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The Effect of Cultural Competence on Customer Experience and Revisit Intention

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Master in Hospitality and Tourism Management

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Resumo

Este estudo foi desenvolvido para examinar o impacto da competência cultural dos colaboradores na experiência do cliente e na intenção de revisita em restaurantes de hotéis de cinco estrelas em Macau. Os dados foram recolhidos junto de turistas e residentes que tinham frequentado restaurantes de hotéis de luxo em Macau. Foram obtidas 165 respostas válidas. A análise dos dados foi realizada através de modelação de equações estruturais (SEM), mais especificamente, Partial Least Squares (PLS), utilizando o software SmartPLS 4. Foram ainda realizadas análises adicionais com recurso à Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA), Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA) e fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA). Verificou-se que a consciência cultural e as competências culturais têm um efeito significativo na experiência do cliente, enquanto o conhecimento cultural não apresenta um efeito significativo. Além disso, a experiência do cliente revelou ter um efeito significativo na intenção de revisita. Na presente análise, a experiência do cliente foi introduzida como variável mediadora e verificou-se que medeia totalmente a relação entre a consciência cultural e a intenção de revisita, bem como entre as competências culturais e a intenção de revisita. O conhecimento cultural não apresentou um efeito mediador significativo. Os resultados da IPMA mostram que as competências culturais têm a maior importância para a experiência do cliente, seguidas da consciência cultural, enquanto o conhecimento cultural apresenta a menor importância. Os resultados da NCA indicam que a experiência do cliente é a única condição necessária para a intenção de revisita. Os resultados da fsQCA revelam que múltiplas configurações conduzem tanto a níveis elevados como reduzidos de intenção de revisita, indicando a presença de equifinalidade.

Palavras-chave: Competência cultural, Experiência do cliente, Intenção de revisita, Inteligência cultural, Hotelaria de luxo, Macau

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Abstract

This study was designed to examine the impact of employees' cultural competence on customer experience and revisit intention in five-star luxury hotel restaurants in Macau. Data were collected from tourists and residents who had dined in luxury hotel restaurants in Macau, resulting in 165 usable responses. Data analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling (SEM), more specifically partial least squares (PLS), using SmartPLS 4 software. Additional analyses were conducted using Importance Performance Map Analysis (IPMA), Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA), and fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA). The findings show that cultural competence awareness and cultural competence skills significantly influence customer experience, while cultural competence knowledge does not show a significant effect. Furthermore, customer experience was found to significantly influence revisit intention. In our analysis, customer experience was introduced as the mediating variable and was found to fully mediate the relationship between cultural competence awareness and revisit intention, as well as between cultural competence skills and revisit intention. Cultural competence knowledge was not found to have a significant mediating effect. Additional analyses provide further insight into these relationships. The IPMA results indicate that cultural competence skills have the highest importance for customer experience, followed by awareness, while knowledge shows the lowest importance. The NCA results indicate that customer experience is the only necessary condition for revisit intention. The fsQCA results reveal that multiple configurations lead to both high and low revisit intention, indicating the presence of equifinality.

Keywords: Cultural competence, Customer experience, Revisit intention, Cultural intelligence, Luxury Hotel Restaurants, Macau

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Introduction

In contemporary hospitality research, customer experience is increasingly recognized as a strategic driver of organizational performance (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Ostrom et al., 2021). However, much of this literature implicitly assumes that experiences are formed within culturally neutral environments. As service encounters become increasingly global and culturally diverse, this assumption becomes increasingly problematic (De Keyser et al., 2020). Guests interpret interactions through culturally embedded norms, expectations, and cognitive frames (Delgado et al., 2023). In such context, understanding how experiences are constructed requires attention not only to what is delivered, but to how service behaviors are interpreted across cultural boundaries.

This challenge is especially visible in international destinations such as Macau, where 5-star luxury hotel restaurants operate at the intersection of global tourism flows and strong local cultural identity. Service employees routinely engage with guests from diverse linguistic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, transforming routine service interactions into cross-cultural exchanges (Grobelna, 2015). In these environments, technical efficiency and standardized service scripts are insufficient. What becomes central is employees' ability to function effectively across cultural differences. Cultural competence, understood as the awareness, contextual knowledge, and adaptive interpersonal skills required to navigate intercultural interactions (Alizadeh & Chavan, 2016; Vrontis et al., 2021), is a distinct capability that goes beyond general service quality or interpersonal friendliness.

Service behaviors in culturally diverse settings function as interpretive cues. Customers rely on culturally grounded schemas to evaluate whether interactions signal respect, understanding, and relational attentiveness (De Keyser et al., 2020). When employees demonstrate cultural awareness and behavioral adaptability, these actions may validate guests' identities and reduce perceived cultural distance (Hsiao et al., 2021). Such cues shape internal evaluations of the encounter, influencing whether the experience is perceived as merely satisfactory or genuinely meaningful. Prior research indicates that personalization strengthens emotional connections and enhances overall customer experience (Gahler et al., 2023). In multicultural hospitality environments, however, personalization may depend less on standardized customization and more on culturally responsive adaptation.

Customer experience subsequently influences behavioral intentions. Within tourism research, revisit intention is a central indicator of long-term performance because it captures customers' willingness to return and sustain relational ties (Libre et al., 2022). Memorable

customer experiences can strengthen customers' emotional attachment while also encouraging positive word of mouth and revisit intention (Kim & So, 2022), while positive experiential evaluations increase perceived value and repeat visitation (Zakiah et al., 2023). Customer experience represents the internal evaluative state through which observable service behaviors translate into future behavioral responses (Peng et al., 2022). Positive and memorable customer experiences can strengthen customers' emotional attachment while also encouraging favorable behavioral outcomes, such as positive word of mouth and revisit intention (Kim & So, 2022) al., 2023). If experiential judgments are culturally contingent, then revisit intentions may also be indirectly shaped by employees' intercultural capabilities.

Despite growing recognition of culture in service research, the role of employees' cultural competence in shaping the formation of customer experience remains conceptually underdeveloped. Existing studies frequently examine cultural competence in relation to employee outcomes or organizational performance (Alshaibani & Bakir, 2017; Hsiao et al., 2021), while customer experience models often treat service encounters as culturally homogeneous. Moreover, five-star luxury restaurant settings, where experiential evaluation is central and cultural sensitivity is implicitly expected, remain comparatively underexamined (Manfreda et al., 2022; Shankman, 2019). As a result, the mechanisms through which culturally adaptive service behaviors influence experiential judgments and subsequent revisit intentions are not fully understood.

Addressing this conceptual gap, the present study investigates the influence of cultural competence awareness, knowledge, and skills on customer experience, and the subsequent effect of customer experience on revisit intention within luxury hotel restaurants in Macau. By conceptualizing cultural competence as a multidimensional adaptive capability and positioning customer experience as the evaluative mechanism linking culturally responsive service behaviors to behavioral outcomes, this research advances hospitality scholarship in two ways. First, it reconceptualizes customer experience formation as culturally contingent rather than culturally neutral. Second, it clarifies the process through which intercultural service interactions contribute to long term customer loyalty. These insights provide both theoretical refinement and practical guidance for managers operating in increasingly globalized hospitality markets.

Accordingly, the study is guided by the following primary research question:

To what extent and through what mechanism do employees' cultural competence awareness, knowledge, and skills shape customer experience and subsequently influence revisit intention in five-star luxury hotel restaurants in Macau?

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Cultural Competence and Customer Experience

Cultural competence is widely recognized as an important capability in hospitality, particularly in service environments where customers come from diverse cultural backgrounds. In such contexts, guests expect to be understood, respected, and appropriately served during their interactions with employees (Lashley, 2000). This is especially relevant in luxury hotel restaurants, where service encounters are central to value creation and where customers evaluate not only the technical quality of service but also how the interaction is delivered.

Prior research conceptualizes cultural competence as a multidimensional construct consisting of awareness, knowledge, and skills (Bharwani & Jauhari, 2013; Hsiao et al., 2021). Cultural awareness reflects sensitivity toward customers' values and cultural differences, cultural knowledge refers to familiarity with cultural norms and expectations, while cultural skills represent the ability to adapt behavior and deliver personalized service during interactions (Comeaux et al., 2023; Pratono & Arli, 2020). Together, these dimensions have been associated with improved service interactions, stronger customer relationships, and more positive customer experiences in multicultural hospitality settings (Hosany et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2018).

The role of cultural competence in intercultural service encounters can also be explained through Cultural Intelligence (CQ) theory. CQ refers to an individual's ability to interact and adapt effectively in culturally diverse situations (Earley & Ang, 2003). In hospitality settings, CQ enables employees not only to understand the diverse needs of customers from different cultural backgrounds but also to adjust their behavior appropriately during cross-cultural interactions (Van Dyne et al., 2010). Accordingly, employees with higher CQ are better able to translate cultural understanding into adaptive interpersonal behaviors during service encounters, thereby enhancing customers' evaluations of the service experience (Magnusson et al., 2013).

Customer experience in hospitality is largely shaped through direct interactions between customers and frontline employees during service encounters. Hotels and restaurants are highly service-intensive environments in which interpersonal exchanges play a central role in forming customers' cognitive and emotional evaluations of the experience. From the customer's perspective, employees' understanding of their culture can facilitate positive exchanges and contribute to more pleasant and memorable service experiences (Hosany et al., 2022). Positive service interactions are more likely to create favorable experiences when

employees demonstrate culturally sensitive, respectful, and personalized behavior aligned with customers' expectations and cultural backgrounds (Hsiao et al., 2023).

However, existing research has largely examined cultural competence as a unified construct, with limited attention given to the distinct effects of its individual dimensions on customer experience. This distinction may be particularly important in hospitality contexts, where customers evaluate service encounters based on what they directly experience during employee interactions. In experiential and relational service settings such as luxury hotel restaurants, customers are more likely to observe employees' culturally sensitive behaviors and adaptive communication than their underlying cultural knowledge, as cultural knowledge may remain abstract unless translated into visible service behaviors (Hsiao et al., 2023). Consequently, more visible dimensions such as awareness and skills may play a stronger role in shaping customer experience. This perspective is consistent with CQ theory, which emphasizes that effective intercultural interactions depend not only on possessing cultural understanding but also on the ability to behaviorally adapt during service encounters (Ang et al., 2015).

Despite the growing importance of cultural competence in hospitality, limited research has examined the distinct effects of its dimensions in luxury service contexts, where customer expectations are high and service delivery is highly personalized (Hsiao et al., 2021). Drawing on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, cultural competence can be understood as a service-related stimulus that shapes customers' internal evaluations. Within this framework, employees' culturally competent behaviors influence customers' cognitive and emotional responses, which in turn form their overall experience (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Based on this reasoning, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a: Employees' cultural competence awareness affects customer experience.

H1b: Employees' cultural competence knowledge affects customer experience.

H1c: Employees' cultural competence skills affect customer experience.

Customer Experience and Revisit Intention

Customer experience is a central concept in hospitality and is widely recognized as a key driver of customer loyalty and behavioral intention (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). In hospitality contexts, customer experience encompasses cognitive and emotional evaluations formed through direct interactions with employees and the service environment (De Keyser et al., 2020). Given the experiential and relational nature of hospitality services, service encounters are critical in

shaping customers' perceptions and evaluations of their overall experience. Positive employee-customer interactions can enhance perceived value, intensify emotional responses, and lead to more favorable evaluations of the service encounter (Kim & Qu, 2020; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2003).

In multicultural hospitality environments, employees' capacity to understand and respond to cultural differences is increasingly important for shaping customer experience (Pizam, 2014; Sucher & Cheung, 2015). Culturally sensitive interactions enable employees to deliver more personalized, respectful, and emotionally positive experiences for customers from diverse backgrounds. According to the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, employee behaviors and social interactions act as service-related stimuli that influence customers' internal cognitive and affective evaluations, thereby shaping their behavioral responses and outcomes (Eroglu et al., 2001; Pizam & Tasci, 2019).

Prior research shows that positive customer experiences contribute to favorable behavioral outcomes, including customer loyalty and revisit intention (Flavián et al., 2019; Tran & Strutton, 2020). Customers who perceive their service experiences as positive, meaningful, and memorable are more likely to revisit the service provider and maintain long-term relationships. In luxury hospitality settings, where experiences are highly personalized and interaction-driven, customer experience therefore becomes an important predictor of revisit intention. Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Customer experience positively affects revisit intention.

Customer Experience between Cultural Competence and Revisit Intention

The relationship between cultural competence and revisit intention is unlikely to be purely direct. Previous research suggests that cultural differences influence how customers evaluate service performance and form satisfaction judgments (Basfirinci & Mitra, 2015). Service employees are therefore expected to adapt their behavior to accommodate diverse customer expectations (Mariani et al., 2018). However, the impact of such behavior on future intentions depends on how customers interpret and evaluate the interaction.

Customer experience arises from the interaction between the customer and the service provider and represents the process through which service inputs are translated into outcomes (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). Within the SOR framework, cultural competence awareness, knowledge, and skills can be understood as service-related stimuli that shape customers' internal evaluations. When employees demonstrate cultural competence, customers may perceive these behaviors as respectful, personalized, and appropriate. These perceptions enhance the overall experience of the service encounter, thereby increasing customers'

likelihood of revisiting. This suggests that customer experience plays a mediating role in the relationship between cultural competence and behavioral outcomes.

Furthermore, the mediating effect may differ across the dimensions of cultural competence. As awareness and skills are more directly observable during service interactions, they may have a stronger influence on customer experience and subsequent behavioral intentions. In contrast, cultural knowledge may have a more limited effect if it is not visibly enacted. Based on this reasoning, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H3a: Customer experience mediates the relationship between cultural competence awareness and revisit intention.
- H3b: Customer experience mediates the relationship between cultural competence knowledge and revisit intention.
- H3c: Customer experience mediates the relationship between cultural competence skills and revisit intention.

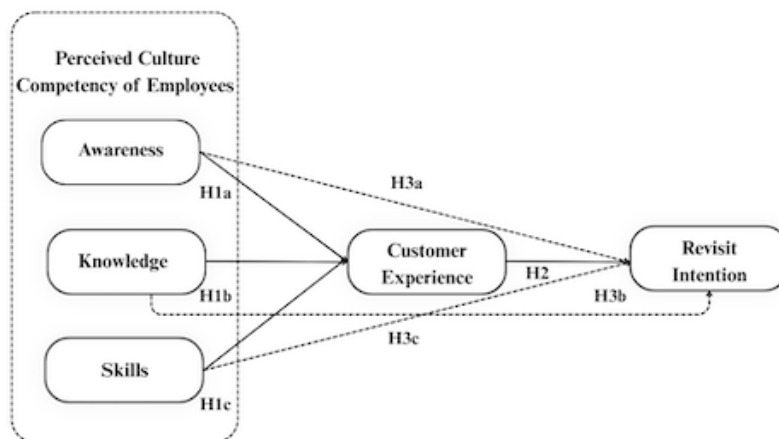


Figure 1. Research Framework

Methodology

Measures

In this study, cultural competence is conceptualized as the capability of service employees to navigate intercultural interactions through awareness, contextual knowledge, and adaptive behavioral skills. Within the context of luxury hotel restaurants in Macau, this capability is particularly salient because service encounters frequently occur across linguistic and cultural boundaries. A twelve-item scale adapted from Hsiao et al. (2023) was used. The scale was selected because it distinguishes cognitive understanding from behavioral adaptability, aligning with the multidimensional conceptualization adopted in this research.

Customer experience is defined as customers' overall evaluative perception of their dining encounter, shaped by emotional responses and interactional cues during service delivery. A multidimensional scale adapted from Gahler et al. (2023) was used to capture this evaluative process. Sample items included "The contact with the experience partner induced good emotions" and "I had positive feelings during the contact with the experience partner." Prior applications of this scale in hospitality research have reported strong composite reliability (Gahler et al., 2023), supporting its suitability for the present study.

Revisit intention was operationalized as the customer's intention to return to and recommend the restaurant in the future, representing the behavioral consequence of experiential evaluation. It was measured using a three-item scale derived from Arnold and Reynolds (2003), which has been widely applied in hospitality and service research. Previous empirical studies have reported satisfactory internal consistency for this measure, supporting its appropriateness for assessing future behavioral intentions.

All constructs were measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree. The questionnaire was initially developed in English and subsequently translated into Chinese using a back-translation procedure to ensure semantic equivalence. The translated instrument was reviewed by two academic scholars and pilot tested with ten respondents to confirm clarity and comprehensibility.

Participants and Sampling

The target population consisted of tourists and residents who had dined at five-star luxury hotel restaurants in Macau. Macau provides a distinctive hospitality setting where global tourism intersects with strong local cultural identity, creating frequent cross-cultural service encounters. Luxury hotels were selected because their clientele tends to be culturally diverse and employees are expected to demonstrate high levels of cultural sensitivity (Manfreda et al., 2022; Shankman, 2019).

Convenience sampling was used to select participants who met the study criteria. Regarding educational background, 73.3% of the respondents have bachelor's degrees, followed by 18.2% with secondary or high school education. A smaller proportion of 6.1% have master's degrees, while the remaining 2.4% have completed doctorate or other forms of education. Representing a moderately uneven distribution, 70.9% of the respondents are female, 24.8% are male, and non-binary respondents make up the remaining 1.8%. Data were collected through an online questionnaire conducted between October and November 2025. A total of

181 responses were obtained, of which 165 valid responses remained after excluding incomplete submissions and substantial missing data.

Common Method Bias

Common method bias (CMB) is a potential concern in survey-based research, particularly when data are collected from a single source using self-reported measures, as this may inflate or deflate the relationships among constructs (Podsakoff et al., 2003). As common method variance has been identified as a methodological concern in hospitality research, both procedural and statistical remedies are recommended to reduce its potential effects (Min et al., 2016). In this study, several procedural measures were applied during questionnaire design, including the use of established measurement scales, clear wording, and respondent anonymity to reduce evaluation apprehension and response bias. In addition, Harman's single factor test was conducted as a statistical assessment of common method bias. The results showed that the first factor accounted for 38.1% of the total variance, which is below the recommended threshold of 50%. This finding suggests that common method bias is unlikely to pose a significant threat to the validity of the findings.

Data Analysis Strategy

To test the conceptual model and associated hypotheses, PLS-SEM was conducted using SmartPLS 4 software. This variance-based method was selected over covariance-based SEM because it aligns with the prediction-oriented objective of the study and focuses on explaining variance in endogenous constructs. The research model seeks to explain customer experience and revisit intention rather than confirm an established covariance structure, making PLS-SEM particularly appropriate (Hair et al., 2021). The proposed framework includes multiple latent constructs and indirect pathways, requiring a method capable of handling structural complexity without restrictive distributional assumptions. PLS-SEM performs robustly under such conditions and is suitable for models estimated with moderate sample sizes. Its component-based algorithm is also less sensitive to violations of multivariate normality, which is advantageous when analyzing survey data (Ringle et al., 2024).

Analysis & Findings

Instrument Quality

Individual, convergent, internal consistency, and discriminant validity indices were examined (Hair et al., 2021). All items demonstrated standardized factor loadings above 0.60 and were statistically significant at $p < 0.001$, thereby supporting the reliability of the individual

indicators (Hair et al., 2021). Table 1 shows the findings on the internal consistency and reliability findings for the measurement instruments. All constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 for both Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values (Hair et al., 2021). Specifically, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.788 to 0.958, while CR values ranged from 0.800 to 0.960, indicating strong internal consistency.

Table 1. Instrument Quality

Latent variables	α	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
1) Cultural Competence Awareness	0.904	0.905	0.839	0.916	0.500	0.791	0.562	0.370
2) Cultural Competence Knowledge	0.924	0.924	0.867	0.457	0.931	0.769	0.456	0.343
3) Cultural Competence Skills	0.924	0.930	0.733	0.722	0.711	0.856	0.621	0.458
4) Customer Experience	0.958	0.960	0.628	0.532	0.427	0.590	0.793	0.589
5) Revisit Intention	0.788	0.800	0.706	0.312	0.294	0.389	0.514	0.840

Note(s): α -Cronbach Alpha; CR -Composite reliability; AVE -Average variance extracted. Bolded numbers are the square roots of AVE. Below the diagonal elements are the correlations between the constructs. Above the diagonal elements are the HTMT ratios.

Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) values for all constructs exceeded the minimum requirement of 0.50 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988), ranging from 0.628 to 0.867. This demonstrates adequate convergent validity. Discriminant validity was assessed using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT) criterion (Hair et al., 2021; Henseler et al., 2015). The square roots of AVE were greater than the inter-construct correlations, satisfying the Fornell–Larcker criterion. In addition, all HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85 (Hair et al., 2021), further confirming discriminant validity. Additionally, no collinearity issues were detected, as all VIF values were below the critical value of 5, indicating that the structural model can be interpreted without bias from multicollinearity.

Structural Model Assessment

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2. The findings show that both cultural competence awareness and cultural competence skills have positive and significant effects on customer experience [CCa ($\beta = 0.226$, $p = 0.008$), CCs ($\beta = 0.398$, $p < 0.001$)], while cultural competence knowledge does not show a significant effect on customer experience ($\beta = 0.040$, $p = 0.660$). Customer experience has a positive and significant effect on revisit intention ($\beta = 0.441$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H1a, H1c, and H2 are supported, while H1b is not.

The direct effects of cultural competence dimensions on revisit intention are not significant. Cultural competence awareness ($\beta = -0.030$, n.s.), cultural competence knowledge

($\beta = 0.027$, n.s.), and cultural competence skills ($\beta = 0.131$, n.s.) do not show significant relationships with revisit intention. To examine the mediating role of customer experience, a bootstrapping procedure was used to test the significance of the indirect effects. The results are presented in Table 2. Customer experience mediates the relationship between cultural competence awareness and revisit intention ($\beta = 0.100$, $p = 0.020$), as well as the relationship between cultural competence skills and revisit intention ($\beta = 0.176$, $p = 0.004$). In both cases, the indirect effects are significant. In contrast, the indirect effect of cultural competence knowledge on revisit intention through customer experience is not significant ($\beta = 0.018$, n.s.). Thus, H3a and H3c are supported, while H3b is not supported.

Table 2. Structural Relationship and Mediation Effects

Latent Variables	Customer Experience	Revisit Intention
Direct		
Cultural Competence Awareness	0.226**	-0.030 n.s.
Cultural Competence Knowledge	0.040 n.s.	0.027 n.s.
Cultural Competence Skills	0.398***	0.131 n.s.
Customer Experience		0.441***
Indirect.		
CCa-> CX		0.100*
CCk-> CX		0.018 n.s.
CCs-> CX		0.176**

Notes(s): *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; n.s. = not significant.

CCa: Cultural Competence Awareness

CCk: Cultural Competence Knowledge

CCs: Cultural Competence Skills

CX: Customer Experience

Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA)

The results of the Importance–Performance Map Analysis are presented in Table 3. The total effects show that cultural competence skills have the highest importance for customer experience (0.398), followed by cultural competence awareness (0.226), while cultural competence knowledge has the lowest importance (0.040).

Table 3. LV Performance

Latent variables	LV performance
Cultural Competence Awareness	71.894
Cultural Competence Knowledge	65.576
Cultural Competence Skills	71.966
Customer Experience	70.702
Revisit Intention	73.397

The performance scores indicate that revisit intention has the highest value (73.397), followed by cultural competence skills (71.966), cultural competence awareness (71.894), and customer experience (70.702), while cultural competence knowledge records the lowest performance score (65.576). At the indicator level, CCs indicators show higher total effects on customer experience compared to CCa and CCK indicators, whereas CCK indicators consistently display lower total effects across the model.

Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA)

The results of the Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA) are presented in Table 4. The ceiling line effect size results revealed that customer experience is the only construct showing a necessity effect on revisit intention, with CE-FDH = 0.235 and CR-FDH = 0.432, both statistically significant ($p = 0.002$). In contrast, cultural competence awareness, knowledge, and skills report effect size values of 0.000, indicating the absence of a necessity effect.

Table 4. Ceiling line effect size overview

	CE-FDH	CR-FDH	P-value
CCa	0.000	0.000	
CCK	0.000	0.000	
CCs	0.000	0.000	
CX	0.235	0.432	0.002

Note(s): CCa: Cultural Competence Awareness, CCK: Cultural Competence Knowledge, CCs: Cultural Competence Skills, CX: Customer Experience

The bottleneck analysis results are also presented in Table 5. Cultural competence awareness, knowledge, and skills do not impose minimum threshold requirements across all levels of revisit intention, as reflected by their constant zero values (0.000). In contrast, customer experience exhibits increasing threshold levels as revisit intention rises. At lower levels of revisit intention, the required level of customer experience is minimal (−2.315 at 40% and −0.628 at 50%). As revisit intention increases, higher levels of customer experience are required, rising to 1.059 at 60%, 2.746 at 70%, and 4.433 at 80%. At the highest levels (90% and 100%), the required level reaches the maximum value of 5.000.

Across both CE-FDH and CR-FDH bottleneck tables, customer experience shows increasing threshold requirements as revisit intention rises, while cultural competence knowledge, awareness, and skills do not display consistent threshold patterns. Thus, customer experience is identified as the only construct with a necessity relationship for revisit intention.

Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA)

A necessity analysis was first conducted using a conservative consistency threshold of 0.90 (Ragin, 2009). The results show that none of the conditions reached this threshold, confirming the absence of necessary conditions for both the presence and absence of revisit intention (RI). Among the tested conditions, customer experience (CX) exhibits the highest consistency (0.791), followed by cultural competence skills (CCs = 0.746), cultural competence awareness (CCa = 0.740), and cultural competence knowledge (CCk = 0.737). Similar patterns are observed for the absence of revisit intention (~RI), where all consistency values remain below the required threshold. These results indicate that no single condition is necessary for the occurrence of either outcome.

Table 5. Bottleneck - CR-FDH

RI	CCa	CCk	CCs	CX
40%	0.000	0.000	0.000	-2.315
50%	0.000	0.000	0.000	-0.628
60%	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.059
70%	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.746
80%	0.000	0.000	0.000	4.433
90%	0.000	0.000	0.000	5.000
100%	0.000	0.000	0.000	5.000

Note(s): CCa: Cultural Competence Awareness, CCk: Cultural Competence Knowledge, CCs: Cultural Competence Skills, CX: Customer Experience, RI: Revisit Intention

The intermediate solution identifies three configurations associated with high revisit intention and two configurations associated with low revisit intention, as presented in Table 6. The overall solution consistency is 0.767 for high revisit intention and 0.774 for low revisit intention, with solution coverage values of 0.607 and 0.776, respectively. These results indicate acceptable consistency across configurations, with higher coverage observed for the absence of revisit intention.

For high revisit intention, three configurations are identified. The first configuration (~CCa * CCs) combines the absence of cultural competence awareness with the presence of cultural competence skills. The second configuration (~CCs * CX) combines the absence of cultural competence skills with the presence of customer experience. The third configuration (~CCk * CX) combines the absence of cultural competence knowledge with the presence of customer experience. Among these, the third configuration (~CCk * CX) exhibits the highest consistency (0.816).

Table 6. Configurations of fsQCA intermediate solution of high and low Revisit Intention.

Condition/ Metrics	High Revisit Intention			Low Revisit Intention	
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5
CCa	⊗	–	–	–	⊗
CCK	–	–	⊗	–	⊗
CCs	●	⊗	–	–	–
CX	–	●	●	⊗	–
Raw Coverage	0.419	0.459	0.479	0.723	0.569
Unique Coverage	0.059	0.03	0.059	0.207	0.053
Consistency	0.799	0.794	0.816	0.794	0.818
Overall Solution Coverage		0.607		0.776	
Overall Solution Consistency		0.767		0.774	

For the absence of revisit intention, two configurations are identified. The first configuration ($\sim CX$) is characterized by the absence of customer experience. The second configuration ($\sim Cca * \sim CCK$) combines the absence of cultural competence awareness and cultural competence knowledge. These configurations differ from those associated with high revisit intention, indicating asymmetric causal relationships between conditions and outcomes.

Overall, the results show that multiple configurations are associated with both the presence and absence of revisit intention. These findings indicate the presence of equifinality, whereby different combinations of conditions lead to the same outcome. In addition, the higher solution coverage observed for the absence of revisit intention suggests that configurations leading to negative outcomes are more consistently explained within the model.

Discussion

This study examined how cultural competence awareness, knowledge, and skills influence customer experience and revisit intention in five-star luxury hotel restaurants in Macau. The findings show that cultural competence awareness and skills significantly enhance customer experience, whereas cultural competence knowledge does not exert a significant effect. Customer experience was also found to significantly influence revisit intention and mediate the relationships between cultural competence awareness, cultural competence skills, and revisit intention. These findings suggest that customers place greater value on culturally adaptive and observable employee behaviors than on employees' underlying cultural understanding alone.

These findings are especially relevant in Macau's multicultural hospitality environment, where frontline employees regularly interact with customers from diverse cultural backgrounds. Consistent with the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework, culturally responsive employee

behaviors function as service-related stimuli that shape customers' experiential evaluations, which subsequently influence revisit intention. The results also support the Cultural Intelligence perspective by showing that the behavioral expression of cultural competence is more influential than cultural knowledge that remains unexpressed during the interaction.

Cultural competence awareness and skills were found to significantly influence customer experience, suggesting that these dimensions play a more important role in intercultural service encounters than cultural competence knowledge. One possible explanation is their visibility during customer interactions. Awareness reflects sensitivity toward customers' cultural values and expectations (Alizadeh & Chavan, 2016; Sue et al., 1996), while cultural skills refer to the ability to adapt communication and service behavior accordingly. Because these competencies are directly observable during the interaction, customers are more likely to perceive them as meaningful indicators of empathy, attentiveness, and personalized service. In luxury hospitality environments, such behaviors can strengthen emotional connection and positively shape customers' evaluations of the service experience.

In contrast, cultural competence knowledge did not significantly influence customer experience. Although knowledge of cultural norms and expectations may support service interactions (Chen et al., 2021; Hosany et al., 2022), its impact appears limited when it is not translated into observable behavior. Customers are unlikely to directly recognize employees' cultural understanding unless it becomes visible through adaptive communication or service delivery. This finding suggests that cultural knowledge alone is insufficient to shape customer evaluations and reinforces the importance of behaviorally enacted cultural competence in multicultural hospitality settings.

Customer experience was also found to significantly influence revisit intention, reinforcing its central role in hospitality service encounters. In this study, customer experience encompasses affective, cognitive, physical, relational, and symbolic dimensions (Gahler et al., 2023), indicating that customers evaluate service interactions across multiple experiential aspects. Positive emotional responses, meaningful interpersonal interactions, and feelings of comfort and connection lead to more favorable evaluations, which in turn increase the likelihood of revisiting. This finding is consistent with previous research showing that customer experience as an important predictor of revisit intention in hospitality settings (Cetin & Bilgihan, 2016; Chiu et al., 2013).

The mediation results provide further insight into how cultural competence influences revisit intention. Customer experience fully mediates the relationships between cultural competence awareness, cultural competence skills, and revisit intention, suggesting that these

dimensions influence future behavioral intentions primarily through the experiences created during service encounters. When employees demonstrate empathy, flexibility, and culturally adaptive behavior, customers are more likely to evaluate the interaction positively, which increases their intention to revisit. These findings reinforce the role of customer experience as the evaluative process that links intercultural service behaviors to customers' behavioral intentions.

The additional analyses further reinforce these findings. The IPMA results show that cultural competence skills have the highest importance for customer experience, followed by awareness, while cultural competence knowledge demonstrates minimal importance. Similarly, the NCA results identify customer experience as the only necessary condition for revisit intention, highlighting that customers are unlikely to return without a sufficiently positive experience. The fsQCA findings further indicate that multiple pathways can lead to revisit intention, although customer experience consistently remains central across these configurations.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that cultural competence in hospitality extends beyond possessing knowledge about cultural differences. Customers evaluate cultural competence primarily through employees' observable behaviors, including empathy, flexibility, attentiveness, and adaptive communication during service encounters. In luxury hotel restaurants, these behaviors contribute to whether customers feel understood and respected throughout the interaction.

The findings also provide further support for the application of the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework in intercultural hospitality settings. Culturally responsive employee behaviors function as service-related stimuli, customer experience represents the internal evaluative state, and revisit intention reflects the behavioral response. Together, these findings show that culturally adaptive interpersonal behaviors influence revisit intention through the customer experiences created during service encounters.

In addition, the findings provide further insight into the Cultural Intelligence perspective by showing that customers place greater importance on behaviorally expressed cultural competence than on cultural knowledge alone. While cultural knowledge remains an important foundation, awareness and adaptive skills become more influential because customers can directly experience them during interactions. This shifts attention from what employees know about culture to how culturally intelligent behavior is perceived and experienced by customers in multicultural hospitality environments.

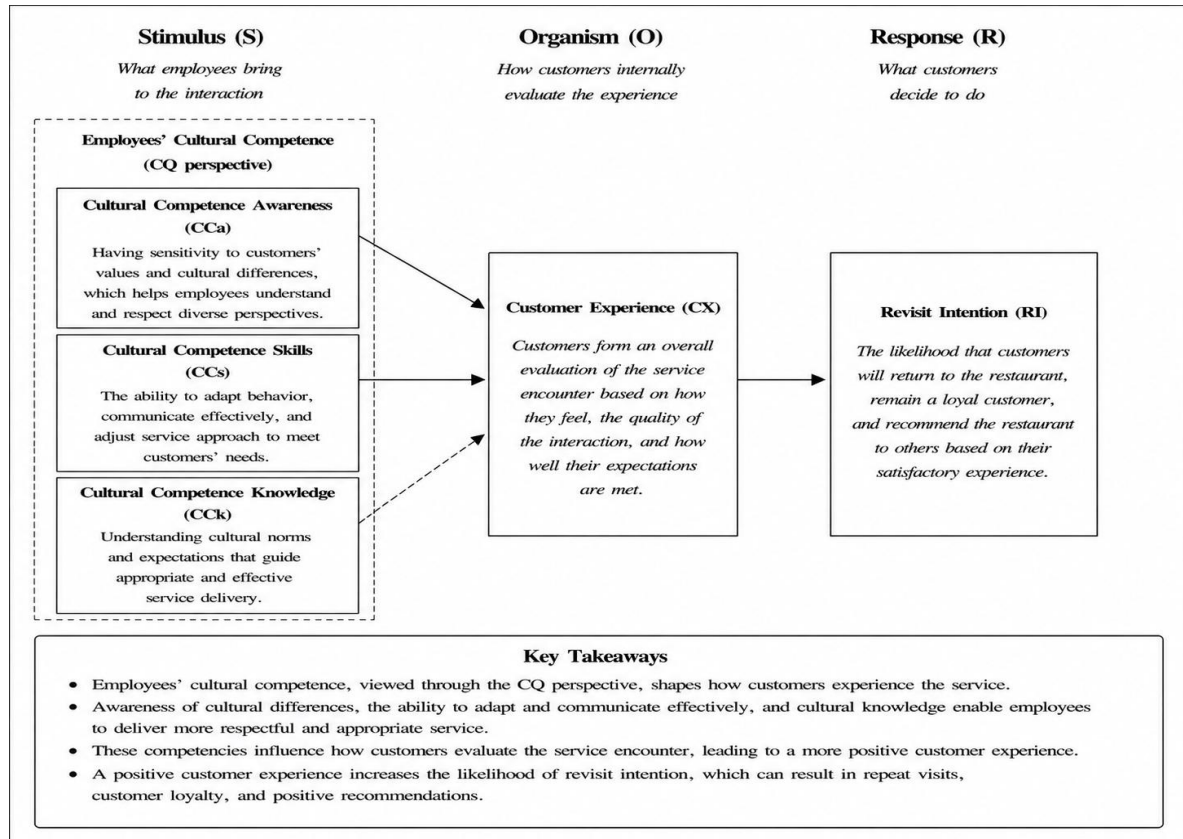


Figure 2. Key Theoretical Insights of the Study

Theoretical Contribution

The findings of this study make several theoretical contributions to the literature on hospitality and tourism. First, this study builds on the literature on cultural competence by examining its dimensions separately rather than treating cultural competence as a single, unified construct. The findings indicate that cultural competence awareness and skills have stronger effects on customer experience than cultural competence knowledge. This suggests that customers respond more positively to culturally adaptive and observable employee behaviors during service interactions. The study therefore highlights that different dimensions of cultural competence do not contribute equally to customer evaluations within multicultural hospitality environments.

Second, this study contributes to customer experience literature in multicultural hospitality settings. The findings demonstrate that customer experience is shaped not only by technical service quality, but also by employees' ability to make customers feel understood, respected, and psychologically comfortable during intercultural interactions. This emphasizes the importance of culturally responsive interpersonal behavior in luxury hospitality

environments. The study also reinforces the experiential and relational nature of hospitality service encounters, particularly in culturally diverse destinations such as Macau.

Third, this study extends the application of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework by showing that culturally competent employee behaviors function as interpersonal service stimuli during intercultural service encounters. Customer experience represents the organism stage because it captures customers’ internal evaluations of the interaction, while revisit intention reflects the behavioral response. The findings therefore clarify the mechanism through which culturally adaptive service behaviors influence customer revisit intention. In doing so, the study extends the application of the SOR framework within multicultural hospitality contexts.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the Cultural Intelligence perspective by showing that customers place greater importance on culturally visible behaviors such as empathy, flexibility, attentiveness, and adaptive communication than on employees’ underlying cultural knowledge alone. While cultural knowledge provides an important cognitive foundation, customers primarily evaluate how this knowledge is behaviorally expressed during the interaction. The findings therefore shift the theoretical focus from what employees know about culture to how culturally intelligent behavior is experienced by customers during service encounters.

Finally, this study also contributes methodologically by combining PLS-SEM with IPMA, NCA, and fsQCA analyses to provide a broader understanding of revisit intention formation in multicultural hospitality settings. The integration of these analytical approaches allows the study to examine not only linear relationships, but also the relative importance, necessity, and configurational effects of the studied constructs. This provides a broader understanding of the factors shaping revisit intention within intercultural luxury hospitality environments.

Managerial Implication

The findings of this study provide practical implications for managers in luxury hotel restaurants, particularly in culturally diverse destinations such as Macau. Since cultural competence awareness and skills significantly influence customer experience, managers should place greater emphasis on employees’ observable interpersonal behaviors rather than relying primarily on theoretical cultural knowledge.

First, training programs should prioritize behavioral application rather than memorization of cultural information. Hotel restaurants may incorporate role play exercises

involving multilingual communication, culturally sensitive dining situations, and service recovery scenarios with international guests. Employees may also be trained to adapt communication style, interpersonal approach, and service delivery according to customers' cultural expectations and comfort levels.

Additionally, managers and human resource departments may consider cultural competence an important criterion during recruitment and selection processes. Since awareness and adaptive interpersonal skills play a stronger role in shaping customer experience, interviews may include role play exercises or simulated guest interactions to assess candidates' empathy, flexibility, and intercultural communication abilities. This may help organizations identify employees who are better prepared to deliver culturally responsive service in multicultural hospitality environments.

Second, managers should provide frontline employees with greater flexibility instead of requiring strict adherence to standardized service scripts. Employees may be encouraged to personalize greetings, adapt communication styles, and adjust their interaction approach according to customers' preferences. Such flexibility may help create more meaningful and emotionally positive experiences while maintaining service standards. In luxury hospitality settings, culturally adaptive interpersonal service may also function as a source of experiential differentiation and long-term customer retention.

Finally, because customer experience was identified as the only necessary condition for revisit intention, managers should prioritize consistency throughout the overall dining journey. Hotel restaurants may establish service guidelines emphasizing personalized interaction at key customer touchpoints and regularly collect customer feedback to identify operational weaknesses and improve intercultural service training.

Limitation and Future Research

Although this study makes several contributions, it also has some limitations. First, the geographic and sectoral scope is restricted to five-star luxury hotel restaurants in Macau; therefore, the findings may not generalize to mid-scale segments or different cultural regions. Future research should adopt a comparative approach across various hospitality tiers and countries to enhance external validity. Second, the conceptual model focused exclusively on customer experience as a mediator. Future studies could incorporate additional variables, such as perceived authenticity, trust, or service quality, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms driving revisit intention.

Convenience sampling was selected to conduct this study, which may introduce selection bias. The sample is also characterized by a gender imbalance, with a higher proportion of female respondents than male respondents. A more balanced distribution may provide additional insights. A total of 165 valid responses were collected, which is sufficient for PLS-SEM; however, a larger sample would improve the generalizability of the findings. Although efforts were made to reduce this limitation, future studies should further examine these findings using alternative sampling approaches to increase generalizability. This is also a cross-sectional study; hence data were only captured at one point in time. It limits the ability to establish causal relationships or observe changes over time. Finally, this study relies on customer perceptions rather than direct observations of employee behavior. Future research could combine survey data with observational methods, interviews, or experimental designs to better capture how cultural competence is enacted during real service interactions.

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Annex

Annex A. Outer Loadings

Cultural Competence (Awareness)	
Staff are aware of the different views on diversity.	0.913
Staff make an effort to understand diversity differences.	0.909
Staff seem to be aware of diversity differences.	0.927
Cultural Competence (Knowledge)	
Staff are knowledgeable of my cultural background.	0.923
Staff understand my culture's specific characteristics.	0.949
Staff seem to be well-informed about my culture	0.922
Cultural Competence (Skills)	
Staff are well-trained to properly treat someone with the same ethnic or cultural background as mine.	0.878
Staff possess the skills that are needed to treat a customer from diverse cultural background.	0.886
Staff value and respect my cultural differences.	0.919
Staff demonstrate knowledge about client's culture.	0.866
Staff know how to communicate appropriately with me in a culturally appropriate way.	0.912
Staff try to communicate using a variety of verbal and nonverbal messages with me.	0.645
Customer Experience (Affective)	
The contact with the experience partner induced good emotions.	0.760
I had positive feelings during the contact with the experience partner.	0.807
The contact with the experience partner put me in a good mood.	0.815
Customer Experience (Cognitive)	
The contact with the experience partner piqued my curiosity.	0.766
I learned something beneficial during the contact with the experience partner.	0.821
I got positive insights during the contact with the experience partner.	0.860
Customer Experience (Physical)	
My physical responses during the contact with the experience partner were pleasant.	0.844
During the contact with the experience partner, I actively moved in a way I liked.	0.796
During the contact with the experience partner, I was active in a way I liked.	0.766
Customer Experience (Relational)	
I established a personal relationship with the experience partner.	0.688
I felt positively connected with the experience partner.	0.828
The contact with the experience partner made me feel like I belonged to a community.	0.827
Customer Experience (Symbolic)	
The contact with the experience partner was in line with my personal values.	0.767
My personal beliefs were confirmed during the contact with the experience partner.	0.766
The contact with the experience partner was in line with my self-image.	0.763
Revisit Intention	
I intend to revisit (hotel name) my next trip to this area.	0.892
(Hotel name) would always be my first choice	0.741
I would like to come back to (hotel name) in the future.	0.879

Annex B. R square Table

Latent Variables	R-square
Customer Experience	0.373
Revisit Intention	0.276

Annex C. Fornell-Lacker Criterion

Latent Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1) Cultural Competence Knowledge	0.931				
2) Cultural Competence Awareness	0.457	0.916			
3) Cultural Competence Skills	0.711	0.722	0.856		
4) Customer Experience	0.427	0.532	0.590	0.793	
5) Revisit Intention	0.294	0.312	0.389	0.514	0.840

Annex D. HTMT Criterion

Latent Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1) Cultural Competence Knowledge					
2) Cultural Competence Awareness	0.500				
3) Cultural Competence Skills	0.769	0.791			
4) Customer Experience	0.456	0.562	0.621		
5) Revisit Intention	0.343	0.370	0.458	0.589	