

# **Exploring Cross-Cultural Differences in Hotel Online Reviews: A Comparative Analysis of Chinese and UK Perspectives**

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## **Abstract**

This research investigated cross-cultural variation in online hotel reviews, focusing on the differences and similarities between Chinese and UK perspectives. Utilizing content analysis, the study examined hotel reviews from two prominent platforms, Booking.com (UK) and Ctrip.com (China), employing cultural models by Hofstede and Hall as analytical frameworks. The study explored mentions of hotel attributes (room quality, cleanliness, location, staff service, and price) and visual cues (images, emoticons, and emphatic marks) in 60 reviews, each from Hilton hotels in the UK and China. Contrary to expectations, UK reviewers exhibit similarities with Chinese reviewers in emphasizing room quality but diverge in highlighting cleanliness. Additionally, UK reviewers mention location more frequently, challenging assumptions about individualistic cultures. Surprisingly, Chinese reviewers surpass UK reviewers in staff service mentions, challenging established literature. Both groups exhibit similar concerns regarding prices. The study also affirmed that high-context Chinese culture prefers images and emoticons, aligning with existing research. the design of hotel review platforms influences visual cue usage, highlighting a nuanced interplay of culture and interface. This research contributes insights into cross-cultural communication in online hotel reviews, emphasizing the role of cultural context in shaping evaluative expressions.

# 1. Introduction

With the development of digital technology, the way media communication occurs has ushered in an era of significant changes. The emergence of digital transformation has prompted new media to gradually replace traditional media, greatly affecting individuals' lifestyles and changing the way they obtain information (Dimmick et al., 2004; Leung, 1998). With its swift and real-time features, new media breaks time and space constraints (Harrison & Wessels, 2012), making cross-cultural communication more convenient and efficient (Witschge et al., 2016). From social media platforms to online review sites, people can communicate and interact directly with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, promoting interaction and integration between cultures (Sawyer, 2011; AlSaleh et al., 2019). Intercultural communication studies are a discipline that closely examines the ways in which people from diverse cultural backgrounds exchange information and meaning (Croucher et al., 2015; Gudykunst, 1985; Guirdham, 1999). The cultural diversity brought by new media has extended a new research field for intercultural communication research, known as intercultural new media studies (INMS), as described by Shuter (2012). The fields of intercultural communication and new media are key areas of research and together form the core of INMS. This interdisciplinary field explores the impact of information and communication technologies on interactions between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, promising to provide transformative insights into intercultural communication processes (Shuter, 2012).

The unprecedented popularity of new media has driven significant growth in online consumption and sales across industries, leading to changes in business strategies (Bagdonienė & Zemblytė, 2009; Clemes et al., 2014). There has been a change in the way consumers share their experiences, with online reviews becoming a significant source of information for potential consumers. Online reviews wield significant influence, and the vast majority of consumers rely on them to make decisions (Chen et al., 2022). As such, online reviews have become a cornerstone of information accessibility, credibility, and utilization in the digital age (Chen et al., 2022; Nakayama & Wan, 2018). In the context of the hotel industry, the stay experiences shared by guests in online hotel reviews are an invaluable way for potential customers to assess services. It is often challenging for tourists to evaluate hotel

services before staying; therefore, online hotel reviews can provide insights into the customer experience and aid decision-making (Radojević et al., 2018).

The significance of online hotel reviews not only extends beyond mere evaluations of service quality but also reflects the diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and expectations of the reviewers. Recognizing this, scholars such as Serra Cantallops and Salvi (2014) advocate for a cross-cultural approach in hospitality research. Despite this imperative, research on the impact of cross-cultural differences on online hotel reviews remains limited (Gao et al., 2018; Tseng, 2017). Scholars have also demonstrated the importance and relevance of INMS across disciplines (Ling & Ling, 2008; St Amant & Kelsey, 2012). The role of cultural differences has been highlighted in virtual communities (Pfeil et al., 2006), emphasizing the importance of examining their effects on the use of new media across cultures. Thus, INMS focuses on the impact of new media on communication between consumers from different cultural backgrounds (Sawyer, 2011). In the context of hotel online reviews, INMS becomes a valuable framework for understanding how individuals affected by different cultural backgrounds utilize new media platforms to express their experiences and perceptions. By dissecting the linguistic nuances, evaluation criteria, and cultural references in online reviews, INMS provides a comprehensive perspective to explore the influence of culture on online hotel reviews.

This study aimed to explore the complexity of hotel online reviews from a cross-cultural perspective by investigating the similarities and differences between Chinese and UK hotel online reviews. When guests leave online hotel reviews, their evaluations are inevitably influenced by cultural backgrounds. These influences can lead to variations in language use, visual cue selection, and attention to hotel attributes. It is crucial to understand how consumers from different cultures express their experiences through online reviews. China and the UK represent Asian and European cultures, respectively, and the cultural distinctions between the two countries are evident (Xu et al., 2008). To unravel cultural complexity, our study draws on the cultural dimensions of maturity proposed by Hofstede (1980) and Hall (1976). Applying Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the study explored how social values influence the description of hotel attributes in reviews. Furthermore, the study also analyzed the impact of Hall's cultural dimensions on visual cues and emphatic marks in online communication. Through these two analyses, the study examined how cultural differences between UK and Chinese reviewers are reflected in the different and similar ways in which

opinions are expressed in hotel online reviews. This research can contribute to the emerging field of INMS and provide valuable insights to the hospitality industry, online platforms, and academia.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 The Impact of Hofstede's Cultural Dimension on Hotel Attributes

#### 2.1.1 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (Hofstede, 1980, 2001) provides a framework to examine and understand cultural differences within societies. Initially introduced in 1980 and later expanded in 2001, this theory is an important tool for comparing the values, behaviors, and attitudes of people from diverse cultures and different backgrounds (Gerlach & Eriksson, 2021). This theory consists of 6 dimensions: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, and Indulgence vs. Restraint. These cultural dimensions have also been shown to have predictive value in explaining cultural variations in behaviors, attitudes, and values (Smith & Bond, 2022). Over the years, Hofstede's theoretical framework has gained widespread recognition and has influenced and inspired a considerable amount of research in the field of cross-cultural studies (Orr & Hauser, 2008; Zhou & Kwon, 2020). Many researchers have used or built on Hofstede's cultural dimensions to explore and understand the potential challenges posed by cultural differences in different environments and their impact on various aspects of human behavior (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018). As such, his theory has proven to be a widely used and influential framework for understanding cultural differences, providing a solid foundation for research and learning in the field of cross-cultural analysis (Minkov, 2017; Minkov & Kaasa, 2020; Thowfeek & Jaafar, 2012). Therefore, an examination of these dimensions serves as a solid theoretical grounding for our study.

Drawing from Hofstede's cultural dimensions (1980, 2001), Chinese and UK cultures differ in several key aspects: individualism and collectivism, long/short-term orientation, power distance, masculinity, and indulgence. The UK, as an individualistic culture, has a stronger sense of self, placing emphasis on obtaining benefits and value through individual efforts, and pursuing privacy guarantees and freedom. In contrast, China, being more collectivistic, values group harmony and loyal reliance on groups and familiar social relationships. In addition, the UK generally has a short-term orientation, emphasizing pragmatism, focusing on the present, and fulfilling responsibilities. Adaptability and flexibility are often key to

decision-making. Chinese culture, on the other hand, is generally long-term oriented, focusing on frugality and future-oriented thinking. The emphasis is on enduring traditions and adapting to changes over time. On the dimension of uncertainty avoidance, China tends to have a higher degree, following rules, fearing change, preferring familiarity, and deducing the logic of things through known experiences. In the UK, uncertainty avoidance is low, resulting in a stronger sense of security, tolerance for changes, a relaxed attitude towards life, encouragement of risk-taking, and a higher tolerance for risks. In terms of power distance, the UK generally has low power distance, promoting the values of equality and democracy. On the contrary, power distance in China tends to be high, with people accepting unequal distribution of power due to their respect for hierarchical structures and authority. Regarding indulgence, the UK is generally more indulgent, inclined towards the satisfaction and expression of self-desires, enjoying life with optimism and impulsiveness, embracing a freewheeling perspective. This inclination leans toward masculinity, with a competitive spirit, self-confidence, and ambition. Chinese culture tends to be more restrained, reflecting a serious mentality with strict social norms and systems. Leisure and entertainment are not as emphasized, aligning more with femininity, which stresses modesty and quality of life.

Previous research has consistently demonstrated that individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds possess distinct criteria when assessing products and services (Chu & Choi, 2011; Obal & Kunz, 2016; Zhou et al., 2015). These cultural distinctions are reflected in the backgrounds, beliefs, and expectations of reviewers, contributing to variations in consumers' expectations and tolerance levels for hotel services. Therefore, depending on cultural background, people's different expectations and tolerances can lead to different ways and descriptions in online hotel reviews. In the hospitality field, prior research has explored the impact of culture on various aspects, including review length (Leon, 2019), emotional content of reviews (Casale et al., 2016), complaint behavior (Ngai et al., 2007), customer expectations regarding service interactions (Calvert, 2001), and the perceived helpfulness of customer reviews in online hotel reviews (Ayeh et al., 2016). While these studies have provided valuable insights within the hospitality domain using Hofstede's cultural dimensions, there remains a gap in understanding how culture influences the specific mention of hotel attributes within guest reviews. Therefore, our study aims to understand the differences and similarities in the importance that UK and Chinese consumers from different cultural backgrounds attach to various hotel attributes based on Hofstede's dimensions.

### 2.1.2 Hotel Attributes

When customers evaluate products, they consider a variety of product attributes (Antonides & Hovestadt, 2021), and researchers and practitioners utilize multi-attribute models to determine which product attributes are relevant to consumers (Jang et al., 2018). Simultaneously, hotel attributes, encompassing various aspects, traits, and features of a hotel, play a vital role in defining and shaping the overall image and attractiveness of the hotel (Srivastava & Kumar, 2021). Striving to enhance the guest experience and ensuring customer satisfaction in the field of hotel management requires careful maintenance and improvement of these essential hotel attributes (Srivastava & Kumar, 2021). Schuckert et al. (2015) highlighted the importance travelers place on various hotel attributes. However, research on differences in emphasis among users from different cultures has often produced contradictory results. McCleary et al. (1998) found that Eastern and Western travelers placed very similar emphasis on various hotel attributes, suggesting no significant difference in emphasis. In contrast, Poon and Low (2005) argued the opposite view, asserting significant differences in attention and emphasis on hotel attributes between consumers from different cultures. Therefore, it remains to be examined whether customers from different countries assign varying importance to hotel attributes.

In previous text mining studies, various hotel attributes have been identified, encompassing staff service quality, location, facilities, room quality, price/value, breakfast, image, safety/security, and marketing (Dolnicar & Otter, 2003; Qu et al., 2000). Notably, research indicates that staff service quality, room quality, and price are the most influential factors in determining overall traveler satisfaction and the likelihood of returning to the same hotel (Berezina et al., 2016; Bodet et al., 2016; Guo et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2017; Qu et al., 2000). The study by Jang et al. (2018) further confirmed that room-related space and cleanliness, as well as front desk-related staff and services, are the most important hotel attributes in ratings. Based on previous research, it is worth emphasizing that, among these various attributes, the primary factors impacting overall hotel satisfaction are room quality, location, cleanliness, service, and price.

### 2.1.3. Cultural differences in Hotel Attributes



Cultural disparities significantly manifest in expectations and responses to the hotel experience. Individualistic societies tend to prioritize self-expression and personal value, while collectivist societies give precedence to group needs over individual preferences (Hofstede, 2001). Reviewers from individualistic cultures often center their reviews on personal experiences and how hotel factors directly impact their comfort and satisfaction. A study conducted by Mattila (1999) explored whether Western and Asian customers, originating from different cultural backgrounds, assess service and hotel environments differently. The results revealed distinctive evaluations by Western customers, known for their individualistic values, as compared to Asian customers. Specifically, Western customers place greater emphasis on physical attributes, such as business center facilities and room quality, cleanliness, in contrast to collectivist Asian customers (Mattila, 1999). Furthermore, Mattila (1999) indicated that variations in power distance also contribute to differences in evaluations. Western customers, influenced by self-oriented cultural values, may exhibit a preference for service dimensions associated with the hedonic aspects of their consumption.

Previous research consistently demonstrates that individuals from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, individualistic cultures, and lower power distance cultures tend to hold high expectations for service quality. This perception stems from their belief in having the authority to demand better service (Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Malhotra et al., 2005; Kueh and Voon, 2007; Witkowski and Wolfinbarger, 2002; Zhang et al., 2006). Tsotsou (2019) reinforced these findings through a comprehensive study examining cross-cultural differences in hotel evaluations from a supranational perspective, focused on variations in hotel evaluations by tourists from different regions of Europe, including Central, Eastern, Northern, and Southern Europe. Using Multivariate ANOVA, the study explored cultural differences in overall service evaluations and specific hotel attributes (value, location, sleep quality, room, cleanliness, and service) among tourists from these diverse European regions. The results illuminated that Eastern Europe, characterized by higher levels of power distance, collectivism, long-term orientation, and restraint, generally holds lower expectations for overall service quality. Consequently, individuals in these regions are more likely to be satisfied and less inclined to voice complaints about service failures, displaying less aggressive reactions. In Eastern Europe, cultural norms may discourage complaints, deeming them as bothersome (Usunier et al., 2005). Additionally, the phenomenon of customers in high power distance cultures tolerating existing service quality due to hierarchical norms was

observed. These customers may have lower expectations of staff service, feeling they lack the authority to demand better service, ultimately resulting in lower satisfaction levels.

Donthu and Yoo (1998) conducted research on the impact of cultural values on service quality expectations, focusing on bank services. Their findings revealed that individuals with low power distance, higher individualism, and short-term orientation held higher expectations of overall service quality compared to those with high power distance, greater collectivism, and long-term orientation. Further insights into the influence of Hofstede's cultural dimensions on customer attitudes towards their overall service experience were provided by Zhang et al. (2020). Their study utilized big data, analyzing guest reviews from 56 different countries for Paris hotels on TripAdvisor. The research uncovered that five cultural dimensions significantly affect various aspects of the hotel stay experience. Reviewers from cultures characterized by lower power distance, individualism, and higher indulgence were found to be more sensitive to tangible aspects of their hotel stay, such as room quality, cleanliness, and location. Additionally, individuals in societies with a short-term orientation placed greater emphasis on service aspects, in contrast to their long-term-oriented counterparts.

Price perception plays a crucial role in influencing customers' purchasing behavior, directly impacting their satisfaction, decisions to switch products or services, and the likelihood of making recommendations (Keaveney, 1995; Varki & Colgate, 2001). Individuals with long-term-oriented values tend to place a strong emphasis on frugality and wealth accumulation while focusing on future financial stability, leading to higher savings rates (Bearden et al., 2006). In China, frugality is not only seen as a virtue but also as a means to achieve long-term financial security. This perspective is rooted in the values of family and community, where saving is considered a way to provide for future generations and contribute to the well-being of the family and society (Hofstede, 2002). In comparison to Chinese culture, UK culture exhibits a distinct short-term orientation, emphasizing the past and present, immediate interests, respect for tradition, and social responsibility. The primary focus in the management of a short-term-oriented culture is on immediate profits (Hofstede, 2002).

Hofstede's cultural framework (1998, 2001) offers further insights, noting that China is often characterized as an introverted culture where restrained individuals emphasize controlling desires and impulses. In such cultures, like China, people tend to be more frugal and self-

controlled, displaying heightened awareness of their consumption. On the contrary, the UK is considered a culture of indulgence, prioritizing the satisfaction of personal needs and the enjoyment of life (Hofstede, 2001). Consequently, Chinese customers are less likely to engage in casual splurging and overspending on accommodations compared to UK reviewers, as this behavior can induce anxiety and discomfort. A study by Zhang et al. (2022) utilized Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory to conduct a detailed analysis of the cross-cultural experiences of customers in the context of peer-to-peer accommodations. Specifically, they compared UK and Chinese ratings of Airbnb accommodations in Beijing. The analysis of Airbnb reviews revealed that Chinese-speaking guests were more likely to express concerns about the price and value for money of their accommodation compared to their English-speaking guests. This difference can be attributed to both cross-cultural distinctions and economic factors (Zhang et al., 2022).

Accordingly, the following hypotheses were made:

H1: UK reviewers are expected to mention the room quality more frequently in online hotel reviews compared to Chinese reviewers.

H2: UK reviewers are expected to mention cleanliness more frequently in online hotel reviews compared to Chinese reviewers.

H3: UK reviewers are expected to mention the location more frequently in online hotel reviews compared to Chinese reviewers.

H4: UK reviewers are expected to mention staff service more frequently in online hotel reviews compared to Chinese reviewers.

H5: Chinese reviewers are expected to mention price more frequently in online hotel reviews compared to UK reviewers.

## 2.2 The Impact of Hall's Culture Dimension Visual Cues

### 2.2.1 Hall's Cultural Dimension

While online communication is increasingly becoming more globalized (Bennett, 2003), it is essential to note that cross-cultural research on online communication remains relatively limited (Cenni & Goethals, 2020). The cultural backgrounds of customers distinctly influence how they compose hotel online reviews, emphasizing the importance of recognizing variations in communication norms and politeness across different languages and cultures (Grainger and Mills, 2016). Hall's cultural dimension (Hall, 1976, 1989), widely acknowledged in cross-cultural research, has played a significant role in shaping our understanding of these dynamics (Warner-Søderholm, 2013). Hall (1976, 1989) particularly highlighted the role of cultural context in communication. His framework illustrates the diversity of world cultures by distinguishing between high-context and low-context cultures based on mainstream communication methods. Cross-linguistic studies often utilize Low-Context Cultural Theory (LCC) and High-Context Cultural Theory (HCC, Hall, 1976, Hall, 1982) as explanatory frameworks, shedding light on trends in cross-linguistic research. In these two types of cultures, the role of context and language in communication differs significantly. High-context cultures are characterized by the transmission of a significant portion of information through nonverbal and implicit communication, whereas low-context cultures rely more heavily on explicit statements and verbal communication (Hall, 1976). This interplay between culture and communication forms a crucial aspect of cross-cultural research, particularly in the realm of online interactions and hotel reviews.

### 2.2.2 Visual cues

Visual cues, defined as non-verbal signals conveying information visually (Foster, 1979), include various forms such as images, symbols, colors, shapes, body language, facial expressions, and other visual elements (Jones, 2013). These cues play a crucial role in communication, influencing the perception and interpretation of information in diverse contexts (Allison et al., 2000; Kundel, 1990; Williams et al., 2011). In the context of online hotel reviews, visual cues, including images, emoticons, and emphatic marks, contribute significantly to the overall communication and interpretation of guest feedback. Hotel online

review platforms allow guests to upload images of their hotel experiences. Analyzing these images can provide insight into aspects of the hotel that are particularly noteworthy for hotel guests, both positive and negative (Ma et al., 2018). The analysis of these images can influence the perceptions of potential customers. Emotions expressed in reviews through emoticons provide a quick visual reference, conveying and translating the emotional tone of a guest's experience (Riordan, 2017). Positive or negative emoticons, for instance, can provide a quick visual summary of the overall mood. Additionally, emphatic marks, such as exclamation points, question marks, and ellipses, also serve as nonverbal visual cues. Although they don't look the same as images or emoticons, punctuation serves as a nonverbal cue in written communication (Dresner & Herring, 2010). While they may not resemble images or emoticons, punctuation for achieving emphasis plays a crucial role in conveying emotion, nuance, and paralinguistic clues in written communication, especially in the realm of short messages in online languages (Dresner & Herring, 2010; Houghton et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2021; Wylie, 2020; Sampietro, 2016).

Visual cues can significantly vary across cultures due to differences in communication styles, symbolism, and the importance placed on nonverbal elements. These differences impact how individuals from diverse cultures interpret and utilize visual cues. Taking these considerations into account, Chik and Vásquez (2017) conducted a multimodal comparative analysis of online restaurant reviews from two distinct geographical contexts: Yelp in the United States and OpenRice in Hong Kong. Their study investigated the differences and similarities in both the mode and content of reviews, along with the use of symbolic resources such as photos and emojis. The findings revealed that both platforms employed emphatic punctuation, but OpenRice featured more reviews with photos and emojis. An interesting observation centered on the use of emoticons: OpenRice permitted users to incorporate emoticons in their reviews, a feature not available on Yelp. This distinction was attributed to the architectural differences of the sites, making it easier for OpenRice users to include emoticons. The study also suggested that the choice of symbols used reflected regional variations. However, it is essential to notice that the difference in posting photos on the two platforms was primarily attributed to disparities in their multi-modal architecture rather than direct cultural factors. For instance, Yelp reviewers have to take an extra step to post a photo, potentially reducing the frequency of photo postings in their reviews. The study offered possible explanations for these differences, considering the functionality of the respective sites and varying writing norms and conventions in the context of restaurant reviews. Notably, the study did not

explicitly pinpoint the cultural differences that might have contributed to these findings. Furthermore, the field of hotel online reviews was not explored in this area. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the differences and similarities between high and low-context cultures in visual cues within hotel online reviews.

### 2.2.3 Cultural Difference in Visual Cues

Given that Chinese culture tends to be high-context, emphasizing implicit communication and shared understanding in cultural context (Hall, 1976), the preference for using images and emoticons may align with the high-context nature. High-context cultures prioritize non-textual forms of communication, giving prominence to images and emoticons (Capece & Di Pillo, 2023), where visual representation allows for nuanced expression and shared cultural references. In low-context cultures such as the UK, communication tends to be more explicit, relying on direct verbal expression (Hall, 1976). Due to the cultural preference for direct communication through written language, the tendency to use images and emoticons is lower. Additionally, emphatic marks are considered a tool in both high-context and low-context cultures to achieve emphasis and structure in written communication (Schafer, 1988). Several studies have demonstrated that the concepts of high-context and low-context cultures have implications for how individuals from different cultures interpret visual cues (Hashmi & Waheed, 2020; Kaynak & Kara, 2013; Kavanagh, 2010; Würtz, 2005). In a study by Kavanagh (2010), Hall's (1976) high/low context distinction was applied to computer-mediated communication to analyze nonverbal communication representations in high and low-context cultures. The study selected a sample of 80 Japanese and English personal diary weblogs, categorizing them into blog topic content, entries, and comments, with a specific focus on emoji usage. The findings revealed that the use of nonverbal contextual cues is culturally rooted. High-context cultures, like Japan, extensively employ graphic symbols in their blog posts, irrespective of gender. In contrast, low-context cultures make less use of emoticons. Notably, the data also demonstrated that the use of emoticons is influenced by the blogger's gender and the specific blog topic, rather than the blog post itself. This influence stems from both the blogger and the blog commenters.

Würtz (2005) conducted a cross-cultural qualitative analysis of websites from high-context and low-context culture countries, aiming to explore the distinctions between these two types

of website samples while using Hall's framework to explain the differences. Websites representing high-context cultures included those from Japan, China, and South Korea, while websites from Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and the United States represented low-context cultures. The results revealed that both types of websites, primarily commercial in nature, made extensive use of images. However, it was evident that high-context culture websites used images more prominently to convey information. For instance, when it comes to website navigation elements, Japanese websites represented links to other pages using images instead of text, while Scandinavian websites used fewer images to guide visitors. This study investigated the use of various communication tools between high-context and low-context websites, emphasizing the reflection of cultural distinctions. These studies have analyzed the usage of visual cues on websites and personal blogs but did not explore how the distinction between low-context and high-context cultures influences visual cues in specific fields, such as online hotel reviews.

Based on the high-context culture of Chinese culture and the low-context culture of UK culture according to Hall's framework, the formulated hypotheses were as follows:

H6: Chinese reviewers are more likely to use images than UK reviewers in hotel online reviews.

H7: Chinese reviewers are more likely to use emoticons than UK reviewers in hotel online reviews.

H8: Chinese and UK reviewers demonstrate a similar usage pattern of emphatic marks in hotel online reviews.

### 3. Method

This study used quantitative content analysis of hotel reviews from popular review platforms in the UK and China, Booking.com and Ctrip.com respectively. By analyzing the reviews from the two countries based on Hofstede's and Hall's cultural model, this research sought to provide insights into the ways in which cultural differences impact the communication and interpretation of hotel reviews in intercultural contexts. The primary focus of our analysis revolved around hotel attributes and visual cues in accordance with the cultural model. The findings of this study have practical implications for the hospitality industry in improving intercultural communication and understanding, while also contributing to the fields of intercultural communication and new media studies.

#### *Material*

The study aimed to investigate the differences in online hotel reviews between UK and Chinese reviewers, focusing on discourse analysis related to hotel attributes (room quality, cleanliness, location, staff service, and price) and visual cues (images, emoticons, and emphatic marks). The comparison was conducted using two popular hotel booking websites, Booking.com for the UK and Ctrip.com for China. Booking.com, identified as the world's largest online hotel booking company, holds a prominent position in the UK's accommodation and hotel site landscape. In contrast, Ctrip.com, established in 1999, caters to the travel needs of Chinese tourists, aligning closely with their usage habits. Both platforms require reviewers to have completed at least one transaction before posting a review, ensuring authenticity. Reviewers can attach images and include emoticons in their reviews. Both platforms allow multiple entries of customer reviews for a single hotel, and additional information such as the reviewer's nationality, number of stays, and time of visit is displayed. However, there are some differences between the two platforms. Booking.com uses a star rating system from 1-10, while Ctrip.com uses a system from 1-5. Booking.com also segregates positive and negative reviews with emoticons of a smiling face and a sad face, respectively. The appendix 1 provides screenshots of a customer review page from Booking.com and Ctrip.com, offering a visual reference to the platforms' review sections.

In this study, Hilton Hotels, a globally recognized hotel management company, was chosen as the focal point for analyzing online reviews. Two specific hotels, Hilton London Wembley



and Hilton Beijing Wangfujing, were selected to represent the UK and China, respectively. These hotels were chosen based on their affiliation with Hilton and their high volume of online reviews on the respective platforms: Hilton London Wembley on Booking.com and Hilton Beijing Wangfujing on Ctrip.com.

Hilton London Wembley included 4,278 reviews on Booking.com, making it a substantial dataset for the UK representation. On the other hand, Hilton Beijing Wangfujing has 3,019 reviews on Ctrip.com, providing a significant dataset for China representation. The study's corpus comprised a total of 60 reviews, with 30 reviews collected from Booking.com for Hilton London Wembley and 30 reviews from Ctrip.com for Hilton Beijing Wangfujing. To ensure diversity and avoid redundancy, each of the 60 reviews was sourced from a different poster. The study focused on reviews posted during the period from January 1st to March 1st, 2023, representing the most current information available at that time. This timeframe aimed to provide the most up-to-date insights into online reviews for the chosen hotels.

### *Procedure*

This study used quantitative content analysis as its research methodology. Content analysis is a method that aims to interpret the meaning within a message's content in the form of writing, images, symbols, or audio by systematically categorizing and quantifying the content (Gheyle & Jacobs, 2017). It is a research method in which the features of textual, visual, or aural material are systematically categorized and recorded so that they can be analyzed (Coe and Scacco, 2017). According to Riffe et al. (2019), content analysis is 'the systematic assignment of communication content to categories and codes according to rules and the analysis of relationships involving those categories using statistical methods such as frequency.'

The study began by collecting a total of 60 hotel reviews, with 30 obtained from Booking.com and 30 from Ctrip.com. Chinese reviews were translated into English using Google Translator for uniformity. Subsequently, the researcher thoroughly read through the collected content multiple times to develop a comprehensive understanding. Following this, a coding scheme was devised to categorize hotel attributes (room quality, cleanliness, location, price, and service) and visual cues (images, emoticons, and emphatic marks). Coders underwent training on the coding scheme, receiving clear instructions on identifying and

coding relevant text to ensure reliability and validity. Each review was then coded according to the established scheme. As an illustrative example, a review by a Chinese guest stating, 'The hotel service is very good, and the restaurant chef is also very attentive!' would be coded as '1' under the staff service attribute, while other attributes not mentioned (room quality, cleanliness, location, and price) would be coded as '0' in their respective columns. Similar coding was applied for visual cues. Examples of the analysis for both Chinese and UK reviews are provided below.

	Chinese review	UK review
	酒店服务非常不错， 餐厅主厨也很用心！ 	Liked · Very good on service and Security
	The hotel service is very good, and the restaurant chef is also very attentive!	
<b>Coding Scheme</b>		
Hotel attributes	0	0
Room quality	0	0
Cleanliness	0	0
Location	0	0
Staff service	1	1
Price	0	0
Visual cues		
Images	1	0
Emoticons	0	0
Emphatic marks	1	0

### *Reliability*

To ensure the reliability of the coding process, coders underwent training on the coding scheme and received explicit instructions for identifying and coding relevant text. To further enhance the reliability and validity of the coding, a second coder, trained in qualitative content analysis, independently recoded 30 online reviews from each hotel platform. The inter-coder reliability, indicating the agreement between the two coders, was assessed by

assigning two online reviews to each coder from the two booking sites. After coding, both coders engaged in discussions to resolve any discrepancies and ensure agreement on the identified items. This iterative process aimed to strengthen the reliability and validity of the coding. The interrater reliability between the two coders was found to be satisfactory:  $\kappa = .94$ ,  $p < .001$ .

### *Statistical test*

As this study aimed to determine the occurrence of specific items related to hotel attributes and visual cues mentioned in each reviews. Several chi-squares were conducted using SPSS. The analysis involved calculating the occurrence of each item mentioned in the reviews.

## 4. Results

The primary objective of this study was to examine and compare how Chinese and UK reviewers express cultural differences when referring to specific hotel attributes in online reviews, utilizing the Hofstede cultural model. The study aimed to determine whether diverse cultural backgrounds influence the significance attributed to room quality, cleanliness, location, staff service, and price in evaluations of hotel experiences. Additionally, the research analyzed the use of visual cues in both Britain and China, drawing on Hall's differentiation between high-context and low-context cultures. This analysis investigated the different impacts of cultures in employing photos, emoticons, and emphatic marks in distinct contexts. The overarching goal was to contribute to a nuanced understanding of cross-cultural variations in expressing preferences and evaluations within the context of online hotel reviews. By examining these cultural differences, the study aimed to shed light on the intricacies of how individuals from different cultural backgrounds articulate their perceptions of various aspects of hotel experiences.

### Hotel Attributes

By employing chi-square analyses, the study aimed to reveal the association between the reviewers' country of origin (UK and China reviewers) and the frequency of mentions for each hotel attribute. The findings indicated that only H3, stating that UK reviewers mention the location more frequently than Chinese reviewers, was supported. Conversely, the other hypotheses were rejected. The results revealed that Chinese reviewers mentioned cleanliness and staff service more frequently than UK reviewers, while both groups of reviewers mentioned room quality and price in a similar manner. The count and percentage of each hotel attribute between UK reviewers and Chinese reviewers can be found in Table 1.

The chi-square test disclosed a non-significant association between the country of origin (UK and China reviewers) and mentions of room quality,  $\chi^2 (1) = 0.000$ ,  $p = 1.000$ . This indicated a lack of discernible difference in the manner in which Chinese and UK hotel online reviews reference room quality. Specifically, both UK and Chinese reviews exhibited a comparable pattern, with 19 reviews (63.3%) from each country explicitly addressing room quality, while 11 reviews (36.7%) in each country omitted any mention of room quality in their evaluations.

Consequently, H1 was not supported, signifying no difference in the frequency of mentions of room quality between UK and Chinese reviewers in hotel online reviews.

The results of the chi-square test revealed a significant difference between UK and Chinese hotel online reviews regarding the mentions of cleanliness ( $\chi^2 (1) = 5.934, p = .015$ ). Specifically, 50% of Chinese hotel reviews explicitly cited cleanliness as a factor in their assessments, highlighting a substantial emphasis on this attribute among Chinese reviewers. In contrast, a lower proportion of UK reviews (20%) made similar mentions of cleanliness, suggesting a comparatively lesser focus on this criterion among UK reviewers. In the context of UK reviews, a higher percentage (80%) refrained from referencing cleanliness, while Chinese hotel reviews demonstrated that only half of the reviews did not include any commentary about cleanliness. Contrary to H2, the observed pattern indicated a higher prevalence of explicit mentions of cleanliness in Chinese reviews compared to UK reviews.

The chi-square test conducted to explore the relationship between the country of origin and mentions of location in hotel online reviews yielded a significant association ( $\chi^2 (1) = 4.286, p = .038$ ). This finding provides insight into the distinct ways in which Chinese and UK reviewers address the aspect of location in their evaluations of hotel experiences. Specifically, in Chinese hotel online reviews, mentions of location were present in 10 instances, constituting 33.3% of the total reviews. In contrast, the majority of Chinese reviews (66.7%) did not include any commentary about the location aspect. Conversely, UK hotel online reviews exhibited a different pattern, with 60% of reviews explicitly mentioning location and 40% not addressing this criterion in their evaluations. The observed results supported H3, indicating that UK reviewers indeed mention location more frequently than Chinese reviewers. The results also highlighted that the consideration of location in evaluations differs significantly between reviewers from the UK and China.

A significant difference emerged between UK and Chinese hotel online reviews regarding mentions of staff service, as evidenced by the chi-square analysis ( $\chi^2 (1) = 9.32, p = .002$ ). In Chinese hotel online reviews, there was a substantial prevalence of mentions related to service staff. Specifically, 26 reviews (86.7%) featured explicit commentary about service staff, underscoring the significance of this aspect in the evaluations from Chinese reviewers. In contrast, a relatively small number of Chinese reviews (13.3%) refrained from including commentary about service staff. Conversely, within the context of UK hotel online reviews, a

more balanced distribution was observed. Half of the reviews (50%) explicitly mentioned service staff, emphasizing their role in the hotel experience, while an equivalent number of reviews (50%) did not address service staff in their assessments. The outcome contradicted H4, which posited that UK reviewers would mention service staff more frequently than Chinese reviewers. Instead, the findings suggested that Chinese reviewers placed a higher emphasis on mentioning service staff in their evaluations compared to UK reviewers.

Table 1. Counts and Percentages of Mentioned and Not Mentioned Hotel Attributes and Visual Cues in Chinese and UK Online Hotel Reviews

Variables	Chinese reviews		UK reviews		<i>P</i>
	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned	Not mentioned	
<b>Hotel attributions</b>					
Room quality	19 (63.3%)	11(36.7%)	19 (63.3%)	11(36.7%)	1.000
Cleanliness	15 (50.0%)	15 (50.0%)	6 (20.0%)	24 (80.0%)	0.15
Location	10 (33.3%)	20 (66.7%)	18 (60.0%)	12 (40.00%)	0.038
Staff service	26 (86.7%)	4 (13.3%)	15 (50.0%)	15 (50.0%)	.002
Price	7 (23.3%)	23 (76.6%)	8 (26.7%)	22 (73.3%)	.766
<b>Visual cues</b>					
Images	23 (76.6%)	7(23.3%)	3 (10.0%)	27 (90.0%)	<.001
Emoticons	7 (23.3%)	23 (76.6%)	0 (0.0%)	30 (100.0%)	0.005
Emphatic marks	9(30%)	21 (70%)	6 (20.0%)	24 (80%)	.178

The chi-square test examining the relationship between the country of origin of reviewers and mentions of prices in hotel online reviews yielded a non-significant result ( $\chi^2 (1) = 0.089$ ,  $p = .776$ ). Within the realm of Chinese hotel online reviews, prices were mentioned in 7 reviews (23.3%), while a majority of 23 reviews (76.6%) refrained from discussing pricing matters. Similarly, in the context of UK hotel online reviews, 8 reviews (26.7%) made reference to prices, and 22 reviews (73.3%) abstained from including price-related commentary. The non-significant result contradicted H5, which posited that UK and Chinese reviewers would differ in their propensity to mention prices in hotel online reviews. The findings suggested that both UK and Chinese reviewers mentioned prices in a similar way when evaluating their hotel experiences.

## Visual Cues

A chi-square analysis was conducted to explore the difference between the reviewers' country of origin (UK and China) and the incorporation of various visual cues, encompassing images, emoticons, and emphatic marks, in online hotel reviews. The findings illuminated a association between the cultural backgrounds of reviewers and their use of visual elements. Specifically, Chinese reviewers exhibited a more frequent utilization of images and emoticons compared to UK reviewers. This aligns with the anticipated outcomes posited in H6 and H7, emphasizing that Chinese reviewers are more inclined to use both images and emoticons in online hotel reviews. Concurrently, the analysis revealed a similar usage pattern of emphatic marks between Chinese and UK reviewers, affirming H8. The count and percentage of each visual cue between UK reviewers and Chinese reviews can be found in table 1.

In the pursuit of understanding the influence of reviewers' country of origin, specifically distinguishing between the UK and China, on the presence of visual cues such as images in online hotel reviews, a comprehensive chi-square analysis was undertaken. The results revealed a conspicuous and statistically significant difference, as evidenced by the chi-square statistic of 27.15 with one degree of freedom ( $\chi^2 = 27.15$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Delving into the specifics, it became evident that Chinese reviews, constituting 23 out of 30 (76.6%), manifested a higher frequency of mentions related to images compared to UK reviewers. In contrast, only 3 out of 30 UK reviews (10.0%) made any mention of images. Furthermore, while 7 Chinese reviews (23.3%) did not incorporate images, a substantial proportion of 27 UK reviews (90.0%) abstained from featuring any images. The outcomes of this analysis substantiated H6, affirming a statistically significant discrepancy in the utilization of images in online hotel reviews, with a higher prevalence in Chinese reviews and a notably lower occurrence in UK reviews.

A chi-square test of independence was employed to examine the relationship between the country of origin of reviews, distinguishing between China and the UK, and the incorporation of emoticons in online hotel reviews. The analysis revealed a statistically significant association between these variables, as indicated by the calculated chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2 (1) = 9.93$ ,  $p = .005$ ). Chinese reviews demonstrated a greater likelihood of mentioning emojis, with 7 out of 30 (23.3%) Chinese reviews incorporating them into their assessments. Notably,

the remaining 23 Chinese reviews (76.6%) refrained from any mention of emoticons. In contrast, none of the UK reviews utilized emoticons in their evaluations. Thus, H7 was substantiated by the findings, affirming that Chinese reviews exhibited a more pronounced tendency to include emoticons compared to UK reviewers.

To explore the potential relationship between the country of origin of reviews (China and the UK) and the use of emphatic marks in online hotel reviews, a chi-square test of independence was conducted. The findings revealed no statistically significant difference between Chinese and UK reviews regarding the incorporation of emphatic marks ( $\chi^2(1) = 3.45, p = .178$ ). Specifically, it was observed that 9 Chinese reviews (30%) mentioned emphatic marks, comparable to the proportion of 6 UK reviews (20%) that also included them. Similarly, a substantial number of 21 Chinese reviews (70%) did not incorporate emphatic marks, mirroring the pattern observed in 24 UK reviews (80%). Thus, H8 was substantiated by the analysis, indicating a similarity in the expression of emphatic marks between UK and Chinese reviews.



## **5. Conclusion/Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine hotel online reviews from a cross-cultural perspective, focusing on the differences and commonalities between Chinese and UK perspectives. Recognizing that cultural background can significantly influence individuals' evaluations, verbal expressions, visual cues, and attention to specific hotel attributes, this study sought to uncover how consumers from different cultures express their experiences through online reviews.

### **Hotel Attributes**

H1 and H2 predicted that UK reviewers are expected to mention room quality and cleanliness more frequently in their online hotel reviews compared to Chinese reviewers. Contrary to these expectations, UK reviewers were anticipated to emphasize room quality similarly in their online hotel reviews compared to Chinese reviewers and had a lower prevalence of explicit mentions of cleanliness compared to Chinese reviews. This finding contradicts previous findings that Western cultures with high individualism typically place greater importance on physical aspects such as room quality and cleanliness than Asian cultures with collectivism (Mattila, 1999). The similar emphasis on room quality in the UK and China may be more directly related to a shared cultural emphasis on personal preference or experience. Despite differences between individualism and collectivism, both cultures can prioritize personal comfort and enjoyment in hotel reviews. Regarding the higher mention of cleanliness in Chinese reviews, previous studies by Seo (2012) and Galati and Galati (2019) reveal the same result as the present study: that Chinese people emphasize room-related aspects such as room quality, cleanliness, and comfort more than other cultures. This emphasis could be due to different cultures valuing cleanliness and hygiene differently. In Chinese culture, there is a statement that 'weisheng (Hygiene) is about guarding health' (Lei, 2009), therefore, cleanliness is highly valued in Chinese culture (Gu and Ryan, 2008; Sun, 2014), not only as a personal preference but also as a social norm. This might raise awareness and explicitly mention cleanliness in reviews. Additionally, Tsiotsou (2019) sheds light on this matter by revealing that those staying with friends tended to rate the overall experience, room, and cleanliness of the hotel lower than those staying with family. In collectivist cultures, family relationships are usually more valued and prioritized than friendships,

potentially resulting in more Chinese travelers journeying with family members. The quality and cleanliness of a room can directly impact a family's shared experience, resulting in more frequent mentions in reviews when the family travels.

As anticipated, H3 was supported, indicating that UK reviewers did mention location more frequently than Chinese reviewers. This finding aligns with previous research by Mattila (1999) and Zhang et al. (2020), which suggested that Western customers, with lower power distance, a more individualistic orientation, and a higher indulgence culture, tend to emphasize location. The emphasis on location in UK hotel online reviews may stem from values of indulgence and individualism. UK reviewers prioritize proximity to attractions, convenience, and personal preferences related to location, appreciating the enjoyment that comes with location convenience. In a collectivist culture like China, the emphasis on holding personal preferences may be less prominent in reviews, with the focus being on the shared experience or broader aspects of the hotel stay. Therefore, location may not be explicitly mentioned, as it might be perceived as less beneficial on an individual level. Additionally, hotel attributes are mentioned to varying degrees depending on the type of traveler (Tsiotsou, 2019; Galati and Galati, 2019). Different traveler types, such as families, friends, couples, singles, and business travelers, influence the perception of hotel attributes. This variance arises due to the different expectations and needs of each group, resulting in diverse perceptions of the same hotel experience. Each traveler category possesses unique preferences and priorities that shape their evaluation and perception of various aspects of a stay, ultimately impacting their overall satisfaction with the hotel.

Contrary to expectations, H4 was rejected, as fewer mentions of staff services were identified in UK hotel reviews, deviating from the established literature (Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Malhotra et al., 2005; Kueh and Voon, 2007; Witkowski and Wolfinbarger, 2002; Zhang et al., 2006) that often associates service mentions with individualism, short-term orientation, and low power distance. Surprisingly, this study found that Chinese reviewers mentioned staff service more frequently than UK reviewers. Research by scholars such as Hsu and Kang (2003), Kuo (2007), Manrai and Manrai (2011), and Tsang and Ap (2007) has confirmed that Asian tourists generally tend to have higher expectations and evaluate service performance differently than Western tourists. These differences are often attributed to variations in collectivism and power distance. Chinese culture, being collectivistic, may lead Chinese tourists to expect more courtesy and consideration in groups than as individuals in

individualistic societies. According to Liu et al. (2001), collectivist customers are less inclined to change service providers and file complaints, tending to express admiration for excellent service. In contrast, individualistic North American customers are more likely to switch providers or file complaints than offer praise for exceptional service. Given that Hilton is a luxury hotel with systematically trained staff, guests with low expectations often receive quality service, exceeding their expectations. Consequently, Chinese reviewers from a collectivist culture are more likely to praise the service staff in their reviews to acknowledge their efforts and maintain a sense of harmony that collectivist cultures emphasize.

Additionally, tourists from Asian cultures may exhibit greater power distance than tourists from Western cultures (Hsu & Kang, 2003; Kuo, 2007; Manrai & Manrai, 2011; Tsang & Ap, 2007). They value their social status and may view themselves as more powerful than the service provider, expecting higher levels of respect and quality service. China's higher power distance inclines reviewers to mention employee service when obtaining respect and attentive service from employees as a way of acknowledging the importance of respectful interactions (Cao & Phan, 2015).

Interestingly, our study revealed no significant difference in the mentions of price in hotel reviews between UK and Chinese reviewers, suggesting that both groups shared similar concerns in this regard. H5 was rejected. This finding contradicts the results of Zhang et al. (2022), which indicated that Chinese-speaking guests tend to be more concerned about the price and value for money of their accommodation compared to English-speaking guests. The observed similarity in concerns about cost between the two cultural groups may imply that considerations related to the price of hotel accommodation are universal and not strictly tied to specific cultural values. The cost of hotel stays represents a concrete and tangible issue that transcends cultural orientations. Soman and Cheema (2011) proposed that economic factors may play a role in shaping concerns about cost, with low-income customers being more attentive to the value for money. In the context of Hilton hotels, where customers likely have higher incomes, it seems that they pay less attention to considerations of value for money during their stay. This suggests that economic factors, rather than cultural differences, might be influencing the importance placed on cost-related aspects in hotel reviews.

## Visual Cues

The Chinese reviewers, rooted in their high-context culture, tend to prefer detailed expressions conveyed through images and emoticons. In contrast, the low-context UK culture leans towards direct verbal communication, resulting in a lower prevalence of visual elements. Emphatic marks, commonly utilized in both cultures for structured written communication, were expected to exhibit similarities. Hypotheses H6, H7, and H8 posited that Chinese reviewers would use more photos and emoticons compared to UK reviewers, but both cultures would demonstrate a similar usage pattern of emphatic marks in hotel online reviews. The data supported these hypotheses, revealing a significantly higher percentage of photos and emojis in Chinese reviews compared to UK reviews. Moreover, there was no substantial difference between UK and Chinese reviews in terms of the use of emphatic marks. This finding aligns with the conclusions drawn by Chik and Vásquez (2017), which suggested that the use of emphatic punctuation remains consistent between Eastern and Western countries, while Eastern countries exhibit a higher usage of photos and emojis. Both regions in this study employed exclamatory marks (!) to convey strong feelings and three dots (...) to express dissatisfaction, highlighting a shared visual resource for emphasizing tone and impact in reviews. Moreover, the similar use of emphatic marks may indicate the globalization of interactions online, where standardized practices on platforms encourage reviewers, regardless of cultural background, to adopt similar punctuation styles for enhanced readability and emphasis in written communications (Poyatos, 1981; Miller, 2011; Salvacion & Limpot, 2022; Saussy, 2006).

The results of our study align with previous research indicating that high-context cultures tend to employ emoticons and images more extensively in online communication compared to low-context cultures (Würtlz, 2005; Barry, 2010; Chik and Vásquez, 2017; Capece & Di Pillo, 2023). This reinforces the notion that the level of context culture significantly influences the use of visual cues, with reviewers in high-context cultures showing a preference for visuals to convey messages effectively. The greater use of images and emoticons by Chinese reviewers is consistent with the characteristics of high-context communication styles. In contrast, Britain's low-context culture typically favors more direct communication, potentially leading to a lower use of emoticons. This inclination may be linked to a preference for clear and unambiguous verbal communication, minimizing the reliance on additional visual or symbolic elements. The observed differences in the use of

images and emoticons between Chinese and UK reviews underscore the cross-cultural distinctions in expressing emotions within the context of online hotel reviews.

Chik and Vásquez (2017) also observe that a website's user interface and review format design can influence the use of visual cues. In our study, the two selected websites featured distinct review formats and functional attributes. For example, Booking.com incorporated two separate sections in its reviews, utilizing smiley face or frown emojis to represent positive and negative aspects. This format allowed reviewers to address the hotel's strengths and weaknesses in distinct blocks. In contrast, Ctrip did not differentiate between positive and negative reviews, allowing customers to compose their reviews in an open space. This difference in design is noteworthy, and it is plausible that Booking.com's use of emoticons already provided reviewers with a straightforward way to express their sentiments, using a simple smiley face or frown emoji, potentially reducing the need for additional emoticon usage. It is worth noting that Ctrip.com offers a more user-friendly and intuitive design that encourages users to effortlessly upload and share images in their reviews. The inclusion of prominent "upload photo" buttons and clear instructions makes it easy for users to add images, potentially driving an increase in image usage (see appendix 1).

In summary, the research underscored that cultural differences indeed influence distinct and shared characteristics in hotel guests' online reviews. Reviewers from China and the UK exhibited both similarities and differences in their focal points when evaluating hotel experiences. This pattern extended to the visual cues present in the review they provide. In essence, cultural differences play a role in shaping the communication of hotel reviews. However, it is essential to recognize that individual habits and preferences also contribute to variations in the communication methods employed in these hotel reviews.

## 6. Limitations and Recommendations

Despite the valuable insights gleaned from this study, several limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size, consisting of only 60 reviews, with 30 from each country, may limit the generalizability of the findings. The small sample size restricts the scope of the study and may not capture the full spectrum of nuances within the diverse cultural contexts of the UK and China. Additionally, the study's focus on only two specific platforms, Booking.com and Ctrip.com, may not fully represent the entire landscape of online hotel review platforms in these two countries. Other platforms (e.g. Tripadvisor.com) with different user demographics and interface designs could yield different results.

Moreover, the examination of only two countries, the UK and China, might not be fully representative of the broader Western and Eastern cultural diversity. To provide a more comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural dimensions, future research should aim for larger and more diverse sample sizes, encompassing a broader range of online review platforms and cultural contexts.

The influence of gender on the use of emoticons, as highlighted by previous research (Barry, 2020), was not accounted for in this study. Similarly, the specific group composition of travelers, whether families, couples, friends, or business travelers, as discussed by Tsiotsou (2019) and Matzler et al. (2006), could have influenced the content and tone of the reviews. Future studies should consider the identification of gender and the group dynamics of travelers to provide a more understanding of how these factors interact with cultural dimensions in the context of online reviews.

Furthermore, while this study used the Hofstede cultural dimensions, which consist of six dimensions, the present study only incorporated five dimensions. The exclusion of the dimension related to high uncertainty is noteworthy. Both the UK and China demonstrated very similar scores (30 and 35, respectively) in this dimension. This dimension might play a significant role in shaping hotel reviews, potentially influencing communication methods. Future research should include this dimension to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its impact on hotel reviews and communication strategies.

Moreover, while many researchers assigned cultural values based on nationality, it is important to acknowledge that individuals may be influenced by various cultural values due to globalization and cultural diversity (Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2017). Future research should aim to assess individuals' cultural values directly, recognizing the potential influence of globalization and the interaction of various cultural influences on individuals' behaviors and perceptions. Although challenging, this approach could provide a more understanding of the interplay between individual and cultural-level factors in shaping online review behaviour. Limiting the analysis to reviews in English and Chinese overlooks valuable insights that could be gleaned from other languages.

In today's connected world, where multilingualism is becoming more prevalent, it is critical to recognize the impact of multilingual individuals on online reviews. Bilingual and multilingual individuals often switch between multiple languages, and their linguistic flexibility may significantly affect the way they express their experiences and evaluations. Therefore, reviews in other languages and the role of multilingual individuals in shaping online discourse need to be considered in the future research.

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1

### Booking.com

#### Guest reviews

Sort reviews by: Most relevant

**Chloe** Denmark

★ **Reviewers' choice** Reviewed: 14 November 2021 10

**it was perfect for a short stay! delivers exactly what it says**

😊 · everything! great location. clean and spacious room, helpful staff! I left my charger in the room and the cleaning team were super quick to retrieve it, the front desk staff assisted super well with this!

👍 Helpful    👎 Not helpful

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**Ian** United Kingdom

Reviewed: 28 February 2023 9.0

**Spotless & Comfortable!**

😊 · Pool facilities & steam room! Comfortable bed (Great pillows!)

😞 · Prefer full shower to a bath/shower but personal preference.

👍 Helpful    👎 Not helpful

### Ctrip.com

120758\*\*\*\*

5/5 超棒 **Excellent**

lucy nice

👍 有用

Dear Customer, thanks for choosing Hilton Beijing Wangfujing and providing positive feedback, we will keep high-quality service, hope to see you next time! wish you a good life!

2021年4月23日发布

**酒店回复**

尊敬的宾客，感谢您选择下榻北京通州北投希尔顿酒店并给予好评，我们会继续保持高品质服务，期待您的下次归来！祝您生活愉快！

---

M6748\*\*\*\*

4.7/5 很好 **Good**

泳池棒，早餐丰盛

**Great pool, great breakfast**

2021年5月5日发布



## Appendix 2

Hilton London Wembley

<https://www.booking.com/hotel/gb/hilton-wembley.en-gb.html?aid=356980&label=gog235jc-1DCAIYZShQOAdICVgDaKkBiAEBmAEJuAEHyAEM2AED6AEB-AECiAIBqAIDuAL5t4SgBsACAdICJDc4NWRjNTMzLTFjY2UtNGFhOC04ZjE2LTQ3N2ZhN2EyMDkxONgCBOACAQ&sid=60b2e7aae9956104e37be1f6be4cc59e>

Hilton Beijing Wangfujing

<https://hotels.ctrip.com/hotels/detail/?hotelId=347308&checkIn=2023-03-03&checkOut=2023-03-04&cityId=1&minprice=&mincurr=&adult=1&children=0&ages=&crn=1&curr=&fgt=&stand=&stdcode=&hpaopts=&mproom=&ouid=&shoppingid=&roomkey=&highprice=-1&lowprice=0&showtotalamt=&hotelUniqueKey=>