

# Research on the Mechanism for Improving the Service Quality of Inbound Group Tourists from a Cross-Cultural Management Perspective



Yi Zhang<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Guangzhou College of Technology and Business, China

**Abstract:** This study explores the role of cross-cultural management mechanisms in improving the service quality of inbound group tourists, particularly within the context of globalization and multicultural environments. By constructing a theoretical framework of "cross-cultural management-service process-perceived quality," the study analyzes three key mechanisms: cultural intelligence and employee adaptability, cultural communication and trust-building, and institutional safeguards and service consistency. The study finds that enhancing cultural intelligence strengthens employees' service adaptability, cultural communication reduces misunderstandings and enhances tourist trust, and institutional safeguards ensure service quality consistency. A case study of Marriott Hotels verifies the effectiveness of these mechanisms in practice and their positive impact on brand loyalty. Finally, the study offers three management implications: establishing cultural adaptation training mechanisms, optimizing cross-cultural communication and feedback systems, and promoting the international standardization of inbound services, while also suggesting directions for future research.

**Keywords:** cross-cultural management, inbound group tourists, service quality, cultural intelligence, satisfaction

## Introduction

In recent years, as the inbound tourism market has gradually recovered, service quality has become a key indicator for measuring a country's cultural soft power and the high-quality development of its tourism industry. According to data from the National Immigration Administration, 9.215 million inbound foreigners visited China from January to March 2025, with 71.3% of them benefiting from the 240-hour visa-free transit policy, marking a year-on-year increase of 40.2%. The State Council has further expanded the scope of the visa-free policy, and six government departments, including the Ministry of Commerce, have released the "Inbound Payment Facilitation Plan" to promote the convenience of tourism services. Against this backdrop, over 60% of inbound tourists consider the quality of cultural

experiences an important factor in their destination choice, with group tourists having higher demands for multilingual interpretation and cross-cultural etiquette compared to individual travelers. However, the traditional approach of "service standardization" has not sufficiently addressed the impact of cultural differences on tourists' service expectations, leading to fluctuations in group tourists' satisfaction. In response, this paper, from the perspective of cross-cultural management, constructs the "cross-cultural Management-Service Process-Perceived Quality" theoretical framework. It explores how service organizations can improve service quality at the cognitive, communicative, and institutional levels, thereby enhancing the overall experience for tourists.

**Corresponding Author:** Yi Zhang  
Guangzhou College of Technology and Business, China

©The Author(s) 2025. Published by BONI FUTURE DIGITAL PUBLISHING CO., LIMITED This is an open access article under the CC BY License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## **1.Theoretical Perspective and Research Logic**

Amid the intensifying global competition in inbound tourism, service quality has become a critical indicator for measuring a country's tourism image and industrial competitiveness. Particularly in the field of group inbound tourism, the tourist experience not only reflects service levels but also embodies the complex interactions of cross-cultural communication. For tourists from diverse cultural backgrounds, the perception of service quality depends not only on the service process itself but also on their cultural expectations, communication styles, and values. The misunderstandings, communication barriers, and behavioral misinterpretations arising from cultural differences have become key factors influencing tourist experiences and satisfaction. However, existing research primarily focuses on outcome variables such as tourist satisfaction and service performance, lacking a systematic exploration of how cultural differences impact service quality at both organizational and individual levels. This research gap leaves us at an empirical understanding of the relationship between service internationalization and cultural adaptability, without revealing its inherent logic.

cross-cultural management theory provides an important framework for this. Unlike traditional management theories, which focus on efficiency or structure, cross-cultural management emphasizes the dynamic interaction between individuals, organizations, and culture. Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory suggests that cultural differences, such as power distance and individualism vs. collectivism, influence behavior patterns and expectations in cross-cultural contexts. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) argue that in service-oriented industries, cultural differences are most directly manifested in differences in values and communication styles. When service staff and tourists lack consensus in these areas, emotional mismatches and experiential gaps may occur, even if the service processes adhere to established standards. Therefore, the core issue in inbound tourist service

quality is not merely whether the service is "delivered appropriately," but whether the "culture is understood and responded to (Luo, Y. & Shen, J , 2020)."

In cross-cultural contexts, managers must not only focus on institutional standardization but also coordinate at the cognitive, behavioral, and institutional levels. This paper conceptualizes this multi-dimensional mechanism as the "Three-Dimensional Synergy Structure" of cross-cultural management: cognitive understanding, behavioral adaptation, and institutional coordination. Cognitive understanding forms the foundation and refers to the organization's and employees' awareness of different cultural value systems, etiquette, and communication styles, which determines the development of cultural sensitivity. Behavioral adaptation is the core, emphasizing the ability of service staff to adjust their behavior based on the context, a capability known as "Cultural Intelligence" (CQ). Institutional coordination serves as the safeguard, involving the organization's support for cross-cultural service through training, communication mechanisms, and system design. The interaction of these three elements constitutes the overall framework of cross-cultural management.

From the perspective of tourist perception, the essence of service quality is a "structure of experience." The SERVQUAL model proposed by Parasuraman (1985) provides analytical dimensions for understanding tourist perceptions, including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. In evaluating service quality, inbound tourists actually assess these five dimensions with cultural references in mind. Different cultures have varying interpretations of "reliability" or "empathy." Western tourists tend to prefer equal, direct communication, valuing the service staff's independent judgment and quick response. In contrast, East Asian tourists place greater emphasis on politeness, order, and harmony, often perceiving respect and thoughtfulness through the details of service behavior. This cultural difference implies that service organizations must strike a balance between

standardization and localization in order to stand out in international competition.

The impact of cultural differences on service quality operates through a "cognition-interaction-perception" chain effect. First, Kim and Mattila (2024) suggest that cultural differences shape tourists' expectations of ideal service; when these expectations are not aligned with the behaviors of service personnel, misunderstandings and dissatisfaction may arise. Second, if the management mechanisms within service organizations fail to provide effective cultural adaptation support, employees may struggle to adjust their behaviors flexibly, which further amplifies misunderstandings and negatively affects tourists' experiences. Conversely, by implementing cultural intelligence training and establishing feedback mechanisms, organizations can enhance emotional resonance and trust throughout the service process, thereby significantly improving tourists' perceived service quality (Rahman & Kamarulzaman, 2021).

Based on the above analysis, this study constructs the cross-cultural Service Quality

Enhancement Mechanism Model (see Figure 1). The model illustrates the pathway through which management mechanisms influence tourists' perceived service quality via the mediating role of the service process. Specifically, it delineates a three-tier logical progression of "management mechanism-service process-perception evaluation," presenting a bottom-up transmission structure that reveals how cultural differences affect perceived service quality through managerial and procedural channels. The foundational layer of the cross-cultural management mechanism encompasses cognitive understanding, behavioral adaptation, and institutional coordination, ensuring that organizations effectively respond to cultural differences. The service process layer represents the externalization of these mechanisms in practice, including communication, interaction, and feedback, while the perception layer reflects the final evaluation of service quality, assessed according to the five SERVQUAL dimensions. The interaction among these layers drives the continuous optimization of service quality within cultural diversity.

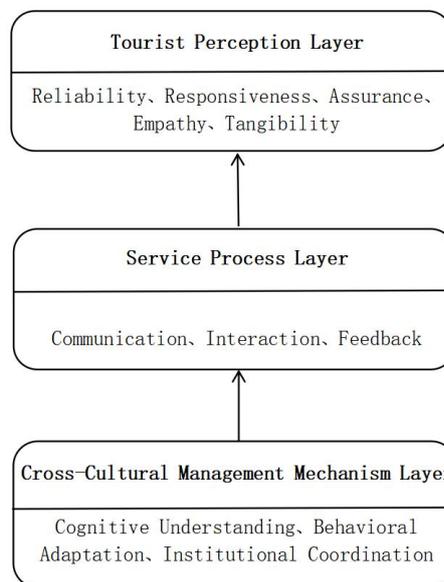


Figure 1: cross-cultural Service Quality Enhancement Mechanism Model

## 2. Mechanism Explanation and Case Analysis

### 2.1 The role of cross-cultural management mechanisms in service quality

cross-cultural management mechanisms significantly influence the enhancement of service

quality in the context of globalization and multiculturalism. In the tourism industry, service quality is not only reflected in process compliance but also closely linked to cultural adaptability and communication skills. Effective cross-cultural

management mechanisms improve employees' cultural adaptability, optimize service processes, and strengthen tourist trust, ultimately enhancing the overall service experience and brand loyalty of tourists. This section analyzes three key mechanisms: cultural intelligence and employee service adaptability, cultural communication and the establishment of tourist trust, and institutional safeguards and service consistency, examining their specific roles in enhancing service quality.

### **2.1.1 Cultural intelligence and employee service adaptability**

"Cultural intelligence" is the core mechanism for improving cross-cultural service quality. It embodies not only an understanding of cultural differences but also the cognitive flexibility and behavioral adaptability of service personnel in intercultural contexts. In a multicultural environment, employees' level of cultural intelligence directly determines their ability to respond to the diverse needs and expectations of tourists from different cultural backgrounds. Employees with high cultural intelligence can accurately identify tourists' cultural backgrounds and expectations and adjust their service behaviors accordingly to achieve a higher level of cultural congruence. During service encounters, this cultural intelligence is reflected not only in cognitive awareness but also through situationally responsive behaviors such as linguistic style, nonverbal etiquette, and interactive nuances. These behaviors evoke emotional resonance from tourists—such as feelings of respect and trust—and significantly enhance their perception of the empathy and reliability dimensions of service quality.

For example, in dining services, Western tourists generally prefer fast-paced and efficient dining experiences, whereas Asian tourists place greater emphasis on table manners and dining rhythm. In response, Hilton Hotels has designed differentiated dining service procedures: providing quick and efficient service for Western guests while offering more detailed and patient service for Asian guests to create a comfortable and respectful dining atmosphere. This demonstrates that cultural

intelligence does not directly enhance tourist satisfaction but rather influences perceived service quality indirectly through the mediating pathway of "service encounter quality—emotional resonance," thereby achieving optimization and harmony in cross-cultural service delivery.

### **2.1.2 Cultural communication and the establishment of tourist trust**

cross-cultural communication is a core element of service quality. Effective cultural communication goes beyond precise language expression; it also involves a deep understanding of the cultural background of tourists and emotional resonance. The cultural sensitivity and emotional resonance abilities of service staff are key to the success of cross-cultural communication.

Research has shown that service staff must not only accurately convey information through language but also establish emotional connections through non-verbal behaviors, such as facial expressions and body language. For example, Western tourists tend to prefer direct communication with a focus on quick responses, while Asian tourists favor polite and subtle communication styles. By adapting communication to these cultural preferences, tourist trust is significantly enhanced, which in turn strengthens brand loyalty. The establishment of trust not only influences immediate service feedback but also determines the long-term brand loyalty of tourists.

### **2.1.3 Organizational systems and service consistency maintenance**

The effectiveness of cross-cultural management relies on institutional safeguards. Institutionalized management within an organization, particularly the integration of standardized and localized cross-cultural services, is fundamental to ensuring service quality consistency. Service organizations need to maintain the uniformity of global service standards while adapting to cultural differences across regions and making necessary localized adjustments.

For example, Marriott Hotels implements a unified service standard globally but makes

necessary local adjustments based on the cultural backgrounds of tourists in different regions. For Asian tourists, Marriott emphasizes the details of service and etiquette, while for Western tourists, the focus is on efficiency and transparency. Through this combination of standardization and localization, Marriott ensures both the stability and adaptability of its service quality, enhancing the overall service experience for tourists.

## **2.2 Case analysis of a typical example**

Based on the above theoretical model, this study selects Marriott International as a representative case to examine how the three-dimensional synergy mechanism operates in real-world service contexts. Specifically, it explores how cultural intelligence training, cross-cultural communication mechanisms, and institutionalized safeguards work in concert to enhance tourists' perceived service quality. In the context of increasingly diversified global tourism and deepening cultural integration, cross-cultural management has become a crucial pathway for international hotel groups to improve service quality, strengthen customer satisfaction, and foster brand loyalty. Founded in 1927 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., Marriott International is one of the largest hotel operators in the world. Its systematic practices in cross-cultural service management provide strong empirical support for validating the theoretical model proposed in this study. At present, Marriott operates more than 8,000 hotels in over 140 countries and regions, serving more than 150 million guests annually from diverse cultural backgrounds. Its service system must simultaneously address the dual imperatives of cultural diversity and brand consistency. To achieve this, Marriott has developed a service strategy centered on cultural adaptability, promoting the philosophy of "global consistency, local resonance." This approach seeks to deliver culturally responsive and personalized service experiences while maintaining unified service standards across its global operations.

In practice, Marriott has embedded the principles of cross-cultural management into its organizational systems and employee behavior

framework, creating a comprehensive management loop that includes cultural intelligence training, localized service process design, and cultural feedback mechanisms. First, Marriott has collaborated with professional institutions, such as the Cultural Intelligence Center, to develop cultural intelligence modules for frontline employees. These modules cover cultural awareness, cross-cultural communication strategies, and situational response techniques, with particular emphasis on the ability to interpret non-verbal behaviors, value differences, and service expectations. This training has been implemented across over 90% of positions in front desk, concierge, and food and beverage services, making it a regular part of both pre-employment and ongoing training. Second, Marriott has implemented a localized service process restructuring strategy in different regional markets. While maintaining core brand values, Marriott adjusts service details according to the cultural characteristics of each region. For example, in China, Marriott launched a "Home Away from Home" service package, which includes Chinese greeting phrases, tea reception, and room orientation preference registration. In the Middle East, additional services such as prayer time reminders and halal dining options were introduced. In the Japanese market, Marriott emphasizes the "quiet service" concept, reducing service interruptions and enhancing respect for privacy. These localized strategies not only strengthen guests' sense of cultural belonging but also significantly improve the emotional warmth and satisfaction of service interactions.

More importantly, Marriott has established a systematic cultural feedback mechanism by setting up regional "Cultural Insights Teams" to regularly analyze cultural data from customer satisfaction surveys. This helps identify cultural conflicts and adaptation gaps in the service process, which are then addressed by adjusting service strategies. For instance, in 2022, Marriott piloted the "Proactive Care" initiative in the Asia-Pacific region in response to feedback from high-end Chinese guests about feeling "neglected." The initiative required

employees to follow up with a second greeting within 30 minutes of guest check-in, significantly enhancing the guests' sense of being respected and emotionally connected. The effective operation of these mechanisms has allowed Marriott to continuously improve service quality in a multicultural environment. According to internal data from 2023, Marriott's guest satisfaction index in China, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia increased to 4.72, 4.68, and 4.65, respectively, all above the global average, with a 18.4% improvement in the "cultural adaptability" dimension. Furthermore, the repurchase rate of Asian guests in Marriott's Bonvoy loyalty program reached 47%, significantly higher than the global average, indicating that cross-cultural management not only optimizes the service experience but also effectively strengthens brand loyalty.

### **2.3 Theoretical reflection and mechanism validation**

Through the case analysis of Marriott's cross-cultural management practices, the "cross-cultural Service Quality Enhancement Mechanism Model" proposed in this study can be validated. Marriott has significantly improved service quality and overall guest satisfaction by enhancing employees' cultural intelligence, optimizing cultural communication strategies, and institutionalizing management. This process clearly demonstrates how cross-cultural management mechanisms influence tourists' perceived quality through the service process, thereby validating the theoretical framework of "cross-cultural management mechanisms → service process → tourist perception." Marriott's cross-cultural management measures have achieved significant results in practice. By enhancing cultural intelligence, employees are not only able to effectively identify tourists' cultural needs but also flexibly adjust their service approach to accommodate guests from different cultural backgrounds. This cultural adaptability has notably increased tourists' trust and satisfaction, thereby enhancing brand loyalty.

In summary, Marriott's case validates the

"cross-cultural Service Quality Enhancement Mechanism Model" proposed in this study and emphasizes the significant impact of cross-cultural management mechanisms on service quality, tourist trust, and brand loyalty. Through the enhancement of cultural intelligence, effective cultural communication, and institutionalized management, cross-cultural management can significantly improve the service experience for tourists and provide strong support for enhancing the competitiveness of global brands. However, cross-cultural management mechanisms still require continuous improvement, particularly in addressing the details of cultural adaptation and enhancing service staff's adaptability. Ongoing optimization and innovation will be key to enhancing global service quality.

## **3. Conclusion and Implications**

### **3.1 Research conclusions**

This study explores the impact of cross-cultural management mechanisms on service quality and, through theoretical analysis and case studies, validates how these mechanisms enhance service quality in a globalized and multicultural environment. The core conclusions of this research can be summarized into three mechanisms:

#### **3.1.1 Cross-cultural awareness, communication coordination, and consistency in tourist experience**

This study finds that cross-cultural awareness is the foundation for improving service quality. Employees' understanding of different cultural backgrounds supports effective communication and interaction. By enhancing cultural awareness, service staff can better identify and adapt to tourists' cultural differences, adjust communication styles and service processes, reduce cultural misunderstandings, and ensure service quality consistency, thereby optimizing the overall tourist experience.

#### **3.1.2 Cultural intelligence training, service adaptability, and improvement in tourist satisfaction**

Cultural intelligence training significantly enhances employees' adaptability in cross-cultural

contexts. Employees with high cultural intelligence are able to flexibly adjust their service approach based on the cultural needs of different tourists, providing personalized services. Research shows that this flexibility and cultural adaptability significantly improve tourist satisfaction and loyalty, especially in terms of cultural communication and the quality of service interactions.

### **3.1.3 Institutional safeguards, standardization compliance, and enhanced brand trust**

Institutionalized management and service standardization form the foundation for ensuring service quality consistency. cross-cultural management mechanisms, through the establishment of institutional frameworks, ensure the delivery of high-quality service globally while adapting to local cultural differences. This not only enhances tourist trust but also strengthens brand loyalty, further boosting the brand's competitiveness in the global market.

### **3.2 Theoretical contributions**

The main theoretical contribution of this study lies in the development of the "cross-cultural Management-Service Process-Perceived Quality" explanatory framework, which systematically elucidates how cross-cultural management mechanisms enhance service quality through various levels. This framework provides profound support for cross-cultural management theory and expands the application of service quality theory within the context of globalization and multiculturalism, highlighting the role and underlying mechanisms of cross-cultural management in enhancing service quality.

Furthermore, this study builds on traditional service quality theory by exploring the key roles of cultural intelligence, cultural adaptation, and institutional safeguards in cross-cultural service. It promotes the internationalization of service quality research and offers new theoretical guidance for international service management practices. The findings not only provide fresh perspectives for academic research on cross-cultural service quality but also offer actionable theoretical support for

cross-cultural management practices.

### **3.3 Management implications**

Based on the research conclusions, this study presents the following three management implications, aimed at providing actionable recommendations for businesses, governments, and academia.

#### **3.3.1 Cultural adaptability of tour guides and frontline staff is key to enhancing service quality**

In cross-cultural service management, the cultural adaptability of tour guides and frontline staff is crucial to improving service quality. Companies should implement systematic cultural intelligence training to help employees enhance their understanding of different cultures, master cross-cultural communication skills, and flexibly adjust service behaviors. The training content should cover cultural awareness, communication strategies, and situational response techniques, ensuring that employees can provide personalized and efficient service in a multicultural environment.

#### **3.3.2 Establish effective cross-cultural communication and complaint feedback mechanisms**

cross-cultural communication is a vital element in improving service quality. Service organizations should establish flexible cross-cultural communication and feedback mechanisms to ensure that tourists can easily express their opinions and suggestions, while also ensuring that service staff can respond promptly and adjust service content accordingly. By establishing effective feedback channels, businesses can quickly identify cultural adaptation issues in service and adjust service strategies based on the feedback, thereby enhancing tourist satisfaction and brand loyalty.

#### **3.3.3 Governments should promote the international standardization of inbound services**

To enhance the overall quality of inbound tourism services, governments should promote the internationalization of cross-cultural service standards, particularly in terms of cultural adaptation and service process standardization. Governments should collaborate with relevant industry associations

and international organizations to jointly develop and implement globally unified cross-cultural service standards. This will ensure that tourists receive high-quality, culturally adaptive service experiences worldwide, thereby enhancing the national brand image and the international competitiveness of the tourism industry.

In summary, this study enriches the theoretical foundation of cross-cultural management in the field of service quality enhancement and provides important management implications for businesses and governments in a globalized context. In the future, research combining cross-cultural management with emerging technologies (such as artificial intelligence and big data) will further drive innovation and improvement in service quality. Particularly in the ever-changing global tourism market, balancing global standardization with local needs will be a key challenge moving forward.

#### Conflict of Interest

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest to this work.

#### References

- Ang, S., Van Dyne, L., Koh, C., Ng, K. Y., Templer, K. J., Tay, C., & Chandrasekar, N. A. (2007). Cultural intelligence: Its measurement and effects on cultural judgment and decision making, cultural adaptation, and task performance. *Management and Organization Review*, 3(3), 335–371. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1740-8784.2007.00082.x>
- Earley, P. C., & Ang, S. (2003). *Cultural intelligence: Individual interactions across cultures*. Stanford University Press.
- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Sage Publications.
- Kim, J., & Mattila, A. S. (2024). Cultural congruence and perceived fairness in global service delivery. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 65(2), 154–170.
- Kluckhohn, F. R., & Strodtbeck, F. L. (1961). *Variations in value orientations*. Row, Peterson and Company.
- Luo, Y., & Shen, J. (2020). Cultural intelligence and organizational performance: Evidence from hospitality industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32(12), 3893–3911.
- Marriott International, Inc. (2024, September 30). *About the Marriott fact book* [Company brochure].
- Marriott International, Inc. (2025, January 17). *\*Form 8-K\** [SEC filing]. U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.
- National Immigration Administration. (2025, April 3). *2025 Q1 inbound visitor statistics* [Press release].
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1985). A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research. *Journal of Marketing*, 49(4), 41–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224298504900403>
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12–40. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359\(99\)80006-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359(99)80006-3)
- Parsons, T., & Shils, E. A. (Eds.). (1962). *Toward a general theory of action*. Harvard University Press.
- Rahman, M., & Kamarulzaman, Y. (2021). Reimagining service quality through cultural adaptation: A comparative study of Asian hospitality firms. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 95, 102907.
- Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (1997). *Riding the waves of culture: Understanding cultural diversity in business*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

**How to Cite:** Zhang, Y. (2025). Research on the Mechanism for Improving the Service Quality of Inbound Group Tourists from a cross-cultural Management Perspective. *Journal of Global Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6(7), 372-379 <https://doi.org/10.61360/BoniGHSS252019300705>