotypes</b>	4) Do you think the C/A job is suitable for women or not, and why?
	5) Please explain the org. culture in the airline industry and in your company.
	6) What is the characteristic of being a C/A?
	7) What are the skills of a C/A?
<b>Need Satisfaction</b>	8) What is the need satisfaction in your life?
	9) Please explain the life style of a C/A?
	10) What is your motivation in being part of a cabin crew?
<b>Rewards and Benefits</b>	11) How does “Reward Power” relate to your work performance as C/A?
	12) What are the rewards and benefits that a C/A gets, and which rewards or benefits do you prefer?
	13) What is the reward strategy in your company?
<b>Female Gender role</b>	14) Please define “Thai Charm”.
	15) How does Female gender role relate to passengers’ satisfaction? Can it reduce conflict?
	16) How can deep acting be replaced by surface acting using the company’s policy and an individual
	17)
	18) What are the good points of Asian culture, when it commonly places restraints on expression of emotions in public?

<b>Non-Verbal Communication</b>	21) Which of the following non-verbal communication do you think are important for being a CA? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Facial expression</li><li>- Tone of Voice</li><li>- Gesture</li></ul>
<b>Emotional Competence/ Emotional Labour</b>	24) Which of the following characteristics are important for cabin crew members?

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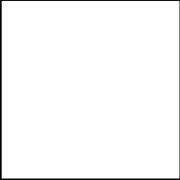
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