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# MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„The Acculturation of Migrant Customers and Their Customer  
Participation in the Public Employment Service“

verfasst von / submitted by

Jorge Luis Pantoja Mora

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science (MSc)

Wien, 2020 / Vienna 2020

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /  
degree programme code as it appears on  
the student record sheet:

UA 066 915

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /  
degree programme as it appears on  
the student record sheet:

Masterstudium Betriebswirtschaft

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Dipl.-Ök. Dr. Christina Sichtmann, Privatdoz.

## Master's Thesis Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

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Jorge Luis Pantoja Mora

# Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Christina Sichtmann, who offered me invaluable guidance and motivation throughout the whole writing process as well as the planning and execution of the study for this thesis. Thank you for your expertise and trust.

In addition, I would like to thank all the staff from the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) for their support during the study conducted at the different AMS branches in Vienna.

Special gratitude to my family, especially my parents and sister, for their endless love, support, and encouragement during this whole acculturation journey. I will never be able to thank you enough for it.

At last but not least, thank you to my dearest friends for being a great source of inspiration and support.

# Abstract

The everyday implications of globalization in certain countries, full with intercultural interactions, have demonstrated the big importance of studying the acculturation process of migrant customers and their customer participation as it leads to service quality, customer satisfaction, and future intentions towards the service provider. Added to the issue that literature on the effect of acculturation on customer participation is very limited, the method for measuring customer participation is usually collecting data only from the customer's perspective, which might be problematic due to potential method biases. This is what inspired this thesis with two main aims: Firstly, studying the effect of identification with the host society on participation behavior measured from the employee's perspective through expertise and willingness to participate as mediators, secondly, studying the effect of identification with the host society's culture on participation behavior through the number and quality of social relationships with the host society as mediators. Through an empirical study conducted in the Austrian public employment service, firstly it was found that identification with the host society, the customer's expertise, his willingness to participate, and the quality of his social relationships play an important role in his participation behavior. Secondly, mild differences in the mediation effects from the employee and customer's perspective were identified. Thirdly, differences in the participation behavior among adopted acculturation strategies were detected. The findings of this thesis provide theoretical contributions as well as managerial and practical implications for service providers, policy makers, service brands, acculturating individuals, and multicultural host societies.

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# 1. Introduction

The fast increase of globalization, along with deep crises in certain countries have led to a big flow of migration around the world. The growth of minorities and their purchase power in several markets have consequently prompted their importance as a target for companies (Emslie, Bent, & Seaman, 2007; Weber, Hsu, & Sparks, 2014).

One of the most important concerns for targeting migrants, is the impact of culture, especially for service providers. As Mattila (2000) states, culture provides the framework for social interactions. Therefore, social rules and customer expectations in service encounters might vary depending on the customer and employee's culture.

The difference in social rules and customer expectations due to the culture has big implications in migrants' everyday lives as service customers. For example, migrants experience difficulties in healthcare services, due to barriers like language, culture, beliefs, or even knowledge about the healthcare system or health itself, which hinders their participation in the service (Davies, Basten, & Frattini, 2009; Felix, 2017). On the other hand, in the financial sector, immigrant customers generally do not know what requirements are expected of them or how they should behave, which adversely affects co-production (Sichtmann & Patak, 2016; Gibbs, 2010). In other words, migrant customers face barriers for participating properly in services due to cultural reasons.

Customer participation has shown to be an important concept in the literature because of its great positive impact on satisfaction with the service experience (Dong, Evans, & Zou, 2008). Furthermore, apart from being associated with customer satisfaction, customer participation has been shown to be associated with quality, and future intentions towards service providers (Cermak, File, & Prince, 1994).

Moreover, adding more complexity to the challenge of targeting migrants in a multicultural market, it is not enough by only targeting migrants depending on their ethnic group, but on how acculturated in the host society they are (Poulis, Poulis, & Yamin, 2013; Maldonado & Tansuhaj, 2002). When migrating to a new country, migrants go through an important process called acculturation. This

process affects the culture of an individual, adapting some traits from the culture where he resides and changing, in consequence, his behaviour in the new host society. (Berry, 1997)

The practical implications and relevance of the relationship between acculturation and customer participation are clear. However, despite these important implications, there is surprisingly very scarce services marketing literature studying the relationship of acculturation and consumer behaviour (Poulis et al., 2013). There is, however, a study from Sichtmann, Davvetas, Romanyuk, & Bleich (2019) examining the mentioned relationship between acculturation and customer participation and providing interesting findings. Nevertheless, there are also important limitations in such study, especially regarding the collection of data, leading to possible biased results.

The mentioned study from Sichtmann et al. (2019) was limited due to the collection of data from the customer in order to measure customer participation. Some examples of the limitations that this approach can involve are the customer not having the experience of how a customer should participate properly in that specific service (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012) or the self-serving bias, which means customers attributing more positive than negative outcomes to themselves (Taylor & Brown, 1988). In other words, there is no study examining the effect of acculturation on customer participation that tackles the previously mentioned collection data limitations.

This is the research gap that my thesis aims to address through empirical research methodology. This thesis aims to study the effect of migrant customer's acculturation on customer participation in the employment service industry. It intends to solve the explained research problem by collecting data from the employee instead of the customer to measure customer's participation, which will result in a more objective measurement of the construct by having dual data. Authors like Schneider, Parkington, and Buxton (1980) or Chan, Yim, & Lam (2010) stress the importance of having dyadic data in services and particularly for studying the process of co-creation.

A service context is also ideal for measuring and analyzing the relationship between these constructs due to the constant indirect and direct contact between the employee and customer, which is crucial for the success of a service (Mills & Morris, 1986). Moreover, the culturally diverse workforces and markets have gained a lot of importance in contemporary academic and policy research (Syed, 2008),

making migrant customer behaviour in employment services also a relevant research topic in the literature.

The study takes place in the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS). AMS is Austria's leading provider of labour-market related services, matching candidates with job openings and assisting job-seekers and companies who turn to them by offering advice, information, qualification opportunities, and financial assistance (AMS, 2018). In April 2017, around 29,000 migrants entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection were registered with the AMS and the majority of them (around 18,000) were in Vienna (The Expert Council for Integration, 2017).

## 1.1 Aims of the Thesis

This thesis has two main aims using empirical methodology through the collection of dyadic data.

The first objective of this thesis is to study the effect of acculturation on customer participation. While the study of Sichtmann et al. (2019) has already studied this effect in the healthcare industry, it has not ever been tested in the public employment service, not to mention it is certainly possible that with the dyadic data approach the results might be different to some extent in both healthcare and public employment services.

The second objective of this thesis is to study the effect of social relationships with the host culture between acculturation and customer participation. More specifically, two mediations between the mentioned variables will be tested: the number of host culture social relationships and the quality of such relationships. This objective is also very relevant for this thesis because social relationships with members of the host society are one of the key factors in an individual's acculturation process (Sichtmann et al., 2019; Furnham & Bochner, 1982).

If such objectives are successfully reached, this thesis would be able to provide relevant theoretical contributions and the results would bring significant managerial implications for service providers, policy makers, and service brands. For researchers, for example, a more objective approach to measure customer participation would be provided. As another example, the findings of this thesis

would give service providers, policy makers, and service brands the knowledge whether acculturation from the customer has an actual effect on customer participation. Such knowledge, while it may appear very simple at first, could have big implications, since customers could be segmented according to their acculturation level and not simply by ethnic group (Vijaygopal, Dibb, & Meadows, 2013). By segmenting customers according to their acculturation level, customer participation could be increased and therefore customer satisfaction as well as commitment (Dong et al., 2008; Cermak et al., 1994).

Furthermore, service providers, policy makers, and service brands could be additionally benefited with the findings regarding the effect of social relationships with the host society and how it affects the acculturation process and customer participation as a final outcome. The knowledge of social relationships with the host culture, added to the one regarding the relationship between acculturation and customer participation, could help them to have a bigger picture of the acculturation process and how it affects the customer's behaviour in a service context, designing even more specific marketing strategies aiming to maximize customer participation.

In the following section, the relevant literature to this thesis will be reviewed in order to have a better understanding of the acculturation process, customer participation, social relationships, the public employment service, and even the integration policy in Austria.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Acculturation

The very first acculturation theory was proposed in 1918 by Thomas & Znaniecki. They ran empirical studies of immigrants in Chicago and theorized based on them that the culture of a minority group is determined by the shared attitudes and habits between the members of that group, called schemas, which can be adapted to one's family, ethnic community, and occupation. Thomas & Znaniecki (1918) also developed for the first time an acculturation categorization based on how immigrants' personalities dealt with fear and curiosity and, in consequence, adapt to the host society.

Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) provided the first and classical acculturation definition, which is as follows: "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups."

Psychologist Barlett (1923/1970) was probably the first author arguing that the minority group attitudes towards the host society are important, this includes willing to maintain the original culture, or whether the minority group is less or equally dominant as the host society.

Berry is nonetheless one of the most notable authors studying acculturation. He provided a better understanding of the factors influencing prior and during the acculturation process. Furthermore, he contributed with the nowadays most accepted and used categorization of acculturation (Rudmin, 2003). Due to the relevance and general acceptance of this author in the acculturation literature, many of his contributions in the field will be explained in the literature review and will be used as an important foundation for the rest of this thesis regarding the acculturation concept.

#### 2.1.1 Unidimensional vs Bidimensional Model of Acculturation

In order to study the concept of acculturation properly, different models and typologies have been created with the objective of measuring the construct effectively. In general, acculturation has been measured from two different perspectives: through a unidimensional or bidimensional model.

### *Unidimensional Perspective*

Originally, the idea of a unidimensional model of acculturation was introduced by Gordon (1964) as a new way of studying individuals in a different society, culturally speaking, since they were generally classified based on ethnocultural categories. Thanks to the unidimensional perspective of acculturation, individuals could be classified depending on their identity and attitudes towards their heritage culture and mainstream (host society) culture. Nevertheless, an important aspect of the unidimensional perspective of acculturation, is that the individual needs to lose his identity with his heritage culture and its values in order to assimilate to the new host society's culture. In other words, the unidimensional model could be seen as individuals being "placed on a continuum of identities ranging from exclusively heritage culture to exclusively mainstream culture." (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000).

Furthermore, the unidimensional model often measured acculturation through demographic data such as generational status, age of immigration, and years spent in the host society, since it was assumed that the more contact the individual had with the mainstream culture, the more assimilated to it he would be (Ryder et al., 2000).

More recently, a new approach in the unidimensional model was developed by taking the middle point in the unidimensional acculturation continuum as biculturalism. This was the case of the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987), which was developed for Asian minority groups like Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or Vietnamese in the United States. According to this scale, there were three general possibilities in which an individual could be categorized: highly traditional, bicultural, or highly assimilated to the host society.

### *Bidimensional Perspective*

The main concept of the bidimensional model of acculturation is that, contrary to the main idea of the unidimensional model, original and host society's cultural identities are independent from each other. According to Ryder et al. (2000), the bidimensional approach is based on two main core assumptions. The first assumption is that individuals differ in the way they identify themselves based on cultural values, attitudes, and behaviours, since some individuals may take culture as an important factor for self-identity, while others take others, e.g. occupation. The second assumption is that individuals can have multiple cultural identities at the same time and that such cultural identities can differ in strength.

The previous presented assumptions also mean that the bidimensional model suggests issues in the unidimensional one, especially with the middle point on its continuum, which is the bicultural category. According to authors criticizing the unidimensional model (Mavreas, Bebbington, & Der, 1989), it would not be able to determine whether a bicultural individual identifies himself with both the heritage and the mainstream culture or with neither or them. Naturally, for empirical research purposes, individuals identifying with both cultures differ significantly with those who do not identify with neither of them, affecting numerous dependent variables differently.

Moreover, Ryder et al. (2000) demonstrated empirically that the "bidimensional model constitutes a broader and more valid framework for understanding acculturation", since a unidimensional model can present an incomplete and misleading rendition of the acculturation process.

Within the bidimensional model of acculturation, Berry's approach (1997) for classifying acculturating individuals has been the most accepted. In the following section, Berry's bidimensional approach will be explained, as well as its critiques, and negative and positive qualities.

### 2.1.2 Acculturation Strategies

Berry (1997) states that acculturation is a long term process, that on the one hand is influenced by moderating factors prior and during the contact with the host country's culture and, on the other hand, acculturation is also influenced by group level and individual level phenomena. Berry explains the

acculturation process and the previously mentioned affecting elements through an acculturation framework.

### *Group Level*

On a group level, individuals could be affected by their society of origin as well as the society of settlement. In an acculturation context, the society of origin is defined by the political context, economic situation, and demographic aspects. Regarding the society of settlement, the attitude of the host society towards immigration plays a very important role. Several authors have discussed this aspect in the acculturation literature (Berry, 2005; Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997; Maisonneuve & Testé, 2007) and it will be further explained and discussed throughout this thesis. Finally, Berry (1997) discusses group acculturation aspects that make ethnic groups suffer changes through time in host societies. Such changes include physical, biological (e.g. dietary changes), economic, social, and cultural.

### *Individual Level*

On an individual level, Berry (1997) introduces the moderating factors prior and during the acculturation process. The important factors prior to the acculturation process include age, gender, and education on the one hand, while on the other hand factors like status, migration motivation, and expectations are also relevant. Additionally, Berry remarks that cultural distance (meaning how different the home and host society's culture is), e.g. regarding language and religion also play an important role and that personality traits like locus of control and flexibility have shown to affect acculturation.

Moreover, regarding the moderating factors during the acculturation process, Berry states that the relevant moderating factors are the length of time that the individual is staying in the host society, the social support he receives from both home a host society's culture, and, as already mentioned, the societal attitudes towards acculturating individuals, which could hamper the acculturation process significantly because of discrimination or prejudices (Berry, 1997).

Within the moderating factors during the acculturation process, Berry includes the possible acculturation strategies from which the acculturating individual can choose, this decision is defined by his attitudes and behaviours. The strategies that acculturating individuals can adopt, according to Berry, are assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. Furthermore, Berry (1980) emphasizes that these acculturation strategies are not static, meaning that the individual going through the acculturation process may switch from one strategy to another through time.

Several authors have since 1918 categorized acculturation and although the different typologies through time are not synonyms, it is also true that these typologies “can be defined by addition or subtraction of aspects of cultures or by positive and negative attitudes toward cultures” (Rudmin, 2003). That means, broadly speaking, all the different taxonomies through time are based on the migrant’s attitude towards the minority and dominant culture. Despite more fourfold taxonomies emerging after Berry’s taxonomy (Bourhis et al., 1997; Coleman, 1995; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Rudmin & Ahmadzadeh, 2001), it is still the most accepted and applied one.

### *Assimilation*

Assimilation occurs when the individual’s attitude towards the dominant culture is positive (+D) but negative towards the minority’s one (-M). In the early years of acculturation research, many authors assumed that acculturation meant only assimilation until a discussion from the Social Science Research Council (1954), where it was emphasized that assimilation is not the only kind of acculturation.

Furthermore, it is also important to mention that in many countries where migrants established, especially in past centuries, governments usually held an assimilation policy. As Bourhis et al. (1997) states: “The assimilation ideology was the most prominent orientation at the height of the rise of the nation-state during the 19th and early 20th century”. The assimilation policy in such societies forced migrants to use an assimilation strategy if they wanted to integrate well.

Despite assimilation being one of the two strategies that brings the least psychological stress, according to many authors studied by the critical history paper on acculturation psychology from Rudmin (2003), migrants adopting this acculturation strategy still experience significant levels of acculturative stress.

### *Separation*

Separation is the strategy used by the migrant when his attitude towards the dominant culture is negative (-D) and positive towards the minority one (+M). In practical terms, migrants adopting the separation strategy “turn their back on involvement with other cultural groups, and turn inward toward their heritage culture”. (Berry, 2005)

Furthermore, in the acculturation literature, it has been argued that the separation strategy is related to high levels of antisocial behavior in immigrants. For example, Sobral, Villar, Gómez-Fraguela, Romero, and Luengo (2013) found through empirical evidence in a sample of 750 immigrants in Spain that indeed separation among other personality variables are related to antisocial behavior. Psychologically speaking, this strategy represents, according to historical literature as well as numerous studies (Rudmin, 2003), the one that brings the most acculturative stress.

### *Integration*

Migrants applying the integration strategy to cope with the acculturation process have a positive attitude to both dominant and minority culture (+D, +M). Integration is a crucial concept in acculturation literature (Boski, 2008). It is, according to Berry (1997), psychologically speaking the best acculturation strategy (Berry & Sam, 1997) and therefore, it is the most preferred alternative in the acculturation literature, which has been repeatedly demonstrated by Berry (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006).

Interestingly, because of the importance of this strategy in the acculturation literature, Boski (2008) created the foundations towards a theoretical model of the integration acculturation strategy, where,

apart from Berry's integration concept, he proposes four more conceptualizations of this strategy, which could be seen as layers or phases that the integrated individual goes through time during his acculturation process.

### *Marginalization*

Finally, marginalization is the strategy with which migrants have a negative attitude towards the dominant and minority culture (-D, -M). According to Berry (1997), migrants using this strategy usually do because they are forced to. For example, in the case of refugees, when they are forced out of their home countries and at the same time the host society rejects them as a minority group and consequently as individuals.

Moreover, marginalized migrants are most likely to experience the cultural alienation known as anomie. According to Bourhis et al. (1997), "along with problematic ethno-cultural identification and acculturative stress, anomie can also adversely affect self-esteem and may hinder the adaptation of immigrants within the host society." In one of the further sections, research in acculturative stress, along with other psychological effects from acculturation will be reviewed, as it is a critical concept in the acculturation literature. But firstly, the general critiques about the previously presented strategies will be explained.

### 2.1.3 Critiques of Berry's Fourfold Categorization

Despite Berry's taxonomy being the most accepted, several authors have increasingly criticized his fourfold categorization. One example is Horenczyk (1997), who criticizes the fact that Berry's model lacks specificity in the dominant group's attitude towards the minority one, as well as differentiating such attitude across different minority groups. Furthermore, Horenczyk argues that the dominant group's attitude towards immigrants should also be measured in regards to content, direction, and intensity. Lazarus (1997) states that individual differences should also be taken into account and that no matter how a culture has a uniform pattern, individual differences always play a role. In other

words, both authors argued that Berry's model should be expanded in order to cover more specific, but also important, factors that play a role in the individual's acculturation process.

Moreover, Merametdjian under Rudmin's supervision (1995) found "impossible" results in the data from subjects in their study of Somali acculturation in Norway: subjects were endorsing two, three, or even four acculturation types at the same time, when the acculturation strategies are supposed to be mutually exclusive.

According to Rudmin (2003) and based on Mason's (1955) critique on many anthropological acculturation studies, the bare focus on how minority groups affect the dominant group's culture is another concern in Berry's model and many others in general. While there have been some studies analyzing how the attitude of the dominant group towards minorities affect the acculturation process of migrants (Bourhis et al., 1997), the process of acculturation in the dominant group has been practically ignored. This is partially inconsistent with Redfield's classical acculturation definition (1936), who states that acculturation can also be a two-way process.

In general, Berry's acculturation model and taxonomy contributed with a better understanding of the process to the acculturation literature. However, it provided a very broad focus, leaving many aspects, like the ones mentioned, to ambiguity. Authors since then, have criticized but also complemented Berry's acculturation model and categorization (Boski, 2008; Bourhis, et al., 1997).

Nevertheless, and as previously mentioned, despite the increasing criticism towards Berry's fourfold categorization, it is still the most applied in acculturation literature. Rudmin himself, who has questioned and criticized this taxonomy through several years (Merametdjian, 1995; Rudmin, 1996, 1999; Rudmin, & Ahmadzadeh, 2001), states that "The popularity of the fourfold approach is widespread, enduring, and robust, despite the fact that faults in the resulting research are dramatic and obvious (although almost never noticed)" (Rudmin, 2003).

#### 2.1.4 Acculturative Stress and Other Psychological Effects of Acculturation

According to Berry, Kim, Minde, and Mok (1987), individuals going through an acculturation process experience acculturative stress, which is defined as a reduction in health status (including psychological, somatic and social aspects).

Moreover, Zaharna (1989), despite not studying the topic from the perspective of Berry's acculturation strategies, discusses how any individual going through an acculturation process experiences "confusion and inconsistencies in one's self-perceptions", naming this concept "self-shock". According to Zaharna (1989), confusion in self-identity happens in an acculturating individual due to a lack of self-validation in interactions with the host (dominant) society, since according to Giffin (1970), "all communication seeks self-validation".

The different authors researching acculturation through history had different views, based on theory or evidence, about which Berry's acculturation strategies entail negative pathological qualities, or positive and even healthful consequences for the acculturating individual or the host society (Rudmin, 2003). According to Rudmin's review about acculturation research (2003), the results of negative and positive psychological consequences of each Berry's strategy across all reviewed studies were as follows: "the assimilation option was negative in 50% of the 68 studies and positive in 32%. The separation option was negative in 68% and positive in 24%. The integration option was negative in 34% and positive in 53%. The marginalization option was negative in 50% and positive in 10%"

However, some theorists, including Voget (1956) and Cang (1980), have argued that, regardless of the migrant's strategy adopted during the acculturation process, all the strategies of acculturation involve difficulties, stress, or other negative qualities.

After reviewing the mentioned literature on acculturative stress and acculturation literature in general, it was identified that social interactions and relationships are critical to the individual's acculturation process. The next chapter will explain how social relationships with the host society influences acculturation.

### 2.1.5 Social Relationships in the Acculturation Process

Social relationships play a crucial role in the acculturation process of an individual in the host society (Furnham & Bochner, 1982). According to Peñaloza (1994), agents from both their country of origin and host society, such as friends, family, media, and other institutions influence migrants culturally and therefore, their behavior as consumers too. For example, O'Guinn, Lee, and Faber (1986), emphasize the importance of media in the acculturating process as a “safer and less riskier path than direct contact”. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this thesis, the focus will be exclusively on the social relationships through direct contact with individuals from the host society.

### *Understanding Acculturation through Social Psychological Theory*

Studying social relationships from a psychological perspective, one can find that self-identity is closely linked to them. According to Byrne and his similarity-attraction hypothesis (1971), when an individual has the perception that another is similar to him on features such as attitudes and values, he would be positively perceived. Byrne's explanation to such hypothesis is that when someone is similar to an individual, it might feel rewarding because it confirms that the individual's beliefs and values are correct, which is in the end seeking self-validation (Giffin, 1970) and if it is positive, it helps for verifying the individual's self-identity (Zaharna, 1989).

The similarity-attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971) also helps to explain why people in general struggle with intercultural interactions: the interacting individuals do not perceive any similarities between each other due to cultural differences, hindering a smooth interaction. Van Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret (2006) argue that according to the contact hypothesis, negative attitudes of one group towards another are caused due to a lack of knowledge about that specific group. Therefore, when two groups are in contact, they learn more from each other and the negative attitudes can be reduced or even disappear.

Moreover, the Social Identity Theory by Tajfel, Turner, Austin, and Worchel (1979), explains how membership in a group represents a key component of social identity and how individuals seek to keep a positive self-image by making favorable comparisons to other individuals in their own groups as well as other external groups. Therefore, we can assume that an acculturating individual can reinforce his own self-identity not only by pursuing and gaining constant self-validation in social

interactions (Giffin, 1970; Zaharna, 1989), but also by comparing himself favorably with other ingroup and outgroup individuals (Tajfel et al., 1979).

The last reviewed hypotheses and theory explain frictions between groups with cultural differences. However, there are also cases in which intercultural relations between groups can lead to positive outcomes due to constant contact with each other (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006). The Common ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) states that once an individual is part of any group, he would be treated in a similar way to other members from that group. Moreover, by “shifting the cognitive representations of membership in groups and outgroups to a more inclusive social identity” (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006), more positive attitudes towards other groups’ members result as an outcome. In addition, Gaertner & Dovidio (2000) argue that common ingroup identity can be reached by either having a common membership in an important group, like studying in the same school or working in the same company, or by other factors such as having a common goal.

In an acculturation context, the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) applies when the host society and minority groups have inevitably contact with each other in everyday tasks and even work together. Once such groups have contact regularly, they gain knowledge from each other and therefore, just as the contact hypothesis states (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006), prejudices and negative attitudes towards each other are reduced or eliminated. Moreover, as Gaertner & Dovidio state (2000), once a group (in this case the host society) shifts its social identity to a more inclusive one, the integration of people from other groups (acculturating individuals) is smoother. This is the case of some host societies, where the acculturation strategy is multicultural, which will be explained in one of the following chapters.

### *Quality of Social Relationships*

In addition to the amount of contact with members of the host society, the valence or quality of such interactions and relationships define the process of acculturation of a migrant. According to Furnham & Bochner (1982), evidence suggests that if an acculturating individual is introduced to close and sympathetic friends from the host society, especially at the beginning of his stay, it is more probable

that the individual would face less problems during the acculturation process in comparison to acculturating people who do not have such relationships.

Furthermore, Zaharna (1989) states that due to every communication seeking self-validation, positive relationships aid in verifying one's self-identity, while negative ones challenge it, leading to possible self-shock. Zaharna further explains that according to first-person accounts, relationships with the host culture become positive when the acculturating individual is just not accepted, but also accepted for his true and unique identity. Such positive relationships leading to a smoother acculturation process of the migrant (Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Zaharna, 1989) could only happen when a host society group is ready to integrate a new member from a different culture by having an inclusive social identity (Gaertner & Dovidio state, 2000). Finally, Sichtmann et al. (2019) state that stronger social ties with members of the host society can lead to a higher willingness to interact with more members from the host society for the purpose of learning further from them.

The four possible strategies according to Berry (1997), along with their general characteristics were already explained in the past sections. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, the attitude of the host society towards the minority groups is also critical for the acculturation process. In the next section, the possible acculturation strategies in the host society will be explained.

### 2.1.6 Acculturation Strategies in the Host Society

The process of acculturation is also affected by the attitude of the host society towards migrants (Berry, 1997; Kartal & Kiropoulos, 2016). This is why the host society's acculturation strategy is very important in order to understand why migrants integrate well or not. Some authors have already studied and developed a categorization of host society's ideologies or attitudes towards migrants (Berry, 2005; Bourhis et al., 1997; Maisonneuve & Testé, 2007).

Berry (2005) himself developed a typology of acculturation strategies, but this time from the larger society perspective, adding this way a "third dimension" in the process of acculturation (being attitude towards home and host country's culture the other two). According to Berry, every original acculturation strategy from the migrant's perspective can apply to the host society, depending on what

strategy the host society is seeking that the migrants adopt. Thus, the following dominant society strategies can be possible:

### *Melting Pot*

Strategy used when the migrant's assimilation is sought by the dominant group. For a long time, the melting pot was assumed to be the only possible host society's acculturation strategy, as originally in acculturation literature, the migrant was expected to assimilate to the dominant group (Berry, 2005; Bourhis et al., 1997). An example of a society with the melting pot strategy is the USA (Permoser & Rosenberger, 2012), where the general ideology for so many years was "a general willingness to incorporate persons of all origins into a common whole". Permoser and Rosenberg additionally emphasize that the USA melting pot strategy was traditionally viewed with an inclusionary character.

### *Segregation*

In this strategy, the host society forces the minority groups to adopt the separation acculturation strategy. Host community individuals who adopt segregation strategy do not favour contact with immigrants and prefer them to remain together in separate community clusters, and are "ambivalent regarding the status of immigrants as rightful members of the host society" (Bourhis et al., 1997).

### *Multiculturalism*

Multiculturalism means that diversity in general is an accepted feature in the society, including all the minority ethnocultural groups, allowing them to use the integration strategy. It is also an ideology that attempts "to strike a balance between unity and diversity" (Citrin, Sears, Muste, & Wong, 2001). Multiculturalism was a concept introduced by Canada as a policy goal, which intended to fight the back then common ideology that every migrant had to adapt to the host society through an assimilation strategy (Arends-Tóth & Vijver, 2003). Host societies adopting the multiculturalism strategy value biculturalism in migrants (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006), which may lead in the future

to “cultural pluralism as an enduring feature of the host society” (Bourhis et al., 1997). Additionally, conflictual relational outcomes with immigrants can be attenuated if the host society adopts this strategy (Bourhis et al., 1997) with integration policies that help reduce acculturation stress and to improve socio-cultural adaptation (Berry, 2005).

### *Exclusion*

As discussed in the explanation of the strategy from the migrant’s perspective, marginalization generally only occurs when the dominant group imposes this by rejecting the migrants who are also forced to leave their home countries due to political, religious or any other reasons. As opposed to host societies embracing multiculturalism strategy, excluding host communities are the ones who are more likely to experience “negative relational outcomes” with minority groups (Bourhis et al., 1997). Moreover, despite some societies accepting pluralism in general, there are still sometimes specific minority groups that the dominant group does not accept (Bourhis et al., 1997; Lebedva & Tatarko, 2004), forcing them into either separation or marginalization strategies due to hostility, rejection, or discrimination (Berry, 1997, 2005).

Researchers have examined the perception of groups, such as stereotypes, prejudices, and even discrimination towards minorities (Bourhis & Leyens, 1999; Doise, 1979; Leyens, Yzerbyt, & Schadron, 1994). For example, regarding stereotypes, Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu (2002) studied the content of stereotypes towards groups based on two dimensions: warmth and competence.

### *Acculturation Strategies Preferred by the Host Society*

Regarding the different host society’s strategies, it has been found (Barrette, Bourhis, Personnaz, & Personnaz, 2004; Piontokowski, Florack, Hoelker, & Obdrzalek, 2000) that dominant groups tend to prefer that migrants follow an integration or assimilation strategy, which would mean that dominant groups prefer the melting pot and multiculturalism strategy according to Berry’s typology (2005). However, it has also been found that testing Berry’s scale in host societies directly might be subject to strong social desirability effect (Taillandier & Maisonneuve, 2005).

In order to avoid a socially desirable effect in the responses, other researchers (Kosic, Mannetti, & Sam, 2005; Van Oudenhoven, & Eisses, 1998) tested what Berry's host societies strategies are preferred through an indirect method, which was by measuring the respondents affective and normative evaluations of migrants after describing different specific scenarios or cases about individuals belonging to a minority group. The findings showed a preference for assimilation strategy in migrants (melting pot) over the rest when using this method for avoiding biased responses.

### *Host Society's Acculturation Strategy Applied in a Service Context*

More specifically, in a service context, it has been argued not only that migrant customers with a higher level of integration in the host society is related with their willingness for interacting with service employees (Sichtmann et al., 2019), but also that the attitude of the employee, who has direct contact with the customer, affects his behaviour (Weber et al., 2014), including customer participation in the service process (Chan et al., 2010; Mills & Morris, 1986). This means that on the one hand negative attitudes, stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination towards the acculturating individual, in this case the customer in our study, can also affect his behaviour negatively (Felix, 2017; Weber et al., 2014) and therefore hinder customer participation, while on the other hand a good attitude of the employee during the service could enhance it (Chai, Deans, & Biggemann, (2012). Therefore, once again the use of dyadic data, in this case measuring attitudes toward foreign cultures, is very important in order to obtain more objective results and perhaps more interesting findings.

As it can be observed from the sections above, acculturation can be a very complex process, since it can be influenced by many factors. Nonetheless, the factors that were considered to be more relevant to this thesis, and especially the ones that in the end could affect customer participation, were the ones that were explained and discussed. In the next section, the foundations as well as the main drivers of customer participation will be introduced.

## 2.2 Customer Participation in Services

Early research on customer participation pointed at the importance of service providers encouraging customers to get more involved in the production of the service in order to increase productivity (Lovelock & Young, 1979). Later, Bateson (1983, 1985) found through empirical methodology that on one hand, some customers find a self-service attractive, while on the other hand other customers did not show any interest at all in it. Then, Mills, Chase, and Margulies (1983) stated that performance can be improved by viewing the customer as a “partial employee”.

Authors have defined customer participation in various ways. Dabholkar (1990) defines it as “the degree to which the customer is involved in producing and delivering the service”. Goodwin and Radford (as cited in Wattanakamolchai, 2008) define participation in 1993 as “the consumer’s ability to exercise options which affect the sequence and substance of service delivery throughout the service experience.” Cermak et al. (1994), on the other hand, refer to customer participation as “the customer behaviors related to specification and delivery of a service”. In addition, they conclude based on empirical evidence that participation should be used to denote behaviours related to the service and that it subsumes relevant aspects of behavioural involvement, which refers to customer attitudes.

Despite customer participation being very rare in manufacturing operations in the past (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003), Mills & Moberg (1982) emphasized the importance of differentiating between the role of the customer in service and manufacturing operations. They concluded that organizational technology should differentiate between such sectors and that the customer’s role in a service is contributing through information and effort.

### 2.2.1 The Drivers of Customer Participation

In order to have a better understanding of what customer participation is, and especially in order to measure customer participation properly, it is important to know the factors that are key to effective co-production. These key factors are task clarity, customer ability, and customer motivation. (Lengnick-Hall, 1996; Auh, Bell, McLeod, & Shih, 2007).

### *Role Expectations*

Before explaining the concepts of task clarity, customer ability, and customer motivation, it is important to consider the concept of role expectations. Role expectations are especially relevant for understanding the task clarity concept, as role expectations are in general the origin of customer's behaviour because many of them are developed from a very early age or since the first time a customer experiences any type of service (McNeal, 1964).

The literature on customer participation has pointed at the importance of role expectations and clarity. Citing Mills & Morris (1986) "even before a prospective client actively searches for a service, he or she may have some picture of the services the organization has to offer and the role he or she is to perform in the production of service outputs". McNeal (1964) studied the origins of role expectations and suggested that the client develops some level of role expectations and abilities through observation, participation, or imitation. Children, for example, learn the shopping process by accompanying and observing their parents on shopping trips.

### *Task Clarity*

A customer having role expectations (consciously or subconsciously) is very common, the critical part for service providers is, however, that the client has clarity in the right tasks he is expected to perform. Therefore, role clarity is a central determinant of effective co-production (Lengnick-Hall, 1996). Mills & Morris (1986) developed a customer participation process, explaining how the service provider in the first customer participation phase can screen and select the right clients with high role readiness when there is no competition from other service providers. It is during the first phases of customer participation that the service provider should train or instruct the selected clients for performing what is expected of them (Sichtmann & Patak, 2016; Mills & Morris, 1986), which would require an expense of resources, but could significantly increase the customer's satisfaction as a final outcome (Jo Bitner, Faranda, Hubbert, & Zeithaml, 1997).

Nevertheless, as it will be explained in a further section of this thesis, the public employment service, at least in Austria (AMS), is obliged to treat every customer equally regardless of their country of origin or how well they participate (Permoser & Rosenberger, 2012). This means that the AMS is not able to select their customers like Mills & Morris (1986) explains, which makes it even more important that every AMS customer has role clarity in order to maximize customer participation.

### *Customer Ability*

Customer ability is the “quality of input the customer provides to the service production process” (Auh et al., 2007). Moreover, customer ability can relate not only to the skills that the customer has in order to provide quality in his input, but also to the confidence required to perform a task (Meuter, Bitner, Ostrom, & Brown, 2005). As opposed to motivation or willingness to participate, ability is what the customer can do, instead of what he wants to do (Meuter, et al., 2005).

Furthermore, customer expertise is related directly to customer ability. According to Lengnick-Hall (1996), as the “customers' expertise increases, their ability to make effective contributions to production activities also increases”. This happens because when the customer has knowledge and expertise related to the service, he is able to provide accurate and useful information to the advisor, aims to control the service process and does not hesitate to make suboptimal contributions (Kelley et al., 1990, Sichtmann et al., 2019). In consequence, when the customer makes the mentioned valuable contributions, the employee is able to offer him a high quality service (Cermak et al., 1994; Dabholkar, 1990).

In fact, customer ability has been often measured in empirical studies through the knowledge or the expertise the customer shows in a service context. Such empirical studies have demonstrated that expertise affects positively co-production and satisfaction with the service outcome (Sichtmann et al., 2019; Auh et al., 2007).

### *Customer Motivation*

Despite customer ability being an important factor that influences customer participation, customer motivation to participate is also “critical for effective co-production” (Auh et al., 2007). According to Lengnick-Hall (1996), customers must be willing to get involved in the service process. This is because motivated customers generally prepare in advance for face-to-face meetings and respond to the employee’s request in a timely manner. In consequence, employees can use their time efficiently by not repeating themselves and customers can ask more direct and useful questions (Auh et al., 2007).

Customer motivation, or willingness to participate (Sichtmann et al., 2019) can be enhanced by building customer commitment (Auh et al., 2007). As Mills et al. (1983) states, the customer can be viewed as a partial employee. Therefore, concepts applied for motivating the employees in a company, such as equity, information, and influence can also be implemented for increasing the customer’s commitment (Lengnick-Hall, 1996).

Moreover, in a B2B service context, Bettencourt, Ostrom, Brown, and Roundtree (2002) state that dedicated resources to projects lead to a higher commitment of a client firm and consequently, the firm’s motivation to have a high-leveled cooperative behaviour with the service provider. Such dedicated resources include “project management personnel, special project structures and incentives, access to communication and information systems, and space to work at the client firm” (Bettencourt et al., 2002). In other words, as a service provider, showing the client that his project is important to the company through the investment of resources leads to the mentioned client firm’s high motivation to participate.

Finally, Bowen and Schneider (1995) found additional incentives for effective co-production, such as lower prices caused by the increase of productivity, or the increase of self-esteem thanks to the increase of control. In other words, if the customer is informed of the advantages that customer participation brings, his commitment and therefore, his motivation to participate would increase. Some of the main customer participation advantages, as well as its disadvantages for both the customer and service provider will be discussed with more detail in the following section.

## 2.2.2 Customer Participation: Advantages and Disadvantages

As already mentioned, customer participation can bring many advantages to both the service provider and customer:

1. It helps to improve performance, since customers become partial employees (Lovelock & Young, 1979; Mills et al., 1983).
2. It increases perceived service quality because customers are involved in the service process from the very beginning (Dabholkar, 1990)
3. It can lead to future intentions towards the service provider and further recommendations to other potential customers (Cermak et al., 1994)
4. It improves customer satisfaction because of the customer's involvement in the process, which gives him more control over the outcome of the service and in consequence, it matches his preferences more precisely. (Cermak et al., 1994; Mills & Morris, 1986)
5. Over time customers can improve their performance in co-production and consequently help to increase the service speed in each subsequent encounter, which would lead to an increasing customer satisfaction through time. (Lengnick-Hall, 1996)
6. It sometimes provides customers discounts and greater convenience (Jo Bitner et al., 1997).

Nevertheless, customer participation can also have some drawbacks and disadvantages when the service provider does not manage customer participation and its implications properly:

1. If the customer is not well trained or taught by the company about how to properly participate, it may make the service process slower, which could hinder customer satisfaction (Kelley, Donnelly, & Skinner, (1990).
2. When the customer fails at the required tasks, employees face many difficulties for delivering the expected outcome. As a consequence, employees are less productive, motivated, and satisfied at their jobs. (Chan et al., 2010)
3. Some customers that participated, can be less satisfied with the service outcome than the ones who did not participate (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003). This happens due to the self-serving bias, which is when an individual claims more responsibility than a partner for success and less responsibility for failure in a jointly produced outcome (Wolosin, Sherman, & Till, 1973). In

the case of a service context, customer participation can make the customer feel that they are in part responsible for the successful service outcome, giving less credit to the service provider and hence being less satisfied with it.

Despite there being some drawbacks and disadvantages of customer participation, it is worth remarking that most of the mentioned ones can still be prevented or managed by the service provider. Moreover, the big advantages of customer participation can certainly compensate for the disadvantages that this concept can bring. In the following section, the most relevant literature (and especially empirical evidence) to acculturation and its effect on customer participation will be reviewed.

## 2.3 Acculturation's effect on customer participation

The importance of customer participation not only in the literature but also at a managerial level has shown to be very relevant. This is why many researchers have studied potential factors that can have an effect on customer participation. In the case of the context of this thesis, the effect of cultural aspects on customer participation has also been studied (Davies, Basten, & Frattini, 2009; Felix, 2017; Sichtmann & Patak, 2016; Gibbs, 2010).

Despite literature about the effect of acculturation (not only cultural aspects in general) on customer participation being almost non-existent, there is nonetheless scarce literature studying and proving the existence of an effect between acculturation and customer's behaviour (Sichtmann et al., 2019). For example, Gail Perry (2008) found a relationship between different acculturation strategies and the use of banks. Vijaygopal et al. (2013) found through empirical methodology that migrants prefer different brands depending on the acculturation strategy they use, confirming that ethnic minorities should not be treated as a single homogeneous group (Lindridge, 2010).

Moreover, Weber et al. (2014) identified through empirical evidence different reactions towards service failure across Chinese Americans depending on their acculturation strategy. Fassaert, Hesselink, & Verhoeff (2009) found some relationships between acculturation and the use of health services, especially in assimilated and integrated Turks, who used mental health services more often

than the ones who did not participate in the host society (separated and marginalized Turks). Moreover, looking into the relationship between culture in general and the service experience, Zhang, Beatty, and Walsh (2008) found that culture has an effect on the consumers' service expectations.

That is to say, there has not only been found a relationship between culture and consumer behaviour, including customer participation to be precise, (Davies, Basten, & Frattini, 2009; Felix, 2017; Sichtmann & Patak, 2016; Gibbs, 2010), but also a relationship between the process of acculturation including its different strategies from Berry (1997) and consumer behaviour. This indicates that there might be significant and interesting findings when studying the effect of acculturation on customer participation, which in part has been confirmed thanks to the study of Sichtmann et al. (2019).

While acculturation and customer participation are the central aspects of this thesis, there are many other secondary factors that, although they are not the main ones, also play an important role as a whole. One example of this would be the context, like the service sector and country where this study takes place. The following chapters will give more insight into the host society, this includes the Austrian integration policy, as well as the employment service in the European Union and Austria.

## 2.4 Integration Policy in Austria

As explained in the past sections, the host society party plays a very important role in the migrant's acculturation process. This is why it is important to understand the specific host society context in which this study will take place, meaning the Austrian integration policy and its cultural and structural aspects.

Historically speaking, Austria has been a target for international immigration and despite this fact, the integration policy was for a long time ignored in the country (Permoser & Rosenberger, 2012). Nevertheless, when the topic entered the political agenda in 1990, it was in a negative context due to the far-right parties: "Integration was used within a larger discursive strategy that sought to justify restrictive immigration policies by framing resident immigrant communities as a problem" (Permoser & Rosenberger, 2012).

Due to the negative character in the introduction of integration policy in the political agenda, immigration in Austria has been often culturally viewed in a negative way, which has been continually both used and fed through political campaigns with more negative connotations towards migration (Wodak & Reisigl, 2000). In consequence, the negative cultural view of immigration has been reflected in the national policies labeled as “integration policies” (Permoser & Rosenberger, 2012).

However, within the last few years, actions have shown the intention to introduce new initiatives in the integration area. Some examples could be a new State Secretariat for Integration, which was created in 2011, or the creation of the Integration Act, which “sets the central framework for the successful integration of persons who settle in Austria on a long-term basis (Federal Ministry – Republic of Austria, 2019). This framework along with other policies set conditions for the migrant to legally integrate in the long term (maximum 5 years), some examples of these conditions are passing German and civic education tests, including geography, history and Austrian culture questions (Perchinig, 2010).

Furthermore, the Austrian integration report in 2015 (The Expert Council for Integration, 2015) explains some measures for promoting the intercultural dialogue, which includes co-operation with the media, establishing integration ambassadors, interreligious dialogues with the community, and improving the institutional structures for equal treatment. Nevertheless, while all these examples could be positive for the opening of Austrian society towards migrants, history has shown that most of the time these measures are “more symbolic than substantial” (Permoser, 2012).

Interestingly, apart from the official integration policies in the country, there have been other policies which were intended to benefit the whole society and benefited migrants in the end as well. Some of these policies are related to the labour market, unemployment benefits, subsidized housing, and welfare aid, helping to reduce the effects of income inequality (Guger, 2009), which affect many immigrants from outside of the EU belonging to the low income-share of the population in Austria.

In short, taking into account Austria’s historical, political, and cultural context, and despite many migrants benefiting from other general Austrian policies, it can be said that integration policies have been more focused on the migrant’s integration rather than the host society’s acculturation process due to the constant immigration. This has been, in other words and in the context of this thesis, more

a number of migrant assimilation (melting pot) policies rather than integration (multiculturalism) ones. Just as Permoser and Rosenberg (2012) argue “Assimilating into Austrian culture is conceived of as a unilateral requirement on the part of the immigrant, rather than as a two-way process involving adaptation on both sides”.

Now that the Austrian integration policy has been briefly explained and discussed, the second part of the context of this thesis will be explained in the next section, meaning the public employment service sector and its main trends across Europe.

## 2.5 Public Employment Service

A public employment service is, according to Sultana & Watts (2005), a career guidance service, which is “intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make occupational, training and educational choices and to manage their careers.” These services could be on an individual or group level, personally or at a distance through helplines or web-based services. Furthermore, the public employment service includes job placement, career information, assessment, consultancy interviews, career education and management programs, as well as work search programs and transition services.

Sultana & Watts (2005) also point out the main trends in the European public employment services. One of the main trends in these services has been the “responsibility-sharing”, which, according to Thuy, Hansen, Price, & Perret-Nguyên (2001), it has been due to three main reasons:

1. Globalization, challenging the public employment service sector.
2. The increase in complexity of the labour market, becoming almost impossible to satisfy the demand that the market demands
3. Issues like unemployment and social exclusion cannot be considered independent from more complex social and economic issues, therefore, the collaboration of different organisations is important for the overcoming of such issues.

Therefore, due to the explained reasons, three main trends for sharing responsibility in the organization of public employment services have been identified:

1. Decentralization through local and regional offices
2. Joint service delivery with partners.
3. Outsourcing and contracting-out

These main trends, according to Sultana & Watts (2005), have triggered the concern of balancing flexibility through responsibility-sharing, while maintaining quality standards.

As previously explained, one of the reasons for the responsibility-sharing trend is that the labour market has become more complex. Thus, European public employment services have been increasing the range and depth of their career guidance services with the purpose of satisfying the labour market needs. Furthermore, they have aimed to reach different categories of clients, especially segments with special needs, who need individualized and customized guidance, like long-term unemployed, individuals with disability, or migrants. (Sultana & Watts, 2005).

In the following chapter, a more specific insight of the public employment service in Austria will be provided, including its main services, organization, and how well it has provided migrant customers such services.

### 2.5.1 Austrian Public Employment Service

The Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) is responsible for different tasks in the labour market in Austria. Such tasks include the placement of workers, contributing to the elimination of placement barriers, creating measures to increase transparency in the labour market, regulation of imbalances between labour demand and supply through training or retraining programmes, preservation of jobs if it is in line with the current labour market policy, and supporting the unemployed through the unemployment insurance (Krause & Liebig, 2011).

As previously explained, responsibility-sharing is a trend in European public employment services, which AMS has also implemented by sharing responsibility with partners. For example, the AMS has implemented some measures through social partners, such as counselling services and a mentorship programme for the proper integration of immigrants in the labour market to complement their standard tools. (Krause & Liebig, 2011). Furthermore, the AMS works closely with NGOs for the purpose of delivering assessment services in order to reach specific groups like migrants. (Sultana & Watts, 2005).

Regarding quality standards, the AMS takes them very seriously, for example in areas like career-related information or the minimum time per client during an interview, as well as the appearance of the rooms for individual guidance interviews. In addition, AMS makes specialized staff training obligatory in career guidance in order to maintain the mentioned quality standards (Sultana & Watts, 2005).

As discussed in the section “Integration Policy in Austria” of this thesis, the topic of migrants’ integration in society has been tackled more in a cultural rather than a structural way (Permoser & Rosenberger, 2012). This means that the topic has been discussed more from the perspective of migrants adapting to society instead of making actual effective changes in the structure of Austrian institutions for them to integrate properly.

In the case of the AMS, despite their efforts of reaching immigrants by providing specific counselling and information materials targeted at this group, the only main budget item assigned to immigrants is the “labour market integration language training” (Krause & Liebig, 2011). Despite this, in 2012, according to the AMS data, 32% of the registered unemployed customers had a migration background (Krause & Liebig, 2011). Moreover, Permoser and Rosenberg (2012) state that “AMS follows a policy of treating equally native and migrant background populations with either Austrian citizenship or long-term residence permit”.

In general, many AMS programs, despite not being officially targeted at migrants for integrating in society, are beneficial for many acculturating individuals (Krause & Liebig, 2011). This confirms what Permoser & Rosenberg (2012) state, which is the fact that even though the Austrian Integration Policy lacks a lot of effective measures for the integration of migrants, there is however a broad range

of programs that benefit the Austrian society as a whole, especially groups in need, among which many migrants are overrepresented.

Understanding the context in which the study of this thesis will be conducted provided a very good insight of the status quo in Austria, which will be useful especially when executing the mentioned study. Nevertheless, as one of the main objectives in this thesis is to tackle the issue of the data collection in the study of Sichtman et al. (2019) by collecting dyadic data, it is critical to be aware of the method biases that will be possible faced. The next chapter explains these biases as well as the suggested remedies by the literature.

## 2.6 Common Method Bias

Early literature on common method bias states that one may encounter systematic error variance due to features intending to represent the construct to be studied, characteristics of the method employed, or simply random error variance (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). For example, in the case of the construct of customer participation, either through experimental (Dong et al., 2008) or empirical studies (Cermak et al., 1994), the same or similar method for measuring the construct has been applied: asking the customer party about his own participation performance, ignoring the employee perspective. This common method for measuring the construct has led to potential biases, which will be discussed in the present section.

The importance of identifying common method biases is crucial for the validity of any theory. According to Doty & Glick (1998), common method bias can be responsible for the invalidity of already empirically supported theories, as well as the validity of theories that were already abandoned due to lack of empirical support.

One of the most relevant works on the matter of method bias is done by Fiske (1982). In this paper, Fiske defined what the concept “method” could include in the measurement process. According to this author, method could mean “the content of the items, the response format, the general instructions and other features of the test-task as a whole, the characteristics of the examiner, other features of the total setting, and the reason why the subject is taking the test”.

Furthermore, according to MacKenzie and Podsakoff (2012), the researcher always has to identify when there is a risk that the respondent could be “satisficing” instead of “optimizing when participating in the study. If a subject satisfices, the risk of facing method bias is higher. Krosnick (1991, 1999) explains that when a respondent satisfices, “he uses a number of possible decision heuristics to arrive at a satisfactory answer without expending substantial effort.” Putting at risk the reliability of the study’s results.

Thus, it is crucial for the researcher to identify situations in which common method bias can be an issue for the study intended to be conducted. MacKenzie and Podsakoff (2012) state that there are higher probabilities of encountering method bias when “factors are present that: (a) undermine the capabilities of the respondent; (b) make the task of responding accurately more difficult; (c) decrease the motivation to respond accurately; and (d) make it easier for respondents to satisfice”. In other words, the capability of the individual, the task difficulty, his motivation, and will to answer accurately are the most important variables to consider in order to identify and avoid potential method bias.

Based on research of the potential issues and the limitations of already conducted studies that are relevant to this thesis, possible common method biases for this study will be explained and their potential remedies will be discussed.

#### *Lack of Experience Thinking about the Topic*

Krosnick (1999), as well as MacKenzie and Podsakoff (2012) state that a lack of experience about a specific topic can hinder an individual’s ability to optimize his responses. As previously emphasized, the ability of the respondent to answer the questions is vital in order to get optimized responses.

The reasons why lack of experience could limit the respondent’s ability to respond to the questions optimally are diverse. According to MacKenzie & Podsakoff (2012), without experience in the topic, the subject would be unable to link key terms to relevant concepts. Additionally, when the subject wants to retrieve information, it is more difficult for him without experience because there is not

much information to retrieve or he lacks practice in retrieving it. Moreover, the lack of experience also makes it more difficult for the subject to draw inferences.

Finally, one of the suggestions from Mackenzie & Podsakoff (2012) for solving this issue is simply changing the subject for measuring the desired construct to other ones who have experience in the area. This is exactly what will be done in the study for this thesis in order to solve the mentioned method bias, which is one of the most important aspects directly connected to the research gap of this thesis.

### *Complex or Abstract Questions*

Complexity in questions could limit the respondent's ability to answer them accurately, since respondents may find them more difficult to answer (Doty & Glick, 1998), leading to higher probabilities that the respondent satisfices instead of optimizing. Mackenzie and Podsakoff (2012) explain that when questions are too complex or abstract they "make it more difficult for respondents to know what information to retrieve from memory to answer the question" as well as they "make judgments more difficult because they make it harder for respondents to assess the completeness of what has been recalled and to identify and fill in gaps in what is recalled."

Furthermore, Mackenzie and Podsakoff (2012) mention the remedy for this potential problem in this thesis, which is attempting not to refer to vague concepts and if there is no choice, then provide clear examples of such concepts. Another possible remedy for avoiding complex and abstract questions is to simplify them, using language and vocabulary fitting the capabilities of the respondents.

### *Measurement Conditions that Make the Consequences of a Response Salient*

This issue leading to potential method bias decreases the motivation in respondents to answer accurately (Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). Steenkamp, de Jong, and Baumgartner (2009), as well as Paulhus (1984) are researchers in the field of socially desirable responses. According to them, when respondents are aware that their responses will be public or that the consequences of them would

bring major professional or social consequences, socially desirable responding tends to be higher, which leads to respondents satisficing.

The suggested remedies for avoiding this issue are: guaranteeing anonymity in the responses, emphasizing that there is no right or wrong answer, as well as explaining in the questionnaires that people have different opinions regarding the topic can significantly reduce the risk of socially desirable responses (Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012).

### *Presence of an Interviewer*

This issue, as well as the previous one explained, is related to a high risk of socially desirable responses. Only because of the presence of the interviewer, the respondent may feel the need to respond in a socially desirable way (Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). This is empirically supported thanks to research like Bowling's (2005), which shows that it is more probable that social desirability bias is an issue in face-to-face or telephone interviews than in paper or computer questionnaires.

The remedies suggested by Mackenzie & Podsakoff (2012) include providing only pencil and paper or computer questionnaires and in case this is not optimal for the study's purposes, it is recommended to emphasize to the respondent that there are no right or wrong answers and that everybody has a different opinion on the subject.

### *Implicit Theories*

Another possible method bias would be that the respondent has an implicit theory that two constructs are related (Lord, Binning, Rush, & Thomas, 1978), and therefore, modify their responses so they match the implicit theory that they had in mind. According to Mackenzie and Podsakoff (2012), "they may be motivated to fill in gaps in what is recalled in a manner that is consistent with their implicit theory". Mackenzie and Podsakoff (2012) propose as a solution to separate psychologically, temporally, or spatially both constructs, which will be applied in this study by separating the measurement of acculturation and customer participation in two different questionnaires.

### *Self-serving Bias*

Research on the self-serving bias has shown it is more likely that individuals attribute positive than negative outcomes about themselves (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Self-serving bias is generally acknowledged in the literature as a psychological strategy in order to protect or enhance the perception of oneself (Greenberg, 1991). Moreover, empirical evidence has shown that “individuals do make internal attributions for their successes and external (a person or situation) attributions for their failures” (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999).

A way to remedy self-serving bias is to make the subject aware of his own attitudes in a specific situation involving self-serving bias. For example, according to Haisle and Weber (2010), a way to extinguish self-regarding behaviour in ambiguity situations, is to make the individual aware of his natural attitudes towards such ambiguity. However, for the purposes of this thesis, a more simple solution is planned, which is the same one for avoiding the “lack of experience” method bias: changing the focus from a self-evaluating study (customer evaluating himself), to an external evaluation (employee evaluating the customer).

There will probably be many difficulties in the study to be conducted for this thesis. However, in the hopes to reduce them as much as possible, all the mentioned potential biases are to be considered, taking into account the possible remedies for preventing them. In the following section, the hypotheses for this thesis will be developed based on the whole Theoretical Background Section.

### 3. Hypotheses Development

#### *Influence of Acculturation on Customer Participation through Its Main Drivers*

As previously explained, the customer participation literature emphasizes the importance of role clarity and expectations (Mills & Morris, 1986). Role clarity has proven to be essential for effective co-production (Lengnick-Hall, 1996). Added to the heavy importance of role clarity on customer participation, it has also been shown that culture influences the role expectations of customers (Chan et al., 2010), meaning there might be an influence of any cultural changes (acculturation) that an individual experiences on customer participation. Furthermore, the influence of culture on customer participation has shown to be present even in service encounters (Youngdahl, Kellogg, Nie, & Bowen, 2003).

More specifically, there has been research and studies focusing on the differences between high and low-acculturated customers (taking acculturation as a unidimensional construct), or the differences between Berry's acculturation strategies (acculturation as a bidimensional construct) and their effect on consumer behaviour in different industries (Gail Perry, 2008; Vijaygopal et al., 2013; Lindridge, 2010; Weber et al. 2014), which suggests an influence on role expectations and participation skills.

An example of empirical evidence studying the relationship between acculturation and consumer behaviour is the one of Chai & Dibb (2014), which found a positive relationship between high-acculturated customers and their preference of using English, the host society's local language, with employees in the banking industry in New Zealand. Another example is the study of Vijaygopal et al. (2013), which shows that acculturation influences brand preference: separated consumers prefer ethnic brands while integrated and assimilated consumers have a preference for local brands. This study not only revealed that integrated consumers prefer host brands less than the assimilated ones, but also that integrated consumers prefer ethnic brands less than the separated ones. This additionally implies that integrated migrants are in a "middle point" between the separated and assimilated acculturating individuals in this matter.

However, the most similar example to the study to be conducted in this thesis, is the one of Sichtmann et al. (2019), which found that identification with the host culture increases the participation expertise and the knowledge of the roles they have to perform.

In general, the literature on acculturation and its effect on the interaction between customer and employee repeatedly suggests a significant variation between migrant customers who identify more with the host society culture and migrant customers who identify less with it. It is important to note, however, that sometimes the direction of the acculturation effect is surprisingly the opposite from the original or common expectations (Chai et al., 2012; Weber et al., 2014).

Regarding customer participation, it is expected that participation behaviour will be affected through the explained drivers in the Theoretical Background Section: role clarity, motivation, and ability to participate, since they are all key factors to effective co-production (Lengnick-Hall, 1996; Auh et al., 2007). Such key factors were also tested as mediators in the study of Sichtmann et al. (2019) through the constructs “willingness to participate” and “expertise”.

The constructs of willingness to participate and expertise in the study of Sichtmann et al. (2019) were designed based on the knowledge that a customer’s understanding of role expectations and their willingness to adopt them might influence their behavior and their interactions with service employees (McColl-Kennedy, Vargo, Dagger, Sweeney, & Kasteren, 2012). The study showed, however, that the migrant’s expertise, and not the willingness to participate, is likely to affect participation behaviour when the employee is perceived as actively participating. Nonetheless, both constructs will be tested as mediators in this thesis regardless of the results in the study of Sichtmann et al. (2019), since as already mentioned, the study of this thesis may show different results due to the data collected from both employee and customer.

Moreover, as emphasized in the theoretical background section of this thesis, it is also important to take into account the other party in acculturation: the host society. In the case of this study, the host society would be reflected in the employee who assists the customer in the public employment service. Despite this aspect not being taken into account for testing the hypotheses per se, it is worth emphasizing that customer participation will be measured through the employee and his attitude towards the customer could have a direct or indirect influence. However, it is also important to point

out that not every single employee participating in the study will be necessarily Austrian because he could also be a migrant or have foreign roots.

Since the general attitude of the AMS employees in multicultural interactions is yet unknown, it is likely, based on the Austrian Integration Policy (Permoser & Rosenberg, 2012; Wodak & Reisigl, 2000), that employees in general would use a melting pot (assimilation) strategy for dealing with customers. However, there is also the possibility that an adopted melting pot strategy would not be the case due to their obligatory specialized training (Sultana & Watts, 2005), which includes a module about migrant customers and how to assist them. Therefore, they could be even more open than the general host society and adopt a multiculturalism strategy.

Therefore, based on the presented general theoretical background, and especially the literature covering the relationship of culture or acculturation with customer participation, behaviour, expertise, and willingness to participate, the following hypotheses are developed:

H1: The customer's identification with the host society's culture positively affects his participation behavior through his expertise related to the service

H2: The customer's identification with the host society's culture positively affects his participation behavior through his willingness to participate in the service

### *The Effect of Social Relationships between Identification with the Host Society and Customer Participation*

As previously stated in the Theoretical Background Chapter, the foundation of social relationships is self and social identity, which are reinforced by either constant self-validation through social interactions (Giffin, 1970; Zaharna, 1989), or by comparing oneself positively to members from the same group or external ones (Tajfel et al., 1979). This is very important to emphasize, since the study for this thesis will measure acculturation by asking the respondent about his own view of his cultural identity. Therefore, it is expected to find a relationship between the respondent's cultural identity and his social relationships.

The contact hypothesis (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006) is also fundamental for understanding how constant contact between two different groups can lead to less prejudices, smoother interactions between them and therefore, in the case of an acculturation context, a better integration from minority groups adjusting to the host society. The common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) is also relevant to the development of the hypotheses in this thesis, since it states that once an outer individual is part of some group due to a common goal or membership in a certain group, e.g. a school or company, then common ingroup identity can be reached. This is the case of a country like Austria, especially in Vienna, where many cultural groups have inevitably contact with each other everyday.

The aspect of many different cultural groups having contact with each other in Vienna is, however, not enough to assume that minority groups can integrate properly in the host society, since both attitudes of the minority and dominant group towards each other have to be taken into account, as well as the final intergroup relational outcome from them (Bourhis et al., 1997). Furthermore, some specific groups are object of discrimination, regardless of how the host society accepts pluralism (Bourhis et al., 1997; Lebedva & Tatarko, 2004). This means that no matter how an individual would tend to identify himself with the host society's culture, if the host society does not accept him, the amount of the acculturating individual's social relationships with members of the host society would significantly decrease.

As previously stated, the attitude of the host society towards acculturating minority groups is necessary to have a better understanding of the acculturation process. In general, according to the literature reviewed (Barette et al., 2004; Piontokowski, et al. 2000), host societies tend to prefer that minority groups adopt an assimilation or integration acculturation strategy (melting pot or multiculturalism from the host society perspective). Based on this and the official Austrian Integration Policy, which tends to prefer that migrants assimilate to the society (Permoser & Rosenberg, 2012), it will be assumed for the purposes of this thesis that when an acculturating individual adopts and integration or assimilation strategy, his relationships with the Austrian host society would tend to increase.

Apart from the constant contact with the host society (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006) and the attitude (official and cultural) of both host society and minority group towards each other (Bourhis et al.,

1997), the quality of the social relationships that the acculturating individual has with the host culture plays a big role in the acculturation process (Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Zaharna, 1989; Sichtmann et al., 2019). According to Zaharna (1989), good quality relationships affect the integration of the migrant positively and bad relationships affect it negatively.

The connection of social relations with members of the host society and the acculturation process for the development of my hypotheses has been explained. Going deeper into social relationships and their connection with customer participation, Peñaloza (1994) states that consumer skills, knowledge and behaviors are transferred by family, friends and institutions to the acculturating individual through behavioral processes like modeling, reinforcement, and social interactions. This is fundamental for understanding the connection of social relationships with customer participation in an acculturation context, since as McNeal (1964) states, role expectations (which is crucial that they are clear to the client) are developed through observation, participation, or imitation.

Moreover, Sichtmann et al. (2019) explain that acculturating individuals with a higher social integration in the host society have higher willingness to participate in a service context, since migrants with stronger social ties may be an indicator of them willing to interact, get in touch, get along and learn from the host society members, including service employees.

Thus, based on the general theoretical background as well as the literature previously presented on social psychology theory and its connection with acculturation and customer participation in a service context, the following hypotheses are developed:

H3: The customer's identification with the host society's culture positively affects his participation behavior through the number of relationships with the host society that he has.

H4: The customer's identification with the host society's culture positively affects his participation behavior through the quality of the relationships with the host society that he has.

## 4. Methodology

The two main goals of this thesis is to study empirically the relationship between migrant customer's acculturation and his participation behaviour from the employee's perspective in the public employment service through both expertise and willingness to participate, as well as to study the role of social relationships with the Austrian society in participation behavior. The data was collected in different AMS branches across the city of Vienna. The selection of the AMS branches was based on the migrant customers traffic, selecting the ones with the heaviest traffic. The public employment service was selected for the purposes of this thesis due to the heavy importance of customer participation in the success of the service outcome (Sichtmann et al., 2019). Moreover, Vienna is an ideal city to conduct this study since a great part of the Austrian capital's population has foreign roots: "In early 2019, about 40.7 percent or 773,176 residents of Vienna had a foreign background" (Municipal Department 23, 2019).

### *Planned Process Explanation*

In order to conduct the study for this thesis, the data had to be collected from both customers and employees. Therefore, the employees from the selected AMS branch were contacted in advance in order to set a day for the study to be conducted in their department.

There were in total 4 questionnaires to collect the required data: Two types of questionnaires to be filled out by each employee and two types of questionnaires to be filled out by each customer. The scale used for measuring the constructs from the questionnaires was a 7 point Likert scale.

The first employee questionnaire to fill out was to collect demographic and general data from them, as well as to measure their attitude towards intercultural interactions (host society acculturation strategy). Each employee received only one copy of this type of questionnaire. The second type of questionnaire for the employee had to be filled out after each interaction with the customer in order to collect data about, according to the employee, the customer's participation as well as how well the employee thought he himself performed during the interview. The latter questionnaire is crucial for avoiding the "lack of experience" and self-serving biases, which are explained in the Theoretical

Background Section of this thesis. Each employee received several copies of this type of questionnaire, which had to be filled out depending on the number of customers he assisted and wanted to take part in it.

Additionally, an envelope containing the questionnaires to be filled out by the employee was given to each one of them at the beginning of their working shifts. This was for ensuring anonymity in their responses and avoiding a bias previously discussed, which is that the employee thinks that the consequences of his responses may be too salient (Steenkamp et al., 2009). Each envelope had a unique code assigned to each employee, which had to be written on every questionnaire filled out by them in order to match the employee with the right assisted customer.

The first customer questionnaire to fill out was to collect general demographic data from him as well as the adopted acculturation strategy. The second customer questionnaire was to collect data regarding their satisfaction with the service and to know how well they believe they participated. Despite not being the main goal of this study to collect participation data from the customer, it could be interesting to compare his perspective with the employee's one. It is also worth mentioning that measuring acculturation in one questionnaire and customer participation in another one could serve as a separation of both concepts for avoiding "implicit theories" bias (Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012).

Each customer also received a unique code, which was written on each questionnaire filled out by him and was also communicated to the employee so the customer's code is also included in the questionnaires filled out by the employee that assisted him, matching each customer with the corresponding employee.

The length of each interaction between customer and employee was diverse as well as the subject of each interview, even though they were in general concerning employment. The questionnaires for the customers were available in the local language, as well as Serbian, Turkish, and English to ensure the respondent's comprehension. Turkish and Serbian translations were chosen based on the two main minorities in Vienna, as at 1st of January, 2019, 101,813 Serbians and 76,355 Turks were living in the city (Municipal Department 23, 2019). Additionally, 5 euros coupons redeemable in local supermarkets were used as incentives for increasing the participation of customers in the study.

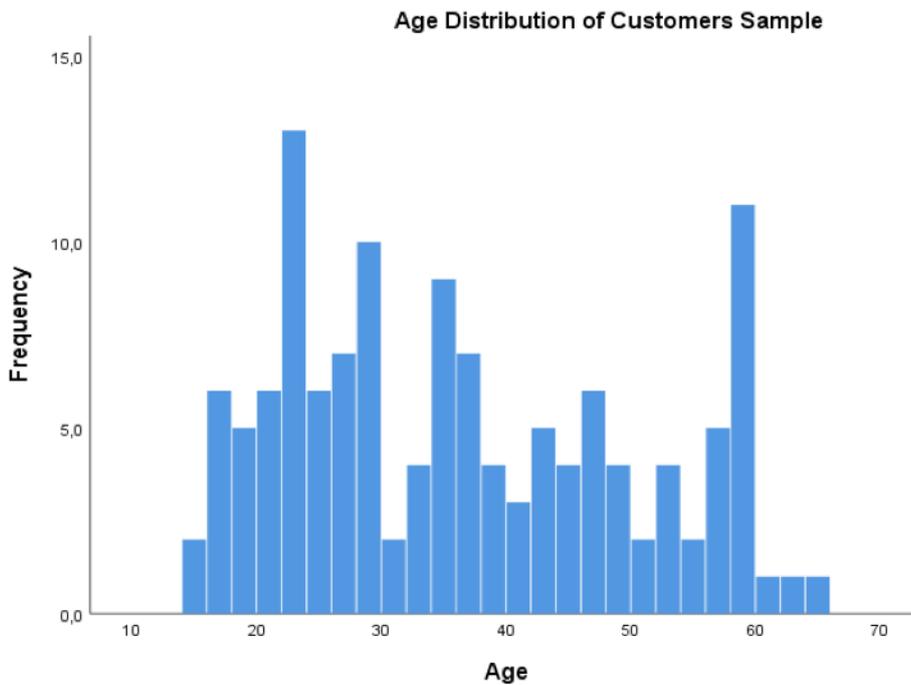
The customers were randomly approached before or after the interaction they had with the employee. There was no time limit for responding to any of the questionnaires. When the customer did not need any assistance for responding to them, space was given to him or her in order to avoid possible method bias because of the presence of the interviewer (Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). Additionally, it was verbally and written emphasized to the customer that their participation was completely anonymous and that there were no right or wrong answers, but merely opinions about the given topic. This was again for preventing method bias conditions that could make the customer think the consequences of their responses would be too salient (Steenkamp et al., 2009).

Finally, it was also important to take into account that many of the migrant customers participating in the study would possibly have a limited educational background as well as limited German skills, the local language. Therefore, the questionnaires were intended to be written using language and vocabulary fitting the capabilities and educational level of the respondents to prevent possible issues because of complex or abstract questions (Doty & Glick, 1998; Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012).

### *Customers Sample*

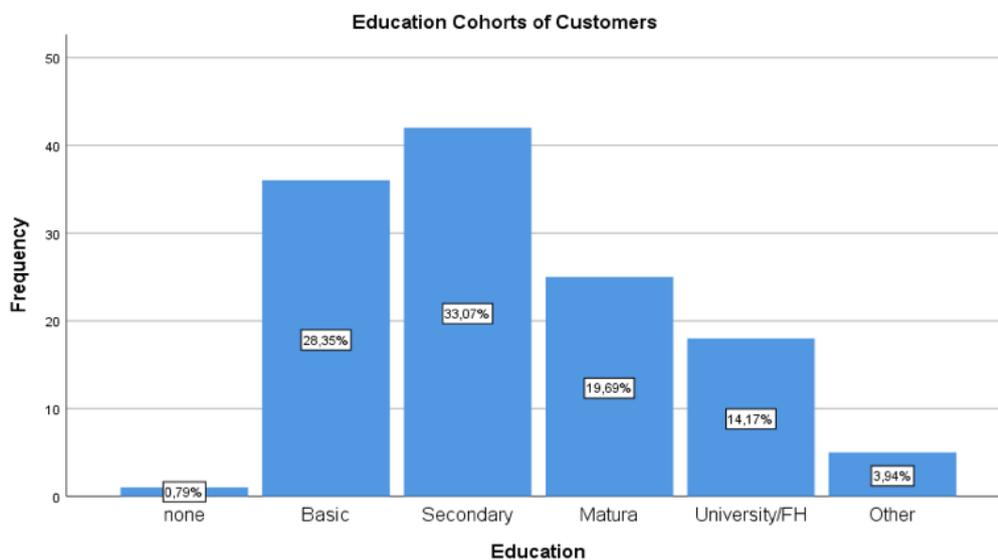
The data was collected from 134 respondents, which 50% were female. The age distribution (see Figure 1) has heavy tails with two main modes: 58 and 22 years old with a frequency of 9 and 8 respectively. The mean age of the sample was 35.9 (SD = 13.76), with a range of 16 to 64 years old. This means that all age groups that might need the AMS services are well represented in the sample. It is important to mention that AMS offers employment consultancy for young customers, who would like to start their first experience in their professional lives, as well as consultancy for older adults who need pension insurance due to age or illness (AMS, 2020).

Figure 1. Age distribution of customers sample



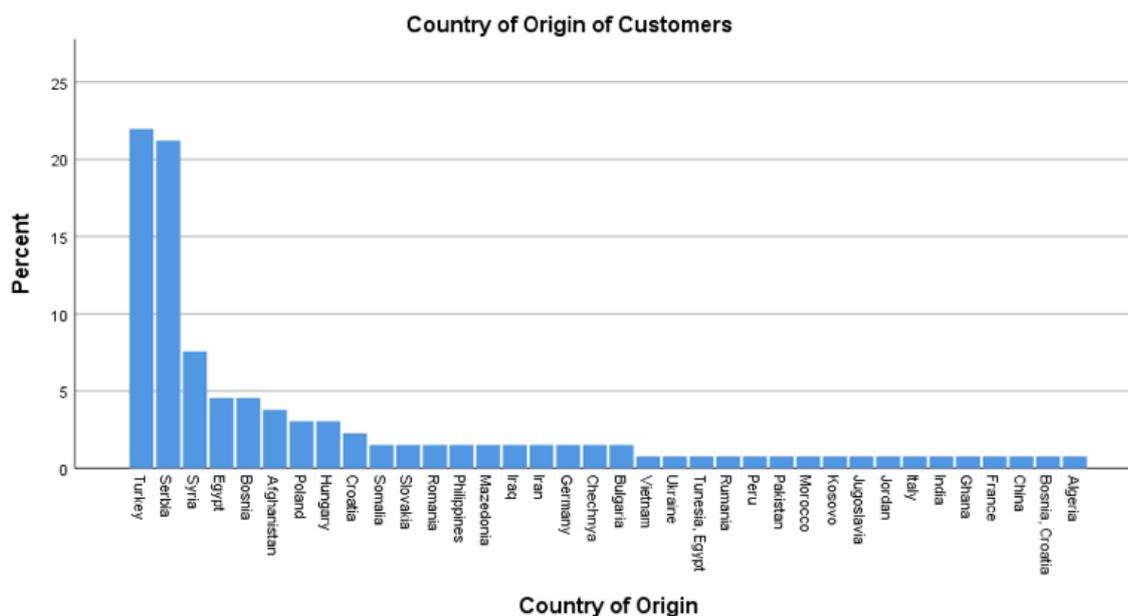
Regarding education, all cohorts were represented (see Figure 2). Basic education: 28.3%, secondary education: 33%, matura (equivalent to high-school): 19.6%, university: 14.1%, and other: 3.9%. Despite not having as many respondents with completed university as desired for the study, it was expected to have a higher sample from basic, secondary and matura education, since a big part of the respondents came from countries with a lower mean of schooling years (UNDP HDR, 2018).

Figure 2. Education level of customers sample



The countries of origin from the sample were also very diverse (see Figure 3), although as expected, the two main minorities in Vienna (Municipal Department 23, 2019) were especially represented in the sample: Turkey with a 21.5% and Serbia with 20.7%. It is also worth mentioning that the third most repeated country of origin in the sample was Syria with 7.4%. This reflects the big impact that the refugee crisis (Squires, 2017) had in the Austrian public employment service and the need of taking this new minority into account when conducting studies with migrant respondents in Austria, as it will be further discussed in this thesis.

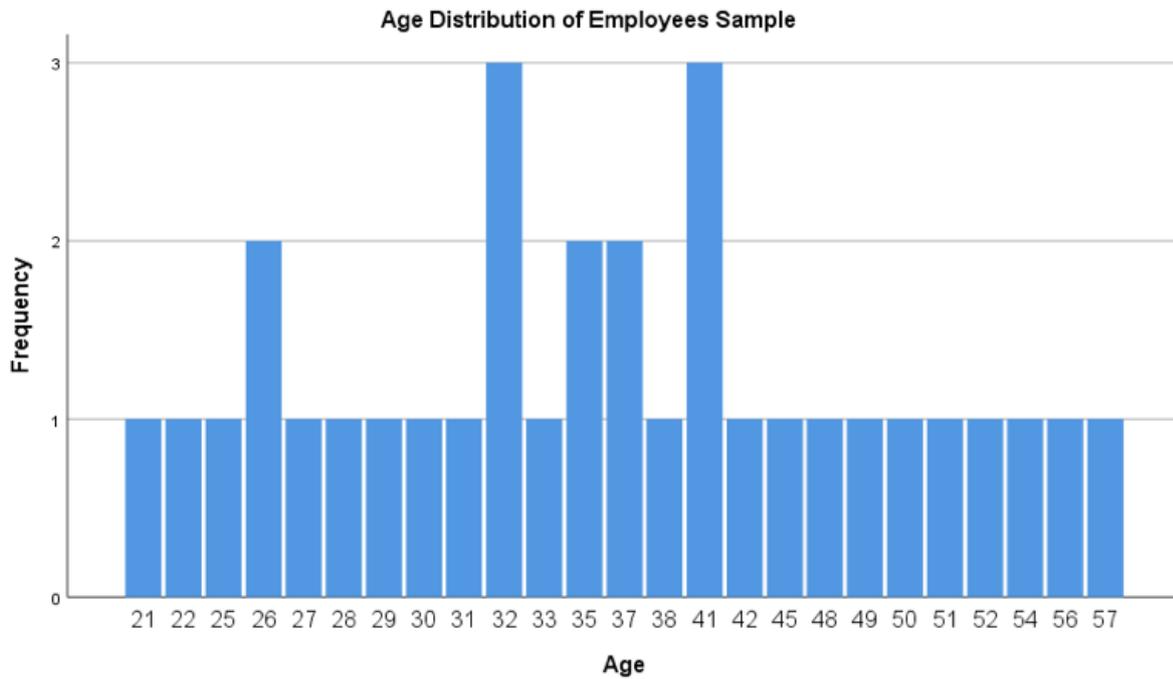
Figure 3. *Country of origin of customers sample*



### *Employees sample*

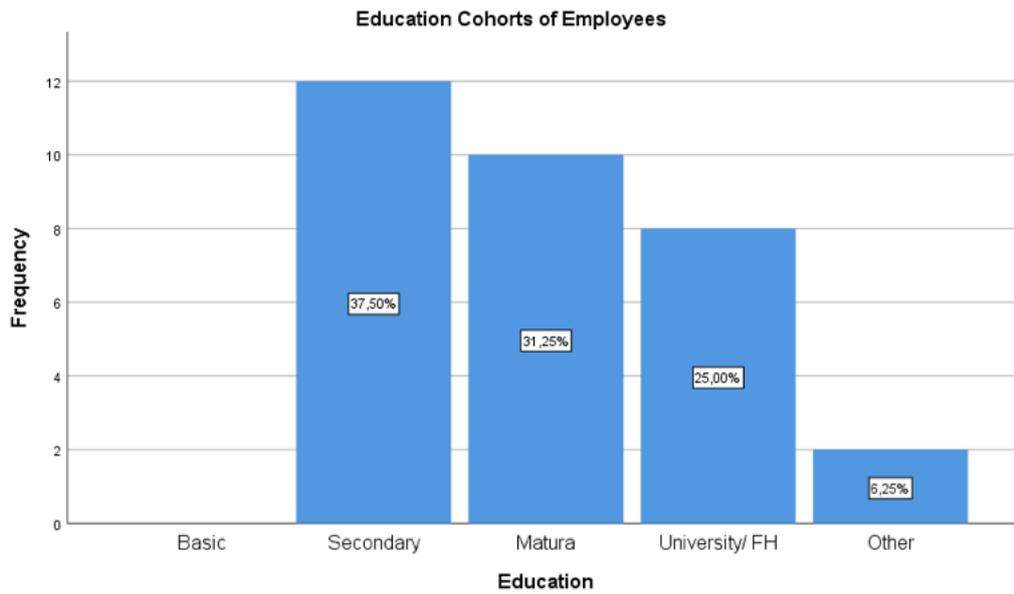
The employees sample consisted of 33 respondents, 63.6% being female. Regarding the age, its distribution was almost uniform, 32 and 41 were the modes (see Figure 4). The mean age was 37.5 (SD 10.36) and 50% of the sample was older than 35 years old. Although the sample was relatively small, many ages were well represented, from a young 21 years old employee, to some other employees who were in their last years of tenure with a maximum of 57.

Figure 4. Age distribution of employees sample



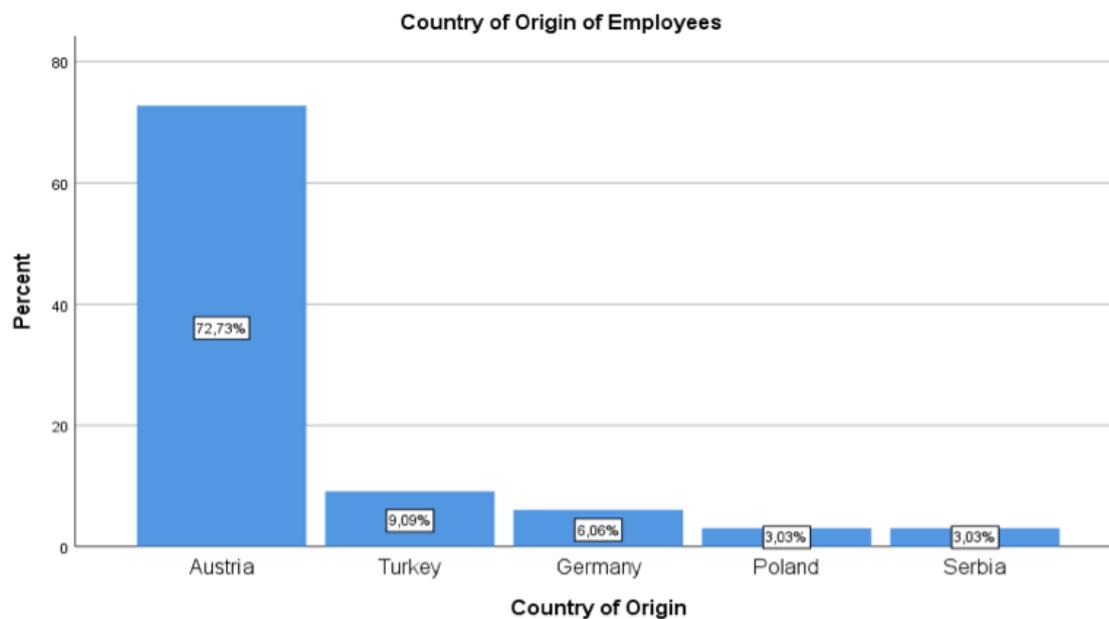
The education cohorts, however, presented different results compared to the customers sample (see Figure 5). Basic education: 0%, secondary education: 37.50%, matura: 31.25%, university 25%, and other 6.28%. In this case, it is important to point out that all employees completed at least secondary education. This is perhaps due to a requirement that AMS has for recruiting its employees. Nevertheless, independently from that, the employees presented in general a higher educational level, for example, 25% of them completed university, while only 14.1% of the customers did.

Figure 5. Education level of employees sample



Regarding the country of origin of the employees (see Figure 6), 72.73% was Austria, 9.09% Turkey, 6.06% Germany, 3.03% Serbia, and 3.03% Poland (the rest did not respond to the question). The country of origin of the employees can have a big relevance in the final outcome of the service that they provide. This will be further discussed in the following sections of this thesis.

Figure 6. Country of origin of employees sample



In general, the customers and employees sample for testing the 4 hypotheses previously presented is representative in every category that is relevant to the context of this thesis: the public employment service industry and the city of Vienna.

### *Measures*

The necessary constructs for testing the presented hypotheses were created by calculating the mean of the respective statements (see Appendix A) that measured the desired construct to rate by the customers and employees. Such constructs were identification with the host country's culture (IDHOST), expertise (EXPERT), willingness to participate (IWTCO), quality of relationships with the host society (QUAREL), and participation behavior (ICOB). The only exception is the case of number of relationships with the host society (NUMREL): if the customer responded with a numerical value, the same value was taken for the analysis and if the customer gave a range (e.g. 20-30 friends and/or acquaintances), the mean of the minimum and maximum value of that range was calculated.

It is also worth emphasizing that EXPERT, IWTCO and ICOB, were measured based on the employee's responses, as it was previously explained, while IDHOST, QUAREL, and NUMREL were naturally measured based on the customer's responses.

Furthermore, four more constructs were created for the purpose of making a contrasts analysis between them and the constructs used for testing the hypotheses previously presented. The first one is identification with the home country's culture (IDHOME), the rest of the constructs measured the customer participation drivers and participation behavior as well, but this time measured from the customer's perspective: expertise (EXPERTK), willingness to participate (IWTCOK), and participation behavior (ICOBK).

Finally, an additional construct was created for categorizing the customer according to Berry's acculturation strategies. For creating this construct, firstly the median of IDHOME and IDHOST was calculated. Then the sample of customers was split in two in both IDHOME and IDHOST constructs, the first half consisted in the customers that had a score below the median and the other half were the ones who had a score above it. Lastly, the BERRY construct was created by dividing the sample in 4

groups (integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization) depending whether they had a low or high score in IDHOME and IDHOST compared to the rest of the sample.

In general, the items for creating the constructs of IDHOST and IDHOME were based on Shokef and Erez (2006), as well as Mezzich, Ruiperez, Yoon, Liu, and Zapata-Vega (2009). The items for the constructs of EXPERT, EXPERTK, IWTCO, IWTCOK, ICOB, were based on Auh et al. (2007). Lastly, the items of the constructs of NUMREL and QUAREL were inspired by the study of Sichtmann et al. (2019). Furthermore, data for demographics such as gender, age, education, income, and country of origin was collected. It is also certainly worth mentioning that the questionnaires included additional sections that, despite not being used for reaching the objectives of this thesis, also served for further research about other aspects in the acculturation and customer participation literature.

After reviewing the literature on acculturation, customer participation, as well as possible method bias, then developing the hypotheses, and selecting the methodology for the analysis and results, it was time to execute the study for collecting the data. The next section will describe, analyze and discuss the planning, organization, and execution of the study for this thesis, including the expected and unexpected issues that arose, as well as how they were tackled. Furthermore, literature on reducing respondent burden will be reviewed and finally, based on this literature, the possible improvements for similar future studies will be discussed.

## 5. Challenges in the Data Collection

While it was already clear that conducting the study for this thesis could represent many challenges during the planning, organization and execution of the whole process, it was surprisingly even more challenging than expected. Furthermore, on the one hand, some expected challenges were not even an issue at all while on the other hand, totally unexpected issues arose and were in fact one of the biggest ones. The present chapter discusses all the issues that arose in the study for this thesis.

### *Presence of the Observer During the Execution of the Study*

Firstly, it is worth pointing out that this study measured different constructs from the perspective of both customers and employees, which was one of the few expected difficulties in the study that was in fact true. This meant it was imperative to be personally present at the AMS branches for coordinating its right execution. Moreover, this also meant it was not possible to collect data from former customers who had an interview at any other point of time in an AMS branch before, since it was necessary to collect also data from the employee who assisted him.

On one occasion, it was attempted to leave some questionnaires at an AMS branch so the employees could collect data from customers independently. After this, it was planned to collect the filled out questionnaires. This could have brought many advantages, since the data collection would have lasted significantly shorter. Additionally, the presence of the study observer would not have been needed. Nevertheless, this approach was not effective, since both the employees from that branch were only able to collect data from one customer in one week. This confirmed that the presence of the observer was imperative not only for controlling the effective and efficient collection of data, but also for motivating the employees to participate well in the study.

### *Different Conditions between AMS Branches and Departments*

The different flow of migrant customers depending on the AMS branch was one of the most important factors for collecting data. The public employment service branches are distributed all around Vienna and there is approximately one branch per district (AMS, 2019). Although it was already previously known in which branches there could be the biggest flow of migrant customers, a high number of customers and employees was still needed for the purposes of this study and some other not very promising branches regarding the flow of migrant customers had to be tried. As expected, these branches could not offer a big number of customers, despite the high cooperation of many employees. However, their participation was still very valuable for reaching the planned number of employees.

Apart from the different flow of migrant customers depending on the branch, there was also the department factor influencing the participation rate in the study. In some departments, the so called “counseling zones” (Beratungszone), the employees already had scheduled interviews with their customers. In other departments, the “information zones” (Infozone), the customer did not need any appointment and they could arrive spontaneously. Most of the respondents were taken from the “Beratungszone” since the interactions in such departments lasted longer, which was something more substantial and useful for the purposes of this study. Nevertheless, the amount of customers in a day per employee was very scarce compared to the big amount of customers in the “Infozone”.

In the “Infozone”, despite the big flow of customers, there was a disadvantage: the interactions in this department were sometimes too short and sometimes the issue of unemployment was not deeply discussed at all. On other occasions, according to some employees, the main topic of the interaction was sometimes related to either health, insurance, or even issues regarding the customer’s safety in general. The interactions in this department were nonetheless taken into account because they also represent the public employment service and they are in fact sometimes the first impression that customers have from the AMS, since the “Infozone” departments are usually on the ground floor.

It is worth mentioning that even though the “Infozone” had more variety in the topics discussed during the interactions, some of the employees from the “Beratungszone” also mentioned that the topic during their interviews was not always strictly related to unemployment but other topics such as pension insurance or unemployment financial support.

The planning and organization for the study with each AMS branch was also difficult. Although many employees surprisingly showed interest before and during the study and hence contacting them was easier than expected, the coordination of the availability from both the observer and the employees was still hampering the progress of the study. Additionally, in some AMS branches, the employees willing to participate sometimes belonged to different departments and therefore, despite being located in the same branch, they were on different floors. This is why it was sometimes very difficult or even impossible to conduct the study in two or more departments at the same time. The only plausible solutions were therefore to conduct the study during different days in both departments or having two observers coordinating the process in each department. This issue arose in several branches.

### *The Employees*

When the AMS branches were contacted and it was requested to conduct the study in them, many employees expressed in advance their will to participate in the study. However, despite their initiative, it was still not enough for reaching the goal of 30 employees that were originally planned and needed for the study. The solution was to spontaneously approach some of the employees in the moment, once the study was about to be conducted. This solution worked for reaching the study's goal.

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that not all employees accepted to participate, in most cases due to a busy schedule during their shifts. A few employees were also concerned about the protection of their data or their responses being completely anonymous. Despite being aware of the method bias of the consequences of responses being salient (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012) and therefore making always clear that their participation in the study would be completely anonymous, the mentioned employees were nonetheless concerned about this topic.

In other cases, some employees were not able to participate because the manager did not allow them to do so, since the participation of too many employees from the same department would hinder the flow of customers being assisted. It is nonetheless important to mention that in some other branches, we counted with the participation of a big part of the whole department at the same time. These were

evidently the occasions when the data of most customers could be collected, since the more employees participating in the study at the same time, the higher the probabilities were that customers would take part in the study.

### *The Customers*

As previously mentioned, it was surprising that several employees cooperated more than expected, since it was thought this could be one of the main issues because of the interruption of their duties during their shifts. The participation and cooperation of customers, however, were some of the factors that limited the progress of the study the most. It was expected that the 5 euros coupons would be a very good incentive for increasing their participation, and although it is not possible to know whether these incentives enhanced their motivation for supporting the study, their participation rate was still very low.

One of the main apparent reasons that the customers were not willing to participate in the study was their limited time, since some of them had another appointment either in another department from AMS or somewhere else. Whether the customers were indeed in a hurry or not, is unknown. However, what is surely true is that there was a general reluctance for participating, since some customers did not even give a reason why they would not participate or explicitly said they were not interested in the study.

A possible explanation for such behavior from the customers was their probable low altruism towards the observer and sponsor of this study, since according to MacKenzie and Podsakoff (2012), it is an important factor for respondents to help the sponsor of the study. Additionally, Krosnick (1991) states that altruism is important for respondents to optimize their responses. Therefore, even though some respondents participated, they may have satisfied their responses due to a low altruism. Such method bias was unfortunately not considered in advance, since this issue was not expected to arise due to the 5 euros coupon incentive.

As mentioned in the Methodology Section, the original process was to approach the customer during the waiting time before their interview with the AMS employee. Details like the general topic of the study, approximate duration time, their participation being anonymous, and the 5 euros coupons

incentive were mentioned for their information, since many customers asked this if it was not explained in advance. After noticing their general reluctance for participating in the study, it was clear that a different approach was needed.

### *Changes in the Process and Dealing with Method Biases*

After further experience with the execution of the study, it was noticed that the attitude and participation of the employee was a big factor that influenced, not only the customer's participation in the interview, but also in the study. After observing the participation of the AMS employees, it was noticed that some of them encouraged the customers after their interview to participate in the study. Surprisingly, this made a very significant difference and the number of customers participating in the study increased. This is why it was decided to change the process slightly by asking all the participating employees to encourage their customers to participate in the study instead of the observer directly approaching the customer before their interview. The employees would encourage the customers by explaining to them that their participation in the study could be very helpful to improve the process of AMS for migrant customers like them. This also meant, however, that customers would have to fill out both study's questionnaires after their interview and not one before and one afterwards, like it was originally intended.

The previously explained modification in the process of the study represented a trade-off between potential method biases and the increase of the customer's participation rate. The lack of a temporal separation between the measurement of acculturation and customer participation constructs represented a risk of having an "implicit theory" bias (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012) in the results. It is nonetheless important to point out that this trade-off was necessary because the difference in the participation rate between the original and modified design was enormous.

Furthermore, the increase of the participation rate in customers when it was explained that with this study the process in AMS could improve for them could confirm there was a low altruism towards the sponsor of this study (Krosnick, 1991), since Mackenzie and Podsakoff (2012) state that a possible solution to this method bias is "to remind the respondents of how research can improve the quality of life for others and/or help the organization".

The fact that many migrant customers decided to take part in the study because of the improvement in the process that could represent and not because of the 5 euros coupons incentive might be a very interesting finding. This might also mean that the customers who participated in the study are interested in improving the service that they were given by giving their feedback, which is a sign of high customer participation. This could, however, bring an issue regarding the sample of customers. It could be possible that the customers participating in the study are generally only those who would show a high customer participation, since they are already showing a sign of high customer participation by willingly giving their feedback. Another possible explanation to this would be that many customers decided to participate when the employee encouraged them due to a feeling of reciprocity (Hoffman, McCabe, & Smith, 1998) because the employee had already helped the customer by giving him consultancy about his unemployment status.

One more important issue in the study, was the fact that many customers did not understand the meaning of many questions from the questionnaires to fill out not only because of the language itself, but also because they sometimes did not understand key concepts for the study like cultural identification, customer participation, or how a Likert Scale works. It is important to remember that many of the migrant customers going to the public employment service in Austria had a low level of education and despite attempting to design the questionnaires in a clear and understandable way, it was nevertheless very difficult for many customers to fully understand certain aspects of them. Furthermore, some customers expressed that the questionnaires were too long, since as it was mentioned in the Methodology Chapter, several additional constructs were measured in the questionnaires for further research in the acculturation and customer participation literature.

As previously mentioned, language was a clear difficulty for collecting data from the customers. Despite translating questionnaires from the local language to English, Turkish, and Serbian, there was nonetheless a significant part of customers who were not able to respond to the questionnaire because they did not speak any of the languages to which the questionnaires were translated. Many of these customers spoke Arabic only, which was something unexpected when planning the study because according to the migration statistics of the Municipal Department 23 of Vienna (2019), not a single Arab nationality was in the top 10 of the population with foreign background. However, the recent political events in Syria and the refugee crisis (Squires, 2017), for example, were erroneously not taken into account and despite the Syrians not being in the top 10 of migrant population in Vienna, it

was very probable that the majority of them would need employment counseling due to their refugee status. Surely something important to be considered in the next studies conducted in Vienna on the migration field.

The approach taken for tackling the issue of customers not fully understanding the questions or statements was partially or fully assisting them while responding to the questionnaires. In some cases, it was enough to only explain the meaning of some questions or concepts, in others, it was necessary to read every single question or statement to them due to physical issues (e.g. not being able to see well), cognitive issues, or language barriers. Despite having a risk of a method bias due to the assistance of the interviewer (Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012), it was considered important to collect data from these customers because they could represent more diversity in the sample for the study, since many of the customers who were not able to see well, for example, were part of the elderly population.

Another possible solution for the issue mentioned above, would have been to interview the customers directly instead. If this was the case, the observer could face the “presence of the interviewer” method bias (Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012), although in some cases of the study conducted for this thesis, the observer had to assist the customer, almost resembling an interview. Furthermore, interviewing the migrant customers would serve for a qualitative study rather than a quantitative one, which may not satisfy certain research aims. In the case of this thesis, this is why the approach of only assisting them was chosen, since this would solve the issue and at the same time keep the quantitative approach of the study that was intended from the beginning.

It is also relevant to mention that although the questionnaires were designed for the customer to take 10-15 minutes responding to them, in some cases, they could even take almost one hour (with assistance) participating in the study. Mostly when a customer took very long responding to these questions, it was due to the issues previously discussed. However, in a few cases, the customer took very long responding to the questionnaires because they felt the need to express to the study’s observer their frustrations regarding their unemployment situation or their acculturation process in general. It was inevitable to link these cases to the acculturation stress topic addressed by many researchers (Berry et al., 1987; Bourhis et al., 1997; Zaharna, 1989) and how this stress affects their daily lives.

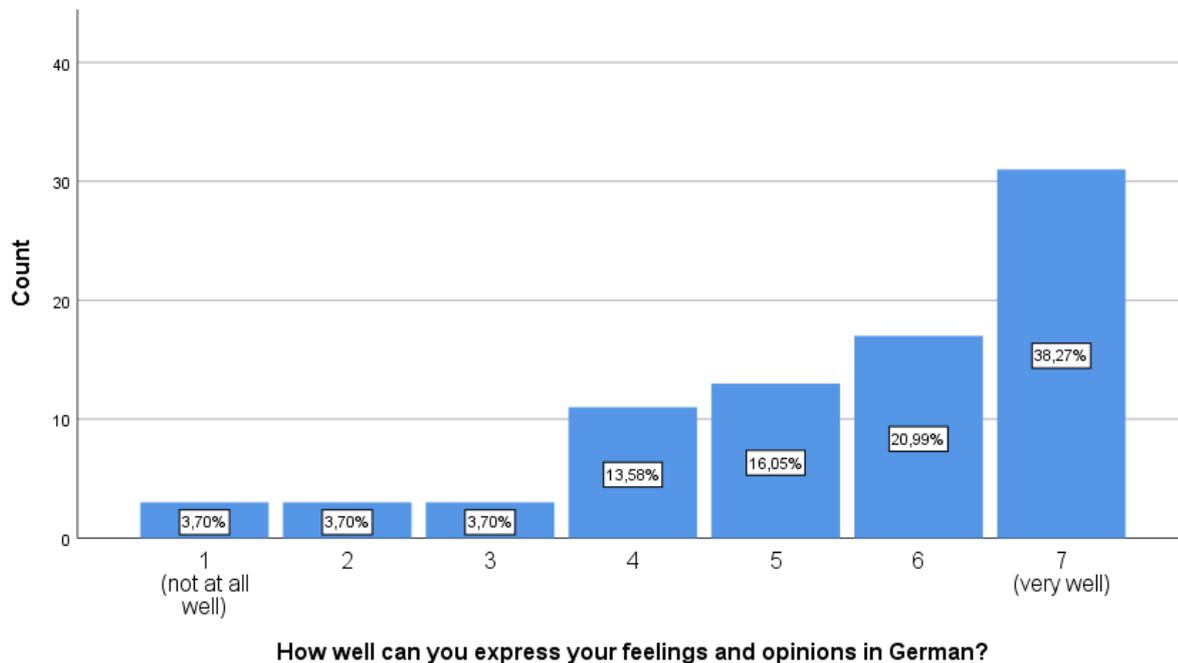
### *Additional observations*

While conducting the study for this thesis, it was very surprising to see the rate of migrant customers not going or arriving too late to their appointments at AMS for their interviews with their advisors that would assist them. The exact rate is unknown but it was observed that in most cases, the migrant customers did not even bother to let the employee know that he or she would not be present for their appointment. This issue, plus almost all employees having a mixed number of local and migrant customers, hindered the process of the study significantly.

Migrant customers not even going to their appointments at AMS represent a big concern regarding their proper integration in Austria, as not going to this scheduled appointments affects their employment situation and therefore, hampers their proper integration to the host society. Furthermore, precisely this kind of customer behavior represents a low customer participation, which means the study would be missing a lot of valuable data of customers with low participation behavior. Additionally to these migrant customers, who might not be properly integrated, it is inevitable to think about the number of migrants who are not even entitled to have consultancy regarding their employment situation at AMS because of their legal status. It is worth remembering that AMS, despite having a policy of treating migrants and locals equally, only assists migrants with a valid residence permit (Permoser & Rosenberg, 2012).

It is also important to mention that a significant part of the customers who took part in the study and did not respond to the questionnaires in the local language, were already living in Austria for several years and, in some cases, did not speak it at least on a basic level. Moreover, 61.73% of the customers that were staying in Austria for more than 10 years could not fully express their feelings and opinions in German (see Figure 7). Despite the findings of some studies like the one of Sichtmann et al. (2019), stating that language does not play a major role in customer participation, it is certainly a very important aspect in Austria's Integration Policy (Perchinig, 2010) and therefore important to the host society in general.

Figure 7. How well migrant customers staying for at least 10 years in Austria can express their feelings and opinions in German



Regarding the participation of employees in the study, as already stated, their cooperation when they were contacted for the first time as well as during the first execution of the study at their branch was very high. An interesting observation is that the employees with a master degree were always motivated to participate and cooperate in the study. They all openly expressed that they understood the difficulties for carrying out a study and that the cooperation from the participants was crucial for its success since they themselves had to conduct a study when they were students. This was another confirmation that altruism towards the sponsor of the study (Krosnick, 1991) played a very important role during its execution.

Nevertheless, due to the low participation rate of customers, it was necessary to do a second, third, and even fourth round at some AMS branches. This led to a gradual decrease in the motivation of the employees in general to cooperate in the study compared to the beginning and therefore, affected the rate of customers willing to fill out the questionnaires for the study, since many employees did not encourage the migrant customers to take part in the study as much as in the first rounds.

Moreover, despite the big cooperation of the main AMS management, by having their permission for carrying out the study at the branches, the availability of each branch management was limited, especially after requesting a third or fourth round in the same branch. When such situations arose, the managers were generally expressing, as previously mentioned, that the employees were generally limited of time or also that some customers approached them to ask about the protection of their data and therefore preferred that their department does not continue participating in the study in further rounds.

It was clear that this study was hindering the normal everyday tasks of the whole department, which could affect their productivity. In retrospect, however, it is also clear that it is better for the study and very probably for an AMS branch department that many employees participate at the same time only in one round, rather than carrying out several rounds on different days due to the low number of employees participating in the previous rounds.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that independently from the motivation of the employees for participating in the study after conducting several rounds in their departments, a general openness and friendliness from them towards the migrant customers was observed. This confirms the mentioned policy of AMS of, not only treating migrants and locals equally (Permoser & Rosenberg, 2012), but also training the employees for dealing with intercultural interactions (Sultana & Watts, 2005).

In summary, there were several challenges when conducting the study of this thesis. However, one of the main challenges was the respondents' reluctance to participate in the study, especially the customers. This is something that was wished to be known prior to the execution of the study in order to reduce resources invested in the study, but especially, in order to maximize the participation rate. Despite not having taken into account such an important aspect, a section of this thesis will be dedicated to some literature on reducing the respondents' reluctance in hopes that future researchers take this into account when conducting studies with possible high reluctance of the respondents to participate.

## 5.1 Reducing Respondents' Reluctance to Participate in the Study

### *Respondent's burden*

One of the key factors to maximize the response rate in surveys or studies, is reducing the respondent burden. According to the Medical Outcomes Trust (1995), response burden can be defined as “the time, energy and other demands, placed on those to whom the (survey) instrument is administered”. Increasing the response rate in any study is critical, firstly, in order to minimize resources expended on the study and, secondly, in order to increase the accuracy of sample estimates, since typically the characteristics of people participating in surveys are different from the ones who do not participate (Richardson, Ampt, & Meyburg, 1996). In the case of the study for this thesis, for example, it was expected that it would be relatively difficult to have respondents adopting the marginalization strategy (Weber et al., 2014; Vijaygopal et al., 2013).

Bradburn (1978) discusses the respondent's burden when participating in surveys, he divides variables related to burden in four: Length, respondent effort, respondent stress, and frequency of being interviewed. Interestingly, all these four variables played a very important role and were identified during the execution of the study of this thesis as important hampers for both approaching the respondent and also for making sure he would optimize instead of satisfice (Krosnick, 1991) when responding to the questionnaires. In the case of the variable “frequency of being interviewed”, it was not a main issue with the customers but more with the employees when we had to conduct the study up to 4 rounds in their branch.

However, Bradburn also emphasizes that it is especially important to focus on the perception of the respondent regarding the burden. That is, despite a questionnaire being significantly long, if the respondent has for example a good time while responding to the questionnaire, the perceived burden would be minimal compared to the positive aspects perceived from it. In fact, Rolstad, Adler, & Rydén (2011) found through a meta-analysis that there is weak support of an association between the length of questionnaires and response burden, which was measured through response rate. Rolstad et al. also support the idea of choosing the measurement instrument based on the quality of content from the respondent's perspective rather than the length.

Another possible approach of the response burden concept, as discussed by Haraldsen (2004), is to divide response burden into respondent burden, design burden, and interaction burden. Respondent burden could be defined as “personal traits and behavioural or attitudinal attributes of the respondents that affect their ability to complete the questionnaire quite independently of how the survey is designed” (Haraldsen, 2004). Design burden means all the content and presentation of the questionnaires, as well as the way the data is collected. Finally, interaction burden results as a combination of the respondent’s characteristics and the survey’s properties.

Since the characteristics or personal traits could not be controlled by the observer during the study of this thesis, only the design burden aspect will be further explained and discussed. Haraldsen (2004) states that survey properties can be summarized as follows:

1. Number of questions
2. Content of the questionnaires
3. Flow of the questions
4. Questionnaire’s layout

In the same way, Haraldsen (2004) summarizes data collection procedure elements as follows:

1. Communication channel used for contacting the respondent, the control over the respondent and how long the contact lasts
2. Recruiting strategy, meaning how the potential respondent is traced and how the respondent is motivated to participate
3. Administrative tasks to be done by the respondent before, during, and after the questionnaire is responded
4. Measures designed to protect the respondent’s data and anonymity

Haraldsen (2004) provides an accurate description of the possible respondent burden causes and proposes an alternative solution to decrease the response burden by administering the study or survey in a computer, since respondents find this mode more entertaining than responding on paper. Nonetheless, this was not the right option in the case of this study, since the study had to take place

in different AMS branches and in some cases, several respondents were responding to the surveys simultaneously, which have meant the need of several computers at every branch. Additionally, no customer complained or made a comment about the questionnaires being on paper.

Haraldsen (2004) and Bradburn (1978) provided a useful framework for knowing what elements can influence respondent burden in the conduction of a study. There was a lack of plausible solutions or recommendations in the mentioned literature that could apply to the characteristics of the study in this thesis in order to reduce respondent burden. This is why more suitable solutions had to be found from additional literature. The main findings that could apply to the case of this study, especially the recommendations from Ampt (2003), will be explained and discussed below.

#### *Literature recommendations for reducing respondent's burden*

Ampt (2003) provides several possible solutions to reduce respondent's burden, and although her focus is on travel surveys, many solutions certainly could be applied to the difficulties that arose during the study of this thesis.

Firstly, Ampt remarks that the respondent's past experience with burden can also influence him in the current survey he is responding to. In fact, it could certainly have an influence on the respondent to decide whether he will participate in the study. During the execution of the study at AMS, a respondent refused to take part in the study because he argued he recently participated in another one sponsored by the University of Vienna while going to the doctor.

Ampt also argues that giving the respondent the flexibility of responding to the questionnaires whenever he wishes can reduce the respondent's burden and that when the questionnaire has to be responded at the time and place of contact, more difficulties regarding respondent burden arise. Several AMS customers asked in fact if they could take the questionnaires with them and hand them back another time. While this was not normally allowed in this study, because, for example, the customers would not have the details of the interview fresh in their minds, it could have been an option for increasing the response rate.

Another key aspect according to Ampt (2003) is to always give information regarding the survey in advance. It is important that the observer or interviewer notifies the potential respondent about the possible burdens of the questionnaires to be responded. The length of the questionnaire is one of the most common ones and according to Ampt, it is important to give an accurate and honest length. In the case of this study's questionnaires, as already mentioned, the approximate duration of them was between 10-15 minutes. Nevertheless, in several cases, due to the mentioned individual physical or cognitive issues, the customers could take up to one hour to respond to them. In fact, in some other cases the respondent already started to respond to the questionnaire and when they realized it would take longer than expected due to such issues, they decided to cancel their participation and leave.

The perceived relevance of the study is also an important thing to consider in order to reduce respondent burden. For example, Altschuld et al. (1992) found that familiarity with the mail sender when contacting the potential respondent, increased the response rates 20% due to the reputation or position of the sender. While it is not completely sure why the response rate of the study for this thesis increased when the employee instead of the observer encouraged the customer to participate in the study, the fact that the customer perceived that the AMS supported this study might have increased the perceived relevance of it. Another possible explanation, as previously mentioned, is that the customer, after being assisted, had a feeling of reciprocity (Hoffman et al., 1998) towards the employee.

Moreover, the customer could also perceive a high relevance of the study when he was told that by participating in the study, the service at AMS could be improved for migrant customers like him. Ampt (2003) emphasizes that many respondents take part in surveys due to altruism or just because it makes them feel good to do something significant for their community. While it was relatively applied to let the respondents know that the service at AMS could be improved because of the study of this thesis, it was not applied across all potential respondents, since it was thought that other information could be more relevant to share with the potential respondent. Therefore, this aspect could have been improved during the execution of the study.

Ampt (2003) also states that the respondent might face physical, cognitive and/or emotional difficulties while responding to the questionnaires, which trigger response burden. Such difficulties were already discussed in the previous section. Despite solving the physical difficulties successfully,

which was usually by reading the questionnaire to the customer, the cognitive difficulties were very challenging to solve. For this type of difficulty, Ampt suggests using the simplest possible language and format.

In the case of this study, the questionnaires were already pre-designed and making changes in the format or language would have been more difficult to implement. Moreover, the questionnaires were originally intended to contain a simple language to understand, not to mention that questionnaires translated in other languages were also offered and despite this, many comments concerning the understanding difficulty were made from both the customers and employees. Regarding the emotional difficulties, the observer should understand all the reasons for the survey and be sure to transmit them directly to the respondent.

Furthermore, Ampt suggests offering several ways of responding to the questionnaire, either by telephone, email, at the time and place of contact, etc. In other words, once again giving the respondent some flexibility for participating in the study. Implementing such flexibility in this study may have been possible, especially offering the customer the possibility of sending the responded questionnaire by email. Although once again, it could have been a trade-off of increasing the response rate in exchange for a decrease in accuracy of their responses and/or difficulties of non-compatibility of the applied methods for collecting data (Ampt, 2003). While it is not for sure that this could have worked, offering several ways of participating in the study is something that could be attempted in future studies in the field.

Attitudes or opinions from external people who have influence on the respondent could also trigger response burden. Apart from the presence of the interviewer (Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012) probably making the respondent not willing to participate or restraining the responses. In addition, when a respondent has an influencing relative, friend or simply peer who is against surveys for any reason, the respondent may feel burdened because of such principles from the external person.

However, Ampt also states that in some particular cases, the actual presence of a third person is required in order for the respondent to respond accurately, or to even participate in the study. Such cases happened in the study for this thesis, when older adults needed the assistance of relatives who could help them recall how the interview with the employee was. More importantly, in other cases

when people that spoke only one language that was not between the available translated questionnaires would have participated if a third party could translate the questionnaire for them.

In the case of customers facing language barriers, it is unknown whether the employees encouraged them in advance to bring a third person if he did not speak German fluently, but it is certain that many customers went to their appointment alone despite not speaking the local language fluently. Therefore, the only way to solve the issue was that the observer assisted the respondent through the whole questionnaire. Unfortunately this alternative solution did not work in every case and several potential respondents preferred to cancel their participation in the study due to such issues.

Ampt additionally points out that providing information prior to responding to the surveys can decrease response burden. The information that should be given includes indicating in what circumstances the questionnaires are not suitable to the respondent, the estimated length of time for responding to it, the reading and comprehension assumed level, anything special that the respondent may be required to do during the survey, and finally how much missing data is acceptable if the respondent decides not to respond to certain questions. In the case of the study for this thesis, as previously mentioned, information like the length of time was given. However, the reading and comprehension assumed level, as well as how much missing data it was acceptable to have, was not given.

In fact, the estimated length of time of the questionnaire was correct, but if the reading and comprehension level was not the right one, the length of time would logically prolong. There was certainly a dilemma between letting the customer know the actual required reading and comprehension level and having the risk of demotivating him to participate, or encouraging him to participate despite not being sure if he matched the right comprehension level and perhaps achieving the completion of the questionnaire. In some cases, the strategy worked, in some others, the customer was demotivated because he realized it was much more difficult to complete the questionnaire as he expected.

Finally, it is strongly recommended to conduct a “pilot study” before in order to identify the ways in which the response burden can be minimized. The observer could also do follow-up interviews for asking the participants of the pilot study, for example, which questions or instructions were not well

understood, or which sections were the most difficult to complete. Furthermore, in self-completion questionnaires, the observer could sit next to the respondent and observe visual cues that would indicate parts where the respondent struggles and then make the corresponding improvements.

In summary, after reviewing the literature on reducing respondent's burden in order to increase the response rate, it was realized that some solutions to decrease response burden were in fact implemented after observing the process of the study during the first days. Improving the study process through trial and error was, after all, not the worst approach. Nevertheless, there were still many aspects to improve, which could have led to a higher response rate and a more efficient collection of data. Below is a summary of ideas, based on the previous discussed literature, that could have been implemented or further developed in order to maximize the response rate:

- Implement a pilot study before conducting the actual one in order to identify possible improvements
- During the pilot study, observe the respondent while he responds to the questionnaire and analyze key factors such as sections where he especially struggles, body language, etc
- Ask the participants of the pilot study whether they could change some aspects of the questionnaires or the data collection method in order to reduce the response burden
- Offer flexibility in the way the potential respondent can participate in the study: at the place and time of contact, by email, or even by telephone if it is feasible
- Create a script that contains the key aspects to mention when approaching directly or indirectly the potential respondent. This could help the observer to bear in mind the most important information to share in order to reduce the response burden
- Emphasize that with the respondent's participation, the service offered to him and other customers like him would be improved in the future. This was implemented but very seldomly
- If it is identified that the customer might face physical, cognitive, or even emotional difficulties, it is better to inform him that the completion of the questionnaire in his case might take longer than normal. According to Ampt (2003), the response burden is higher if the customer realizes that the questionnaire is longer than promised
- The language used in the questionnaires has to be, based on the experience of this study, not only simple, but extremely simple. This is not only because of the potential respondents with

a very basic German knowledge, but also because of the respondents that have also a limited educational background.

- Ask the employees to contact the customer in advance by email in order to suggest him to bring a third person if the customer feels that he can have difficulties with the local language at both the interview and the study.

## 6. Analysis and Results

The whole analysis procedure of the data collected was carried out on the program SPSS. The first step for analyzing the data collected in the study for this thesis, was testing the reliability of the constructs. As mentioned above, all statements to rate were measured on 7-point Likert scales, and when testing the constructs for reliability Cronbach's alpha for each construct was calculated.

Cronbach's alpha was developed by Lee Cronbach in 1951 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011) and it was created for the purpose of measuring internal consistency in a scale or test. In this case, internal consistency would mean that all the statements from the questionnaires used for creating the explained constructs were measuring the same concept. Cronbach's alpha can range between 0 and 1, where the higher the value, the more internal consistency there is.

According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), there are different reports about what Cronbach's alpha values are acceptable for internal consistency, these reports range between 0.70 to 0.95. On the other hand, when Cronbach's alpha is too high (above 0.90), it can mean that some items measuring the construct are redundant. Furthermore, the number of items for measuring a specific construct is also important to consider when testing for internal consistency. This is because when the number of items is too low, Cronbach's alpha tends to underestimate reliability (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

In the case of the data for the analysis of this thesis, the Cronbach's alpha of the constructs ranged from .766 to .960 (Appendix C), whereas the number of items for creating the mentioned constructs ranged from 3 to 8. This means that there are no constructs with low internal consistency: the lowest Cronbach's alpha was from QUAREL, which might be because it only has 3 items, also the lowest from the rest. This is nonetheless not an internal consistency problem, as the Cronbach's alpha from QUAREL still falls in the acceptable range. Moreover, there might be some constructs with redundant items that are practically asking the same question but phrased differently, since IDHOME, EXPERT, and IWTCO had a Cronbach's alpha higher than .90. This is however not a big concern for the internal consistency of the constructs.

Moreover, it was also tested whether the predictor variables presented multicollinearity. Multicollinearity can represent an issue because it creates inflated variances between the variables. This inflation is problematic because some of the predictors contribute very little or no information at all to the model (Robinson & Schumacker, 2009). Looking firstly at the bivariate (also called pairwise) correlations between the predictors is one of the measures used to determine whether there is multicollinearity (Mansfield and Helms, 1982). In this case, the pairwise correlations were not greater than .36 (see Appendix C). This was already a good sign because there were significant correlations between some predictors but the correlations were not extremely large as Mansfield and Helms (1982) warns for having concerns regarding multicollinearity.

Nevertheless, Mansfield and Helms (1982) state that multicollinearity issues can arise even when pairwise correlations are not large. Another measure for determining whether there are multicollinearity issues in the data is the variance inflation factor (VIF) test, which was executed for further confirming the reliability of the constructs. The VIF test expresses how much multicollinearity between the predictors diminishes the precision of an estimate. When the VIF value of a certain predictor is 1, it means there is no collinearity at all with the rest of the tested variables. Furthermore, as a general rule, when a VIF value is higher than 10, it is very likely that there are multicollinearity issues among the explanatory variables (Robinson & Schumacker, 2009).

In the case of this thesis, when analyzing the VIF values from the corresponding variables in the data, they did not show a greater value than 1.26 (see Appendix C). Therefore, it can be concluded that the results from both correlations and VIF test indicated no multicollinearity issues and the constructs are reliable enough to carry out the rest of the analysis.

Before starting the analysis of the correlations table, it is worth mentioning once more that the construct of IDHOME was created even though it was not taken into account in the hypotheses for this thesis, but rather as a control variable for analyzing its correlation with the predictors and comparing it with IDHOST.

Looking at the Pearson correlations table (see Appendix C), some interesting findings can be highlighted. When analyzing the pairwise correlations, IDHOME did not show any linear relationship with any other of the constructs previously presented, whereas IDHOST showed significant positive

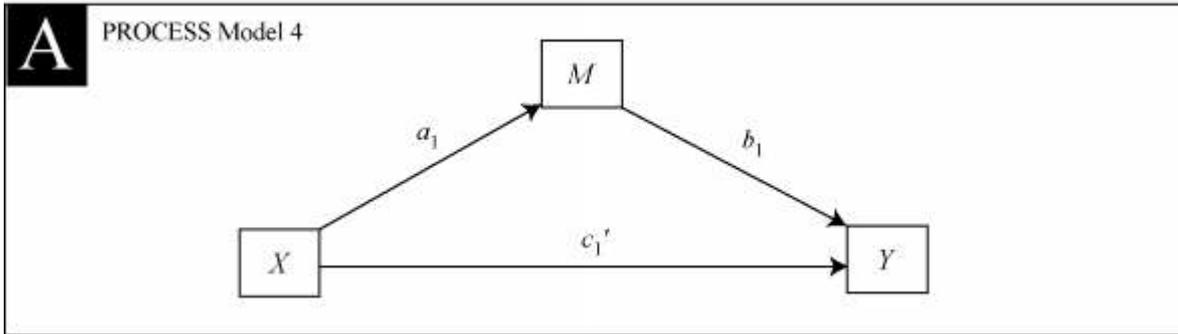
correlations with most of the predictors to test as well as ICOB (.205,  $p < .05$ ). Such differences in the correlations of IDHOST and IDHOME with the predictors have interesting implications, which will be further discussed in the next section. Additionally, NUMREL did not show any correlation with other constructs, except with QUAREL (.342,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting that there is a strong relationship between the number of social relationships with members of the host society and the quality of such relationships.

The 4 mediation models (see Appendix B) previously presented in the Hypotheses Development Section were tested using the Hayes (2017) PROCESS method. PROCESS is a computational tool for SPSS that conducts mediation, moderation, and conditional analyses. This tool combines several popular procedures like INDIRECT, SOBEL, MODPROBE, MODMED, RSQUARE, and MBESS into one and additionally, makes it easy to use. Moreover, many other existing modeling programs require specialized programming skills and they always need to be specifically adapted for the dataset to analyze, as well as for the desired task to do on the dataset (Hayes, 2012).

Furthermore, PROCESS is capable of constructing “bias corrected and percentile based bootstrap confidence intervals for conditional and unconditional indirect effects in mediation models” (Hayes, 2012). Bootstrap is a method for sampling randomly by replacement. It “generates  $B$  bootstrap samples, estimates the model on each, and then applies each fitted model to the original sample to give  $B$  estimates of prediction error” (Tibshirani and Efron, 1993).

A simple mediation model is, firstly, when the independent variable ( $X$ ) is influencing the dependent variable ( $Y$ ) directly, this is called direct effect ( $c$ ). Additionally, a mediation model also includes  $X$  influencing  $Y$  through a mediator ( $M$ ) indirectly, both  $X$  and  $M$  effects on  $Y$  are called indirect effects ( $a$  and  $b$ ). Figure 8 shows the direct and indirect effects in a mediation model graphically. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), for a mediation to exist, a previously significant effect of  $X$  tested on  $Y$  excluding  $M$  (called total effect) has to decrease or become non-significant when it is tested including  $M$ .

Figure 8. *Simple mediation model*. Reprinted from “PROCESS: A versatile computational tool for observed variable mediation, moderation, and conditional process modeling” by A. F. Hayes, 2012.



In this case, the procedure with PROCESS for testing a mediation effect consists of two linear models. Firstly the indirect effect of  $X$  on  $M$  is tested in order to observe the path  $a$  effect. Secondly, the effect of  $X$  and  $M$  together on  $Y$  are also tested. This latter linear model is used for observing path  $b$ , but also for observing whether the effect of  $X$  on  $Y$  was reduced or became non-significant. It is important to mention that Hayes (2012) argues that nowadays the total effect must not be previously tested in order to test the direct and indirect effects. Nevertheless, the PROCESS tool also displays the total effect of  $X$  on  $Y$  after the two previously explained linear models. Finally, in order to know the mediation effect size, PROCESS provides the completely standardized indirect effect of  $X$  on  $Y$ , which is according to Preacher and Hayes (2008) the index of mediation.

The results showed that identification with the host society has a positive effect on the migrant customer's participation behaviour through both expertise and willingness to participate. Furthermore, a significant mediation effect of the quality of relationships with Austrians was found in the relationship between identification with the host society and participation behavior. Nevertheless, the number of relationships with the host society did not show any significant mediation effect. The path coefficients as well as the total effect and mediation indexes of each tested mediation model are shown in Appendix D. Moreover, the mediation indexes with confidence intervals are broken down with detail in Appendix E.

When testing H1, that is, that expertise mediates the relationship between identification with the host society and participation behavior, path  $a$  (IDHOST effect on EXPERT) showed a significant positive effect. The next step was observing that path  $b$  (EXPERT effect on ICOB) also had a significant positive effect. This meant that the indirect effects in this model were all significant. As a next step, it was observed that path  $c$  (IDHOST effect on ICOB) was not significant when being tested with EXPERT in the linear model and additionally, that IDHOST is significant without EXPERT included

in the model (total effect). This led to the conclusion that H1 is confirmed. Finally, when analyzing the completely standardized indirect effect, or mediation index as Hayes (2008) calls it, of EXPERT between IDHOST and ICOB (see Appendix E), the effect is  $\beta = .160$ ,  $p < .05$ , which is considerably large.

Following the same procedure with H2, willingness to participate as mediator between identification with Austrian culture and participation behavior, it was noticed that path *a* in the model was significant with a positive effect. Additionally, path *b* was significant as well with positive effect, whereas the direct effect of IDHOST on ICOB (path *c*) was not significant anymore even though it was when it was tested without IWTCO in the model. Analyzing all the paths as well as the total effect of the model, it leads to H2 being confirmed. The index of mediation from this model showed an effect of  $\beta = .204$ ,  $p < .05$ , which is the largest of all the tested models.

H3 showed nonetheless different results. As it can be observed in Appendix D, none of the paths were significant and in fact, not even the total effect of IDHOST on ICOB was. As expected from this initial analysis, the index of mediation was not significant either. Nonetheless, this could have been due to different reasons. It is important to remember that NUMREL was the only construct that was not measured through several items, being measured only by the estimated number of relationships provided by the customer. Therefore, using Cronbach's alpha for measuring the reliability of this construct is not possible. However, it is also relevant to point out that there were many missing values only in this particular item when collecting the data (92 out of 134), and the approximate values of social relationships that the customer provided varied enormously, resulting in a high standard deviation as it can be observed in Appendix C. This will be further discussed in the next section.

Regarding H4, which includes quality of relationships with the host society as a mediator, the same procedure was applied. When analyzing the indirect effects of this model, they were both significant and with positive effects. Path *b* was nonetheless significant only at a .05 level ( $p < .05$ ), the rest of the indirect effects from all the models showed at least at a .01 level ( $p < .01$ ). Furthermore, the direct effect of IDHOST on ICOB was not significant, but when testing the total effect excluding QUAREL, it was. This leads to the conclusion that H4 is confirmed. Nonetheless, the index of mediation was relatively low ( $\beta = .060$ ,  $p < .05$ ) compared to the models tested in H1 and H2.

These results also provide interesting insights regarding the differences in the indexes of mediation: The strongest mediation indexes were those from expertise and willingness to participate with  $\beta = .160, p < .05$  and  $\beta = .204, p < .05$  respectively (see Appendix E). While it is important to take into account that quality of relationships showed a significant index of mediation with  $\beta = .60, p < .05$ , the effect of the mediation model was much lower than expertise and willingness to participate, whereas the number of relationships did not show any significant mediation effect at all. This leads to the observation that social relationships with the host society, while they may play a role as a mediator between the identification with the host society and the customer's participation behavior, their mediation effect is much milder compared to the main drivers of customer participation.

Furthermore, for comparison purposes and addressing the research gap in this thesis, the same analyses were run with the customer participation scores taken from the customer himself, instead of the employee (see Appendix D and Appendix E). This contrast analysis also showed interesting results: while there were once again mediation indexes of both expertise and willingness to participate that were significant, their effects showed again some differences. When testing expertise as a mediator, the results showed that  $\beta = .136, p < .05$ . Continuing by testing willingness to participate construct as a mediator, the effect was  $\beta = .183, p < .05$ .

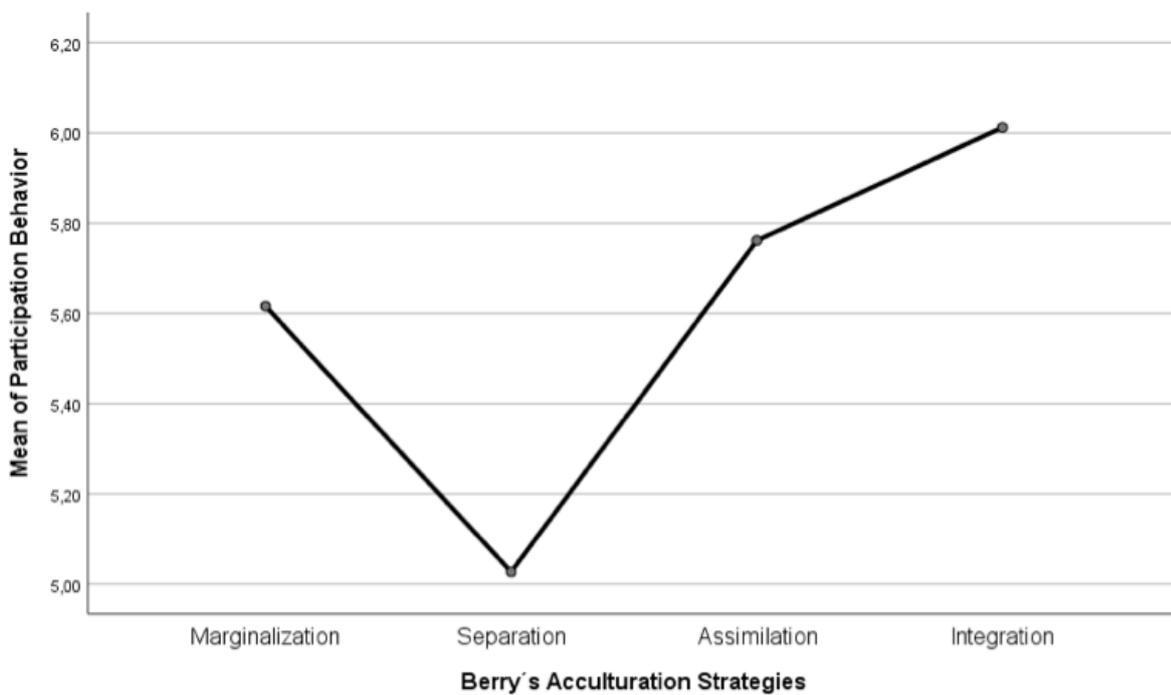
This contrast analysis showed that the expertise and willingness to participate mediation effects taken from the customer's perspective showed a milder effect compared to the mediation effect of the same constructs taken from the employee's perspective. In other words, while this contrast shows that the perspectives from the employee and customer might have differed to some extent, the results also show that these perspectives were not very far from each other.

Finally, as an additional analysis, and also independent from the hypotheses development originally presented in this thesis, a one-way ANOVA was run in order to find possible differences in the participation behavior (ICOB) mean of each acculturation strategy based on Berry's categorization (1997). The test also presented interesting results.

Firstly, a test of homogeneity of variances was run, which discarded that the variance of each acculturation strategy group was the same. Secondly, when looking at the the one-way ANOVA test,  $F(3, 127) = 3.25, p = .02$  (see Appendix F), the null hypothesis that there were not significant differences in the ICOB mean between the acculturation strategy groups could be rejected, meaning

there were some significant differences among the acculturation strategy groups in the way they participated in the service. Lastly, when running a Post Hoc test (see Appendix G) and looking at the specific significant differences of the mean between each acculturation strategy group, it could be found that the group that had the most significant differences in the mean was the separation strategy. Separated customers differed significantly from assimilated and integrated ones, and had surprisingly the lowest mean ICOB score. Furthermore, marginalized customers, despite not presenting any significant difference in the ICOB mean score with the other three acculturation groups, it showed surprisingly a relatively higher mean score than separated customers (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Mean plot of ICOB scores depending on Berry's acculturation strategies



The previously presented analysis and results represent many interesting ideas and significant contributions in the public employment service industry as well as for the acculturation literature. In the next section, the interpretation of these results, as well as the implications for service providers, policy makers, service brands, and migrant customers will be discussed.

## 7. Discussion

The results from the study conducted for this thesis provided several contributions to the acculturation and customer participation literature, as well as managerial implications for service providers, policy makers, service brands that would help them enhance the migrant customers' participation behavior. Moreover, this thesis also provides practical implications for individuals who are going through an acculturation process and for host societies that deal with multicultural interactions every day.

### *Theoretical contributions*

From a theoretical perspective, the results of this thesis firstly confirms the important role of acculturation and social relationships in customer participation behavior in a service context that was not explored before. This can hopefully motivate further research in the field because, as mentioned before, the literature on the topic is very scarce (Poulis et al., 2013). Secondly, this thesis provides a more objective approach for measuring customer participation by collecting data from both employees and customers. Thirdly, differences in the effects of acculturation on customer participation between the employee and customer's perspective were found.

In general, the literature presented in the Theoretical Background Section matched with the findings from the study of this thesis. Despite some exceptions existing in the literature regarding the direction of the acculturation effect (Chai et al., 2012; Weber et al., 2014), the general idea of acculturation in the literature that there are differences between identification with the culture of the host and home country matched the results of this thesis. Moreover, the only existing paper about the role of acculturation in customer participation (Sichtmann et al., 2019) also matched with the main findings of this thesis: identification with the host society does have an effect on participation behavior and social relationships with the host society also do play a role in participation behaviour.

### *Practical implications*

The findings of this thesis have many interesting practical implications. H1 being confirmed suggests not only that customers feeling identified with the host country's culture tend to participate and cooperate well with the service employee, but also that such positive participation behavior is due to a high expertise in that particular service. This could tell us that when the customer feels identified with the host society's culture, he is not afraid and is in fact interested getting involved in several cultural aspects of the host society, such as language, habits, social rules and even institutions. In consequence, the customer gets informed about the relevant aspects related to the service he is provided with, and thus, shows a good participation behavior.

H2 being confirmed also brings valuable insights into the motivation of customers when participating in a service. If the customer's identification with the host society influences his participation behavior through willingness to participate, this means that his participation behavior is partly explained by a willing attitude to facilitate the employee's job by, for example, providing useful information about his unemployment situation. Moreover, such motivation to participate is also influenced by the identification with the host society. A possible explanation of this is that a high identification with the host society's culture can make the customer feel more comfortable in a service interaction. Going back to the social psychological theories reviewed, the similarity-attraction hypothesis from Byrne (1971) could certainly explain this phenomenon. If the customer perceives features in the employee that the customer can identify with, the employee and service could be positively perceived and hence the customer would be more willing to cooperate. Also vice versa: The employee can perceive the customer positively if the customer has attitudes with which the employee can identify, facilitating the interaction.

Regarding social relationships, meaning the results from testing H3 and H4, the findings show that the number of social relationships do not play a role in the relationship between identification with the host society's culture and participation behavior, but the quality of those relationships do. This is a case of quality over quantity, where really meaningful relationships with the host society make a difference for the customer to have a positive participation behavior. Acculturating individuals can integrate faster and more effectively when they have meaningful support from members of the host society, especially at the beginning of their stay (Furnham & Bochner, 1982). This shows that members from the host society are important direct sources of information for the acculturating

individual to gain knowledge about the accepted attitudes and behaviors in everyday situations and in this case, in a service context.

Moreover, as stated in the Theoretical Background section, apart from the acculturating individual identifying with the host society, it is also crucial that the host society members adopt an inclusive attitude (Gaertner & Dovidio state, 2000) towards the individuals that are willing to integrate. The fact that not the number of relationships, but the quality of them played a positive role in customer participation is an important hint suggesting it is not enough for the host society members to have only superficial social contact with those acculturating individuals, but to adopt an active and integrating attitude towards them.

It is also worth pointing out that a positive linear relationship was found between the number and quality of relationships with the host society. This means that the more relationships the customer had, the more probable it is that he has meaningful and positive relationships. Therefore, just as it is important that the host society accepts and integrates acculturating individuals, it is also critical that the acculturating individual adopts an active attitude, seeking involvement or at least learning from the host society's culture. In some cases, the individual finds a valuable relationship from the beginning of his stay and this leads to an exponential growth of his social network with more possible high quality relationships. Nevertheless, in other less fortunate cases, the individual struggles finding such meaningful relationships with the host society and ultimately gives up. The results of this thesis also encourage these individuals to maintain an open attitude towards the host society's members despite some past negative experiences in order to find eventually positive relationships.

More interestingly, when putting together the whole conceptual framework of this thesis (see Appendix B), more practical implications can be identified. If an acculturating individual that identifies with the host society's culture participates well in a service, and it happens through expertise, willingness to participate, and quality of his relationships, there might also exist a connection between the quality of relationships with the host society and the drivers of customer participation. Looking once more at the Pearson correlations matrix (Appendix C), a positive correlation between QUAREL and IWTCO was found. In other words, a possible explanation to an individual willing to participate in a service, is that he has meaningful relationships that support him

through the acculturation process while continuously feeding his identification with the host society's culture more.

Additionally, it is worth pointing out that identification with the home country's culture did not have any influence on participation behavior nor any of the predictors from the conceptual framework. This means that regardless of how much an individual identifies with his home country's culture, it would not make a difference regarding his participation behavior. However, it is important that the customer feels an identification with the Austrian culture for his participation behavior to be maximized. According to Rudmin's critical history review of acculturation literature (2003), the strategy involving the least acculturative stress is integration, which is identifying with both host and home country's culture. Therefore, integration would be the most convenient acculturation strategy to adopt, both for the individual and the host society, which is confirmed in Graph 9.

Regarding the differences in participation behavior depending on the acculturation strategy that the acculturating individual adopts, as previously mentioned, the results of this thesis support the expectations based on the literature (Berry et al, 2006) that integration is the best possible strategy. Nevertheless, contrary to expectations, the separation strategy was the strategy with the lowest score, when marginalization was the strategy expected to show the lowest. A possible explanation to these results is that for a separated individual, culture plays a role in his attitudes and behavior, which are affected by the individuals from another culture with whom he interacts. In the case of marginalized individuals, while it might not be the healthiest idea psychologically speaking (Bourhis et al., 1997) not identifying with any of both home and host society's culture, their attitudes and behavior might stay neutral when interacting with individuals from another culture. Moreover, the marginalized category from the study of this thesis might identify more with a globalization-based culture, which makes them more flexible in intercultural interactions.

Finally, another aspect to consider based on the results, is that since identification with the home country is irrelevant to how the individual behaves in a service, there is no good reason for a society to adopt a melting pot strategy, which would mean forcing the acculturating individuals into an assimilation strategy. In other words, if an individual openly embraces his home country's culture, it does not mean that the individual would not be able to properly integrate into the host society. Such idea also reminds of cases where a host society does not accept specific minority groups (Bourhis et

al., 1997; Lebedva & Tatarko, 2004) through either hostility, rejection, or even discrimination (Berry, 1997, 2005) with the argument that because of their cultural identification with their home countries and related customs, the group cannot integrate properly. The study of this thesis is evidently one more example that confirms this is not the case.

### *Managerial implications*

Regarding the managerial implications, the findings of this thesis are also insightful for service providers, policy makers and service brands. Although this thesis only focuses on the effect of acculturation in the public employment service, these findings can also apply to other services, especially in the ones where the employee and customer have constant multicultural interactions.

Firstly, with the knowledge that customer's identification with the host society's culture improves his participation behavior, not only service providers but also policy makers can design campaigns and strategies for informing (non-overwhelmingly) the acculturating individuals about different elements of the host society's culture by introducing for instance, traditional dances, music, food, clothes or other aspects from the host society. Moreover, service providers and policy makers can also make campaigns and strategies for promoting involvement of the acculturating individuals in the host society, including events aimed for facilitating social and intercultural interactions. Such campaigns for promoting intercultural social interactions should be aimed not only at acculturating individuals but also at host society members.

One example for promoting intercultural relationships is the recommendation of Sichtmann et al. (2019), which is service providers giving benefits to customers with developed intercultural relationships when for instance, a host society member brings a migrant customer by referral and vice versa. The activities created for promoting an intercultural dialogue by the Austrian government (The Expert Council for Integration, 2015), which were previously mentioned in the Integration Policy in Austria Section, are also an example for the integration of minority groups. Nevertheless, these activities and strategies are especially aimed only at the minority groups, and not at the host society as well.

Interestingly, the Austrian Integration Report of 2015 mentions that the matter of becoming a more welcoming society has to be addressed soon, especially for preparing the public administration like residence authorities, schools, kindergartens, and AMS, which was in fact already observed while conducting the study for this thesis. While preparing these institutions sets the Austrian society into a more integrating one, it is very important to emphasize that it is not enough to only focus on public administrations, but also giving the same importance to the general attitude of the host society in order to turn it from a melting pot into a truly multicultural one. In the Austrian Integration Report of 2017 (The Expert Council for Integration, 2017), it is mentioned that certain stereotype perceptions on minority groups, in particular with Muslim background, but also from the Western society, have to be addressed in the future. It remains to be seen whether there is a plan of action in the future for tackling this important issue.

Particularly in the case of service providers, since identification with the home country's culture did not show any effect on participation behavior, it is not considered counterproductive in the short term to assign a customer to an employee that matches his cultural background. Nevertheless, this would not improve the customer's participation behavior substantially, on the contrary, it could promote adopting a separation strategy in the long term. Instead, it is highly encouraged to train all employees so that they know how to deal with possible cultural issues that may hinder the customer's participation behavior and in consequence, the service outcome. This could firstly avoid some work overload for employees who are the only ones assisting migrant customers, since all employees would be qualified to assist them. Secondly, more multicultural interactions could lead to the migrant customer becoming familiarized with the host society's culture and in the long term, improve his participation behavior.

In the case of service brands, since this thesis confirms that acculturation does have a positive effect on customer participation, just as the literature on acculturation argues (Vijaygopal, Dibb, & Meadows, 2013), segmenting customers based on acculturation is recommended and not based on the customer's ethnic group. Thanks to the additional analysis made in this thesis about how integrated, assimilated, separated, and marginalized customer's differed in their customer participation score, service brands and providers could not only have a better idea about the customers that need more support for enhancing their participation behavior, but also about how to increase it. For example, an idea would be to design information campaigns targeted especially at separated and marginalized

groups in order to inform them about the important aspects to take into account before and during their service interaction, since having the right information (expertise) showed to increase participation behavior.

Moreover, all service providers, policy makers, and service brands have to give the attention to customer participation that it deserves, not only through actions like the ones previously suggested, but also by always reminding the employees and customers that certain requirements or activities, while they may be tedious to do, it is at the end for providing the best possible service outcome to them. In the case of this thesis, this was implemented for reducing the respondent's reluctance to participate in the study but it can also certainly be applied for increasing the customer's willingness to participate.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that all these recommendations, if they are executed, have to always show a multiculturalism attitude towards the acculturating groups, which means integrating them into the host society culture while simultaneously respecting and even promoting the home country's culture of the acculturating individual as well. After all, the results of this thesis is an additional confirmation among all the rest of acculturation literature suggesting that integration is the best possible strategy for the acculturating individual's well-being and in this case, for maximizing his participation behavior in service interactions.

## 8. Conclusion

The everyday implications of globalization in certain countries, full with intercultural interactions, have demonstrated the big importance of studying the acculturation process of migrant customers and their consumer behaviour in services. This is precisely what motivated this thesis with two main aims: studying the effect of identification with the host society on participation behavior measured from the employee's perspective through the main drivers of customer participation and studying the same effect through social relationships with the host society. Additionally, the study of this thesis is the first one focusing on the effect of acculturation on customer participation in the public employment service, which provided valuable contributions ranging from the theoretical perspective to practical implications for service providers, policy makers, and service brands.

In general, the two main aims of this thesis were reached, confirming three hypotheses out of four, providing on the one hand a more reliable method for measuring customer participation and on the other hand providing also additional findings regarding the differences of participation behavior depending on the acculturation strategy adopted by the individual.

Based on the solid results of this thesis, it can be concluded that identification with the host society, the customer's expertise, his willingness to participate, and the quality of his social relationships play a very important role in his participation behavior. However, the number of relationships with the host society that the customer had did not show to play any role between acculturation and customer participation. Furthermore, it can be concluded that, despite finding relatively similar effects in participation behavior measured from the employee and customer's perspective, there are nonetheless mild differences between both perspectives and collecting data from both will always be more reliable.

Moreover, it is also important to take into account the limitations of this thesis, which could also lead to interesting further research ideas. Firstly, it is important to consider that in some cases, the customers in the study were assisted by employees from their same cultural background. This could have led to significant higher participation behavior despite them not identifying with the host country's culture, which means that some separated customers might have had a better participation

behavior as if they would have shown in a multicultural interaction. In any case, if this is true, there would have been a wider gap between the individuals who do not identify with the host society and the ones who do. However, it is perhaps an important aspect to consider and control in further research.

Another limitation of this thesis is that despite confirming the important role of the expertise, willingness to participate, and social relationships as mediators between acculturation and customer participation, the exact relationship between all these constructs together is yet unknown. For instance, it is possible that an individual has expertise in a service due to the meaningful relationships that he developed, but it is also possible that an acculturating individual develops meaningful relationships after getting comfortable with the host society and, as consequence, gaining knowledge or expertise on the acceptable and unacceptable social rules, habits, traditions, or in this case, the right behavior as a customer in a service. This is certainly an idea for further research that could put the pieces together in the convergence of the acculturation, social relationships, and customer participation literature.

Regarding H3 not being confirmed, it is important to remember that many customers did not respond when they were asked in the questionnaire about how many friends and acquaintances from the host society they had. This could have been due to small but important details, like the design of the questionnaire, or creating too much respondent burden because it was too hard for the customer to calculate the approximate number. Thus, studying the effect of the number of social relationships on customer participation should not lose its importance, especially taking into account that the quality of their relationships did have an effect on participation behavior. One way to overcome this limitation, is by measuring the number of social relationships that the customer has through multiple items, asking them specifically about their social relationships in different contexts like work, university, social life, etc. This could help the customer recalling the number of acquaintances and relationships he has and simultaneously increase the reliability of this construct thanks to the multiple items with which it was measured.

Finally, it is important to consider all the issues that arose during the collection of the data in this thesis for further research, which are respectively discussed in the Challenges in the Data Collection Section. Special importance should be given to reduce the respondent burden, since customers and employees that did not participate in this study could have had different characteristics compared to the ones who did. It is worth pointing out that for example, marginalized customers of this study were

identified based on their score of their cultural identification compared to the rest of the customers within the sample. This means that due to the characteristic isolating behavior of marginalized individuals, precisely a significant part of the individuals who did not participate in the study were perhaps the actual marginalized customers. This is, as previously mentioned, a typical limitation in the acculturation literature that is nonetheless important and needs to be tackled.

As a final thought, it is worth emphasizing that acculturation is a very complex process that is affected by a great number of factors and simultaneously affects both acculturating individuals and multicultural host societies. This is why it is crucial to remember that acculturation is also a two-way process, which requires efforts from both minority groups and host societies to improve the relationships between them and create a peaceful working and therefore, social environment. If this goal were reached, we could certainly live in a better world.

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# Appendices

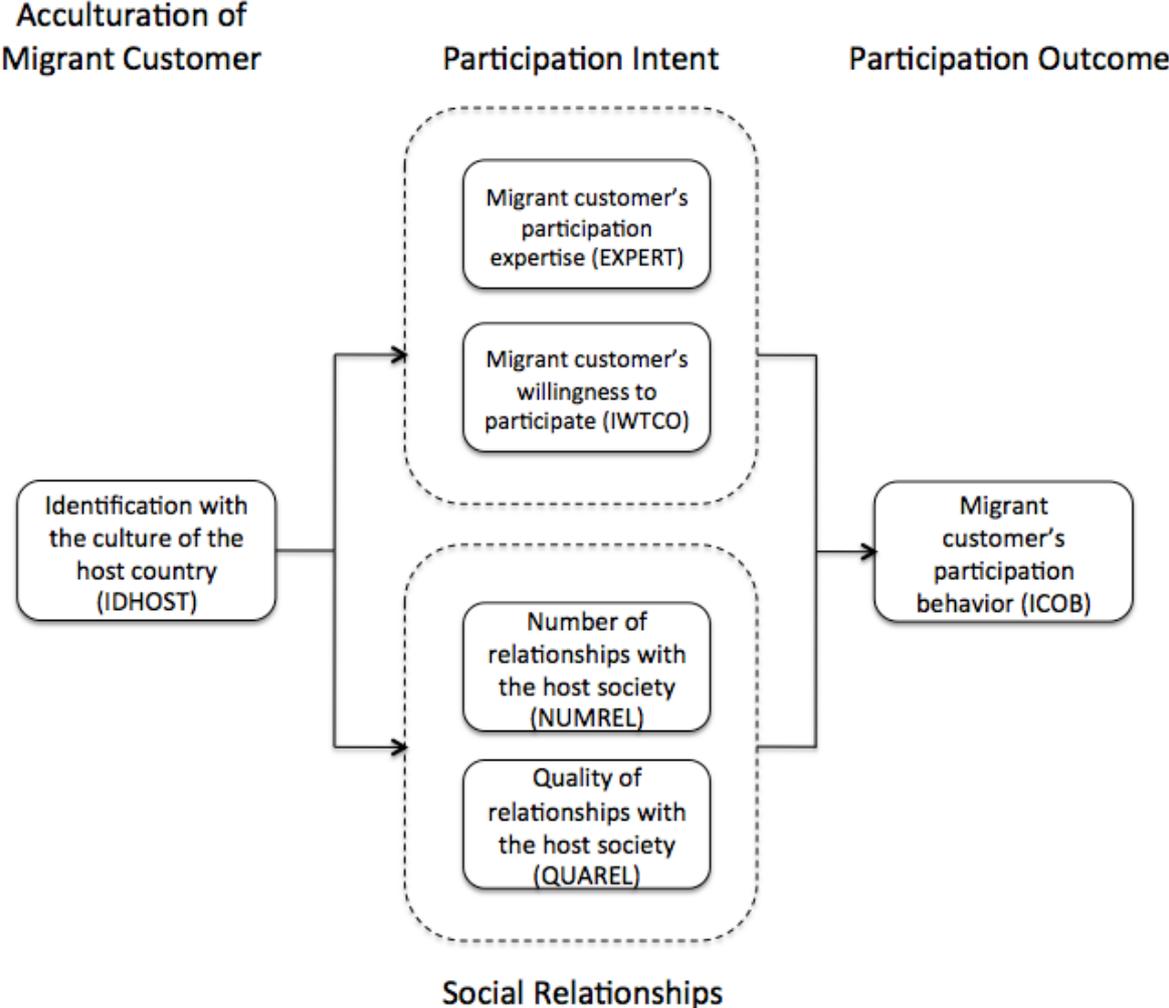
Appendix A. *Questionnaire items for the creation of constructs with their respective citation and perspective from which the construct was taken.*

Construct	Perspective	Authors
<p><b>Cultural identification with home country's culture (IDHOME)</b>            -I see myself as part of my country of origin.            -I feel a strong attachment towards my country of origin.            -I define myself based on my country of origin            -I relate to people from my country of origin with great ease.            -I feel a strong attachment towards people from my country of origin.</p> <p>-Ethnic values of my home culture play an important role in my life.            -I identify with my home culture.            -I believe that I fit well into my home culture society</p>	Customer	Shokef and Erez (2006)
<p><b>Cultural identification with host country's culture (IDHOST)</b>            -I see myself as part of Austria.            -I feel a strong attachment towards Austria.            -I define myself based on Austria.            -I relate to people from Austria with ease.            -I feel a strong attachment towards people from Austria.</p> <p>-Ethnic values of the Austrian culture play an important role in my life.            -I identify with the Austrian culture.            -I believe that I fit well into Austrian society.</p>	Customer	Shokef and Erez (2006)
<p><b>Expertise (EXPERT)</b>            -I think that the customer has good knowledge regarding unemployment assistance            -I think the customer already has experience in getting advice from AMS employees            -The customer understands in general the services of the AMS            -In general, the customer understands almost all aspects of the services provided by AMS and its employees            -The customer was well informed about how unemployment support works in Austria            -The customer knows what is expected of him/her when he/she goes to the AMS in Austria            -The customer knew all the AMS rules and principles to follow</p>	Employee	Auh et al. (2007)
<p><b>Willingness to participate (IWTCO)</b>            -The customer was willing to work with me            -The customer was willing to provide me with all the necessary information (e.g. qualifications, previous work experience, etc.).            -The customer was willing to answer all my questions.</p>	Employee	Auh et al. (2007)

<p>-The customer was willing to help me with everything I needed from his/her side</p>		
<p><b>Quality of relationships with the host society (QUAREL)</b>          - I regularly socialize with ethnic Austrians          -My social circle consists mostly of Austrians          -I have Austrian people that I would consider family</p>	Customer	Sichtmann et al. (2019)
<p><b>Number of relationships with the host society (NUMREL)</b>          -Approximately how many Austrian friends or acquaintances would you say you have?</p>	Customer	Sichtmann et al. (2019)
<p><b>Participation Behavior (ICOB)</b>          -The customer tried to make my job easier          -The customer tried to help me advise him/her better          -The customer has prepared before coming to me          -The customer discussed his/her needs openly with me so that I can give him/her the best possible advice          -The customer shared a lot of information about his/her unemployment status          -I had to ask everything myself (the customer did not explain everything himself).</p>	Employee	Auh et al. (2007)
<p><b>Expertise (EXPERTK)</b>          -I think I possess good knowledge of issues related to unemployment support          -I think I am quite experienced in consultations with people from the AMS          -In general, I understand the services provided by unemployment support services like AMS          -In general, I understand almost all aspects of the service provided by the AMS and its employees          -I am well informed about how unemployment support services in Austria work          -I know what is expected of me if I go to an unemployment support agency like AMS in Austria          -I know all the rules and principles that have to be considered when going to an unemployment support agency like AMS in Austria</p>	Customer	Auh et al. (2007)
<p><b>Willingness to participate (IWTOK)</b>          -I was willing to cooperate with the AMS employee          -I was willing to share all the necessary information (e.g. qualifications, prior work experience, etc.) with the AMS employee          -I was willing to provide the answers to all the questions of the AMS employee          -I was willing to help the AMS employee in whatever s/he would need from my side</p>	Customer	Auh et al. (2007)
<p><b>Participation Behavior (ICOBK)</b>          -I tried to make the AMS employee's job easier          -I tried to help the AMS employee serve me better          -I prepared before coming to meet the AMS employee          -I openly discussed my need with the AMS employee to help her/him deliver the best possible advice          -I shared a lot of information about my unemployment status          -The AMS employee had to ask everything himself/herself (I didn't explain all of the issues myself)</p>	Customer	Auh et al. (2007)

Note: All statements had to be rated based on a 7 point Likert scale except for NUMREL, which was measured depending on the value or range that the customer provided

Appendix B. Conceptual Framework.



Appendix C. *Pearson correlation matrix and descriptive statistics*

	Mean (SD)	Cronbach's Alpha (Number of Items)	VIF	IDHOME	IDHOST	EXPERT	IWTCO	NUMREL	QUAREL	ICOB
IDHOME	4.76 (1.57)	0.918 (8)	1.03	1						
IDHOST	5.49 (1.21)	0.894 (8)	1.26	-.007	1					
EXPERT	5.66 (1.17)	0.931 (7)	1.12	-.086	.360**	1				
IWTCO	6.58 (0.98)	0.960 (4)	1.05	-.010	.292**	.277**	1			
NUMREL	25.11 (54.64)	NA	1.17	-.130	.189	.131	.079	1		
QUAREL	4.28 (1.63)	0.766 (3)	1.22	-.124	.288**	.138	.226*	.342**	1	
ICOB	5.65 (1.25)	0.856 (6)	NA	-.009	.205*	.467**	.696**	.005	.246**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Appendix D. Path coefficients and total effect of each tested mediation model using PROCESS with ICOB as the outcome variable. Standard errors are in parentheses.

	EXPERT as mediator (H1)	IWTCO as mediator (H2)	NUMREL as a mediator (H3)	QUAREL as a mediator (H4)	EXPERTK as mediator (from customer perspective)	IWTCOK as mediator (from customer perspective)
Path a (indirect effect)	.349*** (.085)	.239** (.080)	8.864 (5.680)	.393** (.129)	.285** (.105)	.280* (.121)
Path b (indirect effect)	.478*** (.097)	.888*** (.102)	-.0003 (.003)	.160* (.074)	.362*** (.091)	.492*** (.115)
Path c (direct effect)	.046 (.098)	.001 (.065)	.099 (.115)	.134 (.100)	.044 (.070)	.016 (.062)
Total effect	.213* (.097)	.213* (.097)	.096 (.113)	.197* (.097)	.147* (.067)	.154* (.066)
Mediation Index	.160* (.055)	.204* (.050)	-.002 (.019)	.060* (.036)	.136* (.056)	.183* (.060)

\*\*\*. Coefficient is significant at the 0.001 level

\*\*. Coefficient is significant at the 0.01 level

\*. Coefficient is significant at the 0.05 level

Appendix E. *Completely standardized indirect effects (mediation indexes) of identification with the host society's culture (IDHOST) on participation behavior (ICOB).*

Hypothesis	Mediator	Perspective	Effect	Standard Error	Lower Level Confidence Interval	Upper Level Confidence Interval
H1	EXPERT	Employee	.160	.055	.065	.280
H2	IWTCO	Employee	.204	.050	.101	.301
H3	NUMREL	Employee	-.002	.019	-.042	.034
H4	QUAREL	Employee	.060	.036	.003	.141
NA	EXPERTK	Customer	.136	.056	.032	.256
NA	IWTCOK	Customer	.183	.060	.054	.291

Note: All models tested through Hayes PROCESS method using bootstrapping

Appendix F. *One-way ANOVA test results for finding differences in the mean of participation behavior scores between acculturation strategy groups.*

ANOVA					
ICOB					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	14.825	3	4.942	3.257	.024
Within Groups	192.678	127	1.517		
Total	207.503	130			

Appendix G. *Post Hoc test for finding which acculturation groups present significant differences in the participation behavior score mean.*

Multiple Comparisons							
Dependent Variable: ICOB							
	(I) BERRY	(J) BERRY	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
LSD	Marginalization	Separation	.58960	.31114	.060	-.0261	12.053
		Assimilation	-.14563	.30051	.629	-.7403	.4490
		Integration	-.39577	.27976	.160	-.9494	.1578
	Separation	Marginalization	-.58960	.31114	.060	-12.053	.0261
		Assimilation	-.73524*	.33892	.032	-14.059	-.0646
		Integration	-.98537*	.32067	.003	-16.199	-.3508
	Assimilation	Marginalization	.14563	.30051	.629	-.4490	.7403
		Separation	.73524*	.33892	.032	.0646	14.059
		Integration	-.25013	.31037	.422	-.8643	.3640
	Integration	Marginalization	.39577	.27976	.160	-.1578	.9494
		Separation	.98537*	.32067	.003	.3508	16.199
		Assimilation	.25013	.31037	.422	-.3640	.8643
Bonferroni	Marginalization	Separation	.58960	.31114	.362	-.2443	14.235
		Assimilation	-.14563	.30051	1.000	-.9511	.6598
		Integration	-.39577	.27976	.958	-11.456	.3540
	Separation	Marginalization	-.58960	.31114	.362	-14.235	.2443
		Assimilation	-.73524	.33892	.192	-16.436	.1732
		Integration	-.98537*	.32067	.016	-18.448	-.1259
	Assimilation	Marginalization	.14563	.30051	1.000	-.6598	.9511
		Separation	.73524	.33892	.192	-.1732	16.436
		Integration	-.25013	.31037	1.000	-10.820	.5817
	Integration	Marginalization	.39577	.27976	.958	-.3540	11.456

		Separation	.98537*	.32067	.016	.1259	18.448
		Assimilation	.25013	31037	1.000	-.5817	10.820

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

# Die kulturelle Anpassung von Migranten und deren Mitwirkung in Dienstleistungsprozessen des Arbeitsmarkt Service

Durch die alltäglichen Auswirkungen der Globalisierung und den ständigen interkulturellen Austausch in zahlreichen Ländern, nimmt die Forschung von Akkulturationsprozessen von Migranten und deren Verhalten als Kunden in Dienstleistungen immer mehr an Bedeutung. Einer der wichtigsten Konzepte des Kundenverhaltens ist die Kundenbeteiligung, da diese, im direkten Zusammenhang mit der Kundenzufriedenheit, der empfundenen Servicequalität und zukünftigen Absichten des Kunden gegenüber dem Dienstleistungsanbieter gebracht wird (Dong, Evans, & Zou, 2008; Cermak, File, & Prince, 1994). Jedoch zeigt die Umfang der Literatur im Bereich der Akkulturation und deren Auswirkungen auf die Kundenbeteiligung, große Lücken auf (Poulis et. al, 2013).

Eine Studie von Sichtmann, Davvetas, Romanyuk, & Bleich (2019), weist in diesem knappen Forschungsfeld neue relevante Ergebnisse zur Beziehung von Akkulturation und Kundenbeteiligung in Dienstleistungsprozessen auf. In diesem Forschungsgebiet gilt es jedoch zu beachten, dass die Daten zur Messung der Kundenbeteiligung bis heute nur aus der Sicht der Kunden gemessen wurde. Die dahinterliegende Problematik äußert sich dabei, dass Kunden möglicherweise nicht die Erfahrung besitzen, eine angemessene Kundenbeteiligung zu evaluieren (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012), oder sie würden auch ihr Ergebnis eher mit positiven als mit negativen Attributen abschätzen (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Eine passende Lösung dafür, die in der Literatur ihren Anklang findet, ist die Betrachtung dyadischer Daten (sowohl von Kunden als auch von Mitarbeitern) zur Messung des Beteiligungsverhaltens (Schneider, Parkington, & Buxton, 1980; Chan, Yim, & Lam, 2010).

Genau dieses Vorhaben liefert die Motivation für die vorliegende Arbeit mit zwei konkreten Zielen. Als Erstes wird die Auswirkung von Identifikation mit der Gastgesellschaft auf das Beteiligungsverhalten der Kunden anhand der Daten der Mitarbeiter mit Kundenexpertise und Kundenbereitschaft zur Beteiligung am Service als Mediatoren, gemessen. Das zweite Ziel liegt darin herauszufinden, wie sich Identifikation mit der Kultur der Gastgesellschaft auf die

Kundenbeteiligung auswirkt, wobei die Anzahl und die Qualität der sozialen Beziehungen in der Gastgesellschaft als Mediatoren betrachtet werden.

Die präsentierten Resultate der Forschungsziele wurden durch empirische Daten von beiden Seiten, Kunden und Mitarbeitern des österreichischen Arbeitsmarkt Service (AMS), erreicht. Das AMS wurde aufgrund der enormen Wichtigkeit der Kundenbeteiligung am Erfolg des Dienstleistungsprozesses gewählt (Sichtmann et al., 2019).

Zusammenfassend kann gesagt werden, dass die beiden Ziele der Thesis erreicht wurden und, basierend auf die Resultate, festgestellt werden kann, dass die Identifikation mit der Gastgesellschaft, die Kundenexpertise, die Bereitschaft am Dienstleistungsprozess mitwirken und die Qualität der sozialen Beziehungen eine enorm wichtige Rolle für die Kundenbeteiligung spielen. Dennoch ist zu vermerken, dass die Anzahl der sozialen Beziehungen, die die Kunden mit der Gastgesellschaft pflegen, keine Rolle als Mediator zwischen der kulturellen Anpassung und Kundebeteiligung spielen.

Des Weiteren wurde eine Vergleichsanalyse der Mediatoren Effekte der Bereitschaft und der Expertise des Kunden am Dienstleistungsprozess teilzunehmen anhand der Daten aus der Sicht des Mitarbeiters und des Kunden durchgeführt. Basierend auf dieser Gegenüberstellung kann der Entschluss gefasst werden, dass, abgesehen von ähnlichen Ergebnissen der Mediatoren Effekte von Mitarbeiter und Kunden, nur kleine Unterschiede zwischen beiden Daten zu erkennen sind. Jedoch liefert die Betrachtung von Daten aus beiden Perspektiven stets aussagkräftigere Ergebnisse als unilaterale Daten.

Zum Schluss konnte durch eine zusätzliche Analyse basierend auf der Kategorisierung verschiedener Akkulturationsstrategien nach Berry (1997) festgestellt werden, dass Kunden die als integriert in die Gastkultur eingeordnet werden, die höchste Beteiligungsrate aufweisen, gefolgt von Assimilation, Marginalisierung und zuletzt, entgegen der Erwartungen, weist Separation die niedrigsten Beteiligungsrate auf.

Die Ergebnisse, die in dieser Thesis präsentiert werden, liefern einen wichtigen theoretischen Beitrag und tragen zu wertvollen praktischen sowie unternehmerischen Verbesserungen bei. Diese Thesis bietet Forschern einen objektiveren Ansatz zur Messung der Kundenbeteiligung. Insbesondere für Dienstleistungsanbieter, Gesetzgeber und Dienstleistungsmarken bietet die

Forschung dieser Arbeit wertvolles Wissen im Bereich Akkulturation und Kundenbeteiligung. Dieses Wissen kann verwendet werden, um Marketingstrategien besser definieren und durchführen zu können und weiteres kann damit auf eine maximale Mitwirkung der Kunden unterschiedlicher Herkunft am Dienstleistungsprozess gezielt werden. Darüber hinaus, kann durch die erlangten Ergebnisse der tägliche interkulturelle Austausch von Einzelnen die sich im Anpassungsprozess befinden, aber auch von multikulturellen Gesellschaften erleichtert werden und zu einer erfolgreichen kulturellen Anpassung.

# The Acculturation of Migrant Customers and Their Customer Participation in the Public Employment Service

The everyday implications of globalization in certain countries, full with intercultural interactions, have demonstrated the big importance of studying the acculturation process of migrant customers and their consumer behaviour in services. One of the most important concepts of consumer behavior is customer participation, since it is often associated with customer satisfaction, perceived quality of the service, and future intentions towards the service provider (Dong, Evans, & Zou, 2008; Cermak, File, & Prince, 1994). Nevertheless, literature on acculturation and its effect on customer participation behavior is surprisingly very scarce (Poulis et al., 2013).

Among the limited literature on the topic, a study from Sichtmann, Davvetas, Romanyuk, & Bleich (2019) examines the relationship between acculturation and customer participation in services, providing interesting findings. However, there are also limitations in such study because until now, the data for measuring customer participation was collected only from the customer's perspective. This could be problematic, as the customer himself might not have the experience of how a customer should participate properly in that specific service (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012) or could attribute more positive than negative outcomes to himself (Taylor & Brown, 1988). The possible solution to this limitation, is collecting dyadic data (from both employees and customers) for measuring participation behavior, which is often emphasized and recommended by the literature (Schneider, Parkington, & Buxton, 1980; Chan, Yim, & Lam, 2010).

This is precisely what motivated this thesis with two main aims. The first aim was studying the effect of identification with the host society on participation behavior measured from the employee's perspective through expertise and willingness to participate as mediators. The second aim was also studying the effect of identification with the host society's culture on participation behavior, but through the number and quality of social relationships with the host society as mediators.

The explained effects of the two research aims were studied using empirical methodology by collecting data from both customers and employees in the Austrian public employment service (AMS). The public employment service was selected due to the heavy importance of customer participation in the success of the service outcome (Sichtmann et al., 2019).

In general, the two main aims of this thesis were reached. Based on the solid results of this thesis, it can be concluded that identification with the host society, the customer's expertise, his willingness to participate, and the quality of his social relationships play a very important role in his participation behavior. However, the number of relationships with the host society that the customer had did not play any role between acculturation and customer participation.

Furthermore, a contrast analysis was done between the mediation effects of expertise and willingness to participate taken from the employee and the customer's perspective. Based on this contrast analysis it can be concluded that, despite finding relatively similar mediation effects from the employee and customer's perspective, there are nonetheless mild differences between both of them and collecting data from both will always be more reliable.

Finally, it was found through an additional analysis based on Berry's (1997) categorization of acculturation strategies, that integrated customers were the ones having the highest participation behavior score, followed by assimilated, then marginalized, and lastly, contrary to expectations, separated customers with the lowest score.

The findings of this thesis provide valuable theoretical contributions as well as managerial and practical implications. For researchers, this thesis offers a more objective approach for measuring customer participation. For service providers, policy makers, and service brands, this thesis provides valuable knowledge in the acculturation and customer participation field in order to plan and execute marketing strategies aimed at maximizing the participation behavior of customers with different cultural backgrounds. For acculturating individuals and multicultural host societies, the findings of this thesis provide recommendations for easing the everyday intercultural interactions and a successful acculturation process of both minority groups and the multicultural host society.

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