Managing Culture Shock

Case Study: Business Hotel in Beijing

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Managing Culture Shock – Case Study: Business Hotel in Beijing

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The purpose of this Bachelor Thesis is to study culture shock and find suitable solutions for how to manage culture shock. The research examines Chinese culture through the views of expatriates living and working in the hotel industry in Beijing and provides methods on how to cope with culture shock.

The thesis includes a theoretical part and the empirical research. The theory part introduces the essential definitions of culture, culture shock and explains the model of cultural adjustment. For the relevance of the research the basic characterizations of Chinese culture are also presented. The second part of the thesis is the empirical research. The main research method was qualitative and the primary data was collected through participant observation. The research includes structured observations and theme interviews of five foreign employees working at a four star business hotel in Beijing.

The results of the thesis indicated that the main causes for expatriates working in Beijing and experience culture shock are cultural misunderstandings, the difficulty of language and communication and the significance of hierarchy in Chinese culture. The final part of the thesis offers management strategies for culture shock. To further understand cultural differences and culture shock the observations are presented through W-Curve of Cultural Adjustment (1963). The results demonstrated that it is important to be prepared for culture shock and to adjust easier it is essential to create a routine, communicate with locals and search for information about the foreign culture. As a side product of the thesis a poster of W-Curve of Cultural Adjustment -model was created for the use of Laurea University of Applied Sciences.

The research was conducted during the authors six month internship period in a hotel in Beijing as the author realized the effects of culture shock first hand. The thesis works as guidelines for those considering entering Chinese culture and for those looking for ways to deal with culture shock.

Keywords: culture shock, culture difference, hospitality, tourism, China

Laurea Ammattikorkeakoulu	**Tiivistelmä**

Kerava
Degree Programme in Tourism

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Selviytyminen kulttuurishokista. Tapaustutkimus: Liikemieshotelli Pekingissä

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli tutkia kulttuurishokkia ja etsiä hyviä keinoja sopeutua uuteen kulttuuriin. Opinnäytetyö tutkii kulttuurishokkia kiinalaisen kulttuurin puitteissa ja esittelee ratkaisuja kysymykseen, miten selviytyä kulttuurishokista. Tutkimustyö tehtiin haastattelemalla ja havainnoimalla ulkomaalaisia, jotka työskentelivät ja asuivat Pekingissä tutkimusajankohtana syksyllä 2014.

Tutkimus sisältää teoreettisen ja empiirisen osuuden. Teoriaosa määrittelee kulttuurin ja kulttuurishokin sekä käsittelee malliesimerkkejä kulttuuriin sopeutumisesta. Tutkimus esittelee myös kiinalaisen kulttuurin peruspiirteitä. Tutkimuksessa käytettiin laadullisina tutkimusmenetelminä strukturoitua osallistuvaa havainnointia ja teemahaastattelua. Ensisijainen tutkimusaineisto kerättiin havainnoimalla ja huomioimalla päivittäistä elämää kuuden kuukauden ajan neljän tähden liikemieshotellissa Pekingissä. Toissijainen aineisto kerättiin haastattelemalla viittä hotellin työntekijää.

Tutkimustyön tulokset havainnollistivat, että suurimmat syyt kulttuurishokin tuntemiseen Pekingissä ovat kulttuuriliset väärinkäsitykset, kielen ja kommunikoinnin tuottama vaikeus sekä arvoaseman merkitys kiinalaisessa kulttuurissa. Tulokset osoittivat, että sopeutumisen kannalta on tärkeää tiedostaa kulttuurishokin mahdollisuus, luoda päivittäinen rutiini, kommunikoida paikallisten kanssa ja etsiä hyödyllistä informaatiota vieraasta kulttuurista. Tutkimustyön viimeinen osuus esittelee selviytymisstrategioita kulttuurishokin kohtaamiseen käyttäen hyödyksi kulttuuriin sopeutumisen W-käyrämallia. Tutkimustyön tuloksena luotiin myös juliste kulttuurin sopeutumisen W-käyrämallista Laurea-ammattikorkeakoulun käyttöön.

Avainsanat: kulttuurishokki, kulttuurierot, hotelliala, matkailu, Kiina

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1 Introduction

Moving and adjusting into a new culture, different language, and to an unfamiliar working life is always a big change. The purpose of culture is to teach how to do things, how to think in order to organize the world and how to reinforce values helping to decide what is appropriate and desired (Reisinger and Turner 2003, 56). Culture is a widely researched subject and culture shock is a phenomenon recognized in many researches concerning culture. Nowadays the world is becoming more connected and a lot of employees are travelling in search of better work opportunities. Hence, it is important to know more about different cultures and work environments. In order for the expatriates to adapt quicker inside different cultures it is essential to educate on cultural variety and awareness. Culture shock is one of the most common symptoms a foreign traveler encounters and in order to survive culture shock and to make adaption to a new culture a little bit easier – this research was made.

The Peoples Republic of China was a relatively closed culture from 1949 to 1976. The hospitality industry in China has existed for a very short period of time and only began to develop after the implementation of Chinas Open-Door Policy in 1979 (Taylor and William 1997, 496). Given the economic and political roles that China is now playing in world affairs and the fact that the importance of this role is increasing daily, understanding and learning how to interact with China socially, politically and economically is of big importance (De Mente 2009, 30). Quickly developing Beijing is the capital of China and despite the copious pool of labor in China, skilled workers versed in modern business practices are scarce. Most companies have to employ managers and personnel from abroad to start up their operations. For many new expatriate managers China is a stimulating and demanding environment in which to live and work.

The focus of the research is on how to identify and diminish the effects of culture shock while encountering a new and different culture. The research involves the capital of China, Beijing as a destination. Therefore, the case study chosen is a four star business hotel located in Beijing. The company was a logical option as the author worked there for six months and got acquainted with the local work culture and experienced culture shock first hand. The first part of the research involves the essential theory: Researching culture shock requires the knowledge of definitions of culture, culture shock and culture dimensions that are covered theoretically in the research. In order to comprehend the research material and results of the study it is also necessary to observe Chinese culture more closely. The empirical research conducted at the hotel includes the author's observations during a period of six month, interviews of the hotel employees and the interview of the hotel manager. The interviews conducted at the hotel revolve around Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (1980) and on the W-curve of cultural adjustment (1963).

In order to learn about different cultures and one's own, it is necessary to learn how to recognize cultural differences, understand how cultural factors influence behavior and to implement strategies that successfully target certain culture groups. This research discusses cultural-differences of China in contrast to other cultures and culture shock. Hence, the research aims to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is culture shock?
2. How to lessen and manage the effects of culture shock?

The thesis is constructed to present the critical theoretical background, explain the thesis process and provide clear results with an in-depth analysis of the topic. The literary review aims to support the conducted field work to create a valid outcome and to assist the reader to comprehend the results and their purpose.

2 Culture Shock

Culture shock is one of the most known and recognized difficulties encountered by a traveler facing foreign cultures. Culture shock is experienced by an individual who encounters a different culture. Culture shock can be defined as: "…the reaction of sojourners to problems encountered in their dealings with host members (Bochner 1982, 172)" or as a sense of dislocation as the problems- physiological and even physical- that result from the stress of trying to make hundreds of adjustments necessary for living in a foreign culture (Reisinger and Turner 2003, 56). Culture shock is caused by an inability to cope and adjust to a new cultural environment, confronted with different ways of life and doing things, being overloaded with unfamiliar stimuli one cannot comprehend, inability to ask questions and understand the answers, or even recognize food. Cross-cultural differences are not only limited to language, food or dance, but are also experienced in a variety of human interactions between international tourists and local hosts, including their non-verbal behavior, religious beliefs, time orientation, attitude to privacy, their manners, customs, forms of address, body language and gestures.

2.1 Culture Adaption and Adjustment

Culture shock has an adverse effect on intercultural interaction as social communication becomes less effective. Many symptoms of culture shock have been reported (Reisinger and Turner 2003, 56) to be following: strain, sense of loss arising from the feeling of being removed from a familiar environment, a feeling of impotence from being unable to deal with

the new environment, embarrassment, humiliation, depression, feelings of being rejected by the members of the new environment, confusion about one's own values, identity, incompetence, frustration, negative feelings towards hosts, refusing to learn a new language, increase in irritation, fatigue, criticism, decline in initiatives and even preoccupation with worries and cleanliness. Oberg (1960) described and researched the common symptoms of culture shock. The common symptoms seemed to be excessive washing of hands, extreme concern of drinking the water, eating local food and cleanliness of bedding, an absent minded and far-away stare, loss of appetite, an over dependence on being with one's own nationals, sudden anger over minor problems, great concern over minor skin irritation and slight pains, and a terrible-longing to be back home.

Culture shock is experienced in four different stages: Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) came up with a W-curve of cultural adjustment or satisfaction with the sojourn. They proposed that cultural adaption forms a W-form and consists of four stages: initial optimism, the subsequent disappointment, adaption and gradual recovery. The first stage of experiencing culture shock is described euphoria as everything about the new culture is exciting and wonderful. This stage generally lasts for few weeks and is the only stage a short-stay traveler encounters. The first stage can also be called honeymoon stage (Oberg 1960, 177-182) and it is characterized by fascination and optimism. At this stage the travelers are preparing for the new journey and they are excited to travel into a new culture with high expectations.

The second stage is reached when the disillusionment and frustration arise. That is the stage people usually refer to when they refer to culture shock. The second stage is characterized by the frustration of not being able to step in with the members of the culture. That is when a person does not know what he or she does not know. Inevitability there are disappointments: "When the adjustment to a new culture means an upward change in status, people feel good about the new culture. When the adjustment means a downward change in status, people quickly feel unhappy (Varner and Bearner 2011, 58)". Hofstede (2001) noted that a visitor in a foreign culture adopts a mentality of a child and learns the simplest things all over again, often with a lot of difficulties. This can normally lead to feelings of hostility towards the new environment and to feelings such as helplessness and distress. The second stage is also described as "hostility" stage (Oberg 1960, 177-182). The traveler discovers the cultural difference between the host and home culture and feels frustrated when the traveler is unable to solve problems in familiar ways. This leads for the traveler to reject the new culture and to seek out the people from the more familiar, home culture.

The third stage is referred to as the adjustment period (Gullahorn and Gullahorn 1963). The adjustment stage is characterized by an increasing ability to cope in the new culture and environment. More of the host culture is learned and she or he is more able to communicate

with members of the culture. This is where the feeling of success is present and solutions are found for some of the problems that seemed overwhelming at stage two. The visitor adjusts to the host culture, begins to appreciate the new culture, interact with locals, learn the local language and even jokes in a foreign language (Reisinger and Turner 2003, 60). This is when the expatriate starts to spend less time with people from their home country and accept differences while becoming more adjusted to the host culture.

The fourth stage of culture shock is described as gradual recovery. The fourth stage occurs when the newcomer is able to identify with the host culture: he or she becomes fluent in the new culture and is able to accept and enjoy the new cultural environment (Bochner 1982, 172). Typically in the fourth stage the expatriate is well adjusted to the culture and can relate to the concerns of the host country employees but also understand the concerns of the home country. To be able to reach the fourth stage and feel fully adjusted to the new culture can take several years, depending on the culture and on the individual.

As the W- Curve of Adjustment was first intended as a four stage model (Gullahorn and Gullahorn 1963) later research proofed necessary to add a fifth stage. The fifth stage involves the concept of reverse culture shock and readjustment after returning back to home country. Research conducted that the returnee has been longing to return to the old, familiar culture of home but once back in his own culture everything is different and he finds many things to criticize. Returnees find that people at home have had new experiences, too, and the returnee must adapt. The process of readjusting to home is similar process as the adjustment to a new culture. In some cases reverse culture shock can be felt more heavily than the actual initial culture shock.
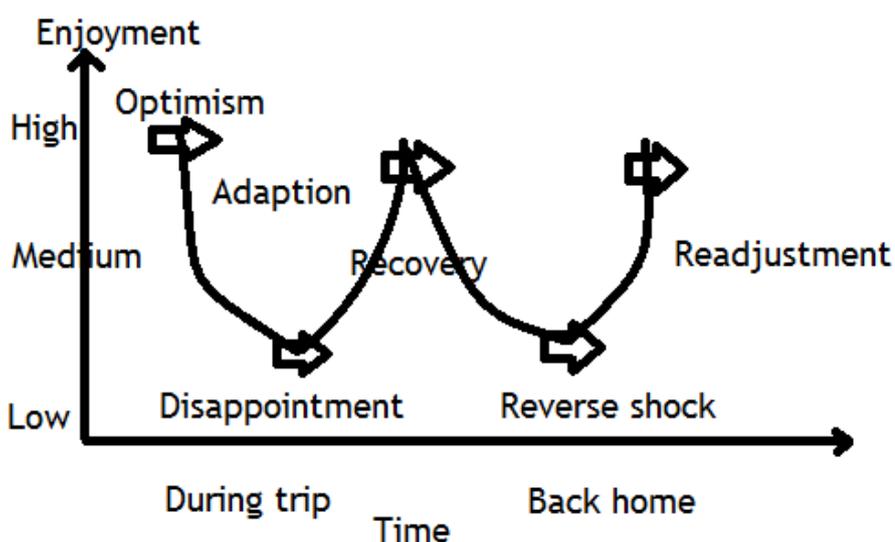

Figure 1. The U-Curve and W-curve of cultural change, adaption and adjustment over time (Gullahorn and Gullahorn 1960, Oberg 1960)

Figure 1 explains the W-Curve of Cultural Adjustment through the five different stages of adaption. In the beginning the expatriate is full of optimism which gradually changes into disappointment with the newly encountered culture. After this the expatriate starts to find new methods to adjust to the culture and becomes more integrated to the daily life in a foreign country. The last parts of the W-Curve describe the expatriates feeling while returning back to their home country and readjusting back to home culture.

In more recent research Kim (1995) has developed a theoretical model that paints the cultural adjustment process as being more complex than the U- and W-curve model of culture shock. Her model of adjustment is described as a process of stress-adaption-growth. From this perspective, the newcomer encounters stress upon entering a new culture as a result of developing a diminished ability to function normally. The individual becomes more stressed when confronted with new and different way of dealing with the daily life. To reduce the stress, the newcomer develops and incorporates new cultural norms required to function normally and thereby begins the adaption process to the new environment. Through continual experience of stress-adaption, the individual's perspectives broaden, resulting into personal growth. According to Kim the stress-adaption-growth consists of three phases. The stress-adaption-growth dynamic plays out not in a smooth linear progression, but in a cyclic and continual "draw-back-to-leap" representation of the present acculturation of the interrelationships among stress, adaption, and growth. Strangers respond to each stressful experience by "drawing back", which in turn activates adaptive energy to help the individual to reorganize themselves and to "leap forward" so to speak. This process continues as long as there are new environmental challenges and as long as the expatriate integrates into the new culture.

The intensity of the feelings in each stage and duration of culture shock depends on the degree of cultural differences between a foreigner and the receiving culture (Reisinger and Turner 2003, 61); the cultural knowledge of the individual, the ability to adjust, the length of the stay in the foreign country, frequency of overseas travel, number of friends in a host community, type of tourist, type of arrangement and many other factors. The individual differences also make a change as those who are more familiar or have better knowledge of the culture can adapt quicker, also those with better social skills are more likely to adjust quicker. Further, individuals who stay in a culture for only short period of time, for example from one to three months, can still experience all the stages of culture shock. Others, who stay longer, even several years, may experience each stage of culture shock for a year of two before acculturation occurs.

2.2   Communication

Culture and communication are closely connected (Beamer and Varner 2011. 26). Culture is generally shared and learned through communication and communication is based on the cultural norms and values. What is communicated and how it is communicated are both determined by culture. Culture shock has an adverse effect on intercultural communication because the communication becomes less effective. In inter- and cross-cultural tourist-host contact, tourists and hosts are "…confronted with a culture different from their own in terms of customs, values, standards and expectations" (Reisinger and Turner 2003, 61). The major variables that measure cross-cultural tourist-host contact and which have been suggested by Bochner (1982) are:

- on whose territory the contact occurs
- the time span of the interaction
- its purpose
- the type of involvement
- the frequency of contact
- the degree of intimacy, status and power
- distinguishing characteristics of the participants

Bochner examined the effects of intercultural tourist-host contacts on tourists and visited people. According to Bochner (1982) the main communication issues in the contact between tourist-host were found to be caused by difficulties in:

- Interpersonal communication and behavior: language fluency, polite language usage, expressing attitude, feelings and emotions
- Non-verbal signals: facial expressions, eye contact, special behavior, touching, posture and gestures
- Rules and patterns of interpersonal interaction: greetings, self-disclosure, making or refusing requests

Language shock, which occurs due to problems with an unfamiliar language and an inability to communicate properly, is another recognized concept. Language and culture are interviewed and shape each other. Environment is of the key reasons for the development of linguistic concepts and the development of the language. Language reflects our culture and values and it also changes over time. What makes communicating more difficult is the fact that different cultures give different meanings to identical or similar words. Language is the main tool for communicating even though being able to speak the language does not constitute that one can understand the culture fully.

Edward Hall (1990) offers another theory to examine cultural similarities and differences in both perception and communication. He categorizes cultures as being either high-or low-context, depending on the degree to which meaning comes from the communication setting rather than the words being exchanged. A high context communication or message is one in which most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicitly transmitted part of the message or spoken aloud. In comparison a low context communication is just the opposite and the mass of the information is vested in explicit code (McDaniel, Porter and Samovar 2010, 215). In high-context cultures, such as China, many of the meanings behind communication are not transmitted through words alone. One reason for this is a very homogeneous culture: similar experiences and information networks and well established social protocols. High-context cultures, because of tradition and history, change very little over time. People from high-context cultures tend to be aware of their surroundings and can express and interpret feeling without verbally stating them.

In low-context cultures the population is less homogeneous and therefore tends to compartmentalize interpersonal contacts. In low-context cultures, the verbal message contains most of the information and very little is embedded in the context or the participants. To state an example, the Asian mode of communication of high context is often vague, indirect, and implicit, whereas Western communication of low context tends to be direct and explicit (McDaniel, Porter and Samovar 2010, 217). Hall (1990) states that when people communicate, they take for granted how much the listener knows about the subject under discussion. In low-context communication, the listener knows very little and must be told practically everything. In high-context communication, the listener does not need to be given as much background information.

2.3   Values and Attitudes

Social interaction is influenced by differences in cultural background – most of the difficulties arise from differences in cultural values. Cultural values play a significant role in shaping customs and practices that occur within organizations. Understanding cultural values is important as it facilitates the ability to properly identify, understand and response to differences in thinking, feeling and acting (Dong and Liu 2010, 224). For corporations that include members from different cultures, knowledge and sensitivity of cultural values is a necessity that must be addressed in management practices and training. Rokeach (1973) defined value as "… an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally preferable to an opposite mode of conduct or end-state of existence". He referred to values as beliefs about desirable goals and modes of conduct (Rokeach, 1979, 41).

Values can be classified according to their importance within a society. Values can be classified as primary, secondary and tertiary values (McDaniel, Porter and Samovar 2010. 188) and the values differentiate between dissimilar countries and cultures. Primary values are the most important ones: they specify those things worth dying for and the importance of a specific value is connected to a specific culture. The secondary values are the next best values in the culture. For example in United States of America the secondary values are mainly democracy and the protection of oneself and close family members. The tertiary values are at the bottom of the value hierarchy; these can be for example cleanliness and hospitality.

Kluckhonh and Strodrbeck's Value Orientation Theory (1961) argued that all human cultures are confronted with universal problems emerging from relationships with others, time, activities and nature. The concept includes four assumptions: all human societies face the same problem, they use different means to solve them, the means to address universal problems are limited and the value orientations are behaviorally observable through empirical studies. Value orientation theory suggests that cultures develop unique positions on five value orientations.

The first value orientation is the relationship between people and nature: people can be subjugation to nature, live in harmony with nature or have mastery over nature. The second orientation is activity orientation that addresses the question of what the modality of human activity is. This refers to the time used for self-expression and play, self-improvement and development as well as work. In protestant cultures a high value is placed on time and efficiency. In other cultures, earning a living through labor is not only a duty but also a virtue and thus not separable from other aspects of human existence. In some religious cultures praying cherished and considered to be more important for humans than working.

The third values orientation evolves time. Time orientation concentrates on the question what the temporal focus of human life is. Time orientation can be the past, present and future. When time is considered as a tangible object, it becomes something to be managed and used responsibly. Cultures are varied depending on their use of time. For example punctuality in some countries is considered as a necessity however in other cultures it is not as important.

The fourth value orientation is human nature. Human nature orientation questions the intrinsic character of human: are we born good or evil, or a mixture of both. The final orientation is called relational orientation, and it addresses the relationship between the individual and others. According to Kluckhonh and Strodrbeck's Value Orientation theory relationship can be individualistic, linear or collateral. In individualistic relationships people are encouraged to accept responsibility as independent individuals.

2.4   Managing Culture Shock

Many of the newcomers entering a new culture experience significant difficulty while adapting to the host culture. Thus, the problems facing anyone trying to adapt to a new culture are quite numerous. During the initial period, as explained before, the feelings of fear and isolation, being disliked, and distrust are the basics of culture shock. An assessment of some of the reasons behind these feelings is an excellent first step in developing the skills needed to adjust to a new culture. Acculturation is the process of learning to live in a new culture (McDaniel, Porter and Samovar 2010, 400). According to Berry (2005) the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual member is defined as acculturation. At the individual level it involves changes in a person's behavioral repertoire. This process of adjustment is a lengthy process that requires gaining a large body of useful knowledge of the culture.

The effects of culture shock can be lessened and according to Jin (1989) to avoid cross-cultural conflicts expatriates need to:

- be prepared for a different culture
- learn the form and conventions of communication in different cultures
- participate in social activities with people from different cultures
- be able to learn from others and take risks
- develop cultural sensitivities
- recognize cultural complexity
- consider themselves as culture messenger
- be patient and understanding
- have realistic expectations
- have the courage to experience culture shock

Both culture shock and reverse culture shock demonstrate that culture is an extremely important influence on human behavior and it can also be a very useful learning experience. An individual has the possibility to gain important understanding about cultural relativism and to become better acquainted with cultural differences and to become better prepared for future sojourning experiences.

3   Characteristics of Chinese Culture

Chinese culture is now evolving in the direction of Western cultures. More and more Chinese are giving preference to personal, people-oriented standards that are making the culture less

formalistic and ritualistic in addition to homogenous (De Mente 2009, 21.) This chapter attempt to characterize Chinese traditional values and behavior and to identify the key areas of Chinese culture. Enforced cultural studies have given use some generalizations about Chinese culture: Chinese are used to working at the same company for their whole life - the work environment is like a family and the chief executive is the head of the family. Hierarchy in China is very important and every Chinese knows their position in the organization.

The national program that China created in order to attract foreign tourists has played a significant role in the modernization of Chinese culture and economy (De Mente 2009, 125). The Chinese have always welcomed the foreign guests who come to admire the technological accomplishments, amazing scenery and the traditional Chinese culture. However in order to accommodate the growing number of tourists China has had to westernize its infrastructure with for example thousands of high-rise hotels. Beijing is a good example of how the modern day life is led in China and for a tourist seeking the more traditional China, Beijing is not the best option. Nevertheless a lot of great landmarks of the ancient China are located near and in Beijing such as the Forbidden Palace and The Great Wall of China.

3.1 Philosophies of Life

Religion can explain a lot of differences between Eastern and Western societies (Reisinger and Turner 2003, 87). Traditional Chinese culture is highly influenced by the principle of Confucianism, which emphasizes hierarchical interpersonal relationships. For instance, Confucius dictated the correct naming, use of precise words, speaking with a proper degree of hierarchy, respect and the ability to foresee how one's own behavior affects others. Confucianism restricted the expression of emotions. Taoism stressed emotional calm, being in harmony with nature and it discouraged assertiveness and self-expression. Buddhism emphasizes common coexistence. More recently, Chinese culture has been influenced by the political philosophies of socialism and communism. Under this culture, followers are expected to follow the decision of leadership strictly, and leadership is more transactional. Traditional structure of Chinese state-owned companies constrains a single leader's capability to change the organizational culture and increases the possibility of cultural change imaginable (Dong and Liu 2010, 226).

3.2 Personal Honor

A big cultural factor that is significant in China in social and business relationships is the concept of "face" also referred to as "personal honor" (De Mente 2009, 159). Face can be described as the metaphor for a self-image one wishes to project to other people. The Chinese concept of face can be divided into four different categories:

One that states the good reputation one gets by avoiding mistakes and making wise decision. One that covers all the actions one takes in order to "give face" to others by showing them respect and paying them compliments. One that refers to a person receiving "face" based upon when the individual is being treated respectfully and is receiving compliments from other people. And to finish, "the face" that refers to actions that are embarrassing or damaging to a person when these become known to other people. The last part is also what is generally referred as losing face. Reputation is of extreme importance in China that is why it is essential to understand and deal with the concept of face. When it comes to intercultural relationships or business agreements inside China - it is important to take into an account the concepts of saving and losing face.

3.3   Language and Communication

The Chinese language itself is as diverse as the whole country. Since 1949, the regime has made great efforts to unify the country by making Putonghua, "the ordinal language", official (Po-yee and Sinclair 1990, 142). The influence that languages have on the values, attitudes and behaviors of people is essential. People cannot communicate fully and effectively across the cultural barriers inherent in languages and mindsets they create and sustain. It is fairly simple to interpret or translate technical subjects from one language into another, but translating cultural attitudes and values into another language ranges from difficult to impossible. Not being relatively fluent in languages can lead to difficulties. It was not just Confucianism, Daoism, other philosophies and the political power of China's kings and emperors that helped to meld the diverse Chinese groups into a one nation. It was also the language and big part was played by the Chinese writing system. Even though the characters have modernized through the years the common writing system of Hanzi that originated from pictorial drawing has morphed into the shape that is today known as the common day Hanzi and has become the means of communicating in China connecting the different ethnic groups (De Mente 2009,27). Now that China has joined the world community as a superpower the role and importance of Chinese language has become more significant.

3.4   Expatriates in Beijing

Beijing is the capital of the People's Republic of China and one of the most populous cities in the world. The population of Beijing as of 2013 was 20,150,000 which makes Beijing the second largest Chinese city by urban population (China National Bureau of Statistics 2013). Beijing has seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites – the Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven, Summer Palace, Ming Tombs, Zhoukoudian, Great Wall, and the Grand Canal (Brown 2009, 10). In 2010 the average salary of a Beijinger was 2010 euros in a month and the minimum 55 euros per

month. The population of Beijing in comparison to rest of China is very wealthy however as described by the income differences, Beijing is a city with huge class differences. Beijing is a city full of traffic, pollution and people however in the midst of temples and museums there is a large amount of beggars.

China ranked 7th in HSBC's 2012 Expat Explorer Economics annual survey: The survey measured disposable income, quality of life and the challenges of raising children abroad, among other things, by talking to expats from four continents (Sebag-Montefiore 2012). Almost half of the expats surveyed came with the expectation that they would earn more in China. This is the reasons a large amount of people choose to work in Beijing nowadays – to earn more money than in their own country. There is a large expatriate community in Beijing: A study by the Beijing Academy of Sciences estimated that there were on average 200,000 foreigners living in Beijing in 2010 on any given day, including students, business travelers and tourists, who are not counted as registered residents (2010).

That is why Beijing has a lot to offer for the immigrants. There are a lot of Western brands and stores to be found in Beijing as well as other services. The internet is full of different article advising expatriates living and working in China and there are also a lot of expatriate groups that meet regularly. One of the main reasons limiting the number of expatriates living in Beijing is the inability to adjust to the culture and the quality of life in Beijing (Sebag-Montefiore 2012).

4   Chinese Culture through Hofstedes Cultural Dimensios

"Culture is the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others" (Hofstede 1980). Perhaps the most important researcher to gather data about cultural characteristics is Geert Hofstede. Chinese cultural values have been studied extensively by both Chinese and Western researchers. Chinese from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore were all included in Hofstede's (1980) original studies. He created identifying characters that could form the basis of comparison from culture to culture. These characteristic are called *cultural dimensions* (1980, 1984, and 1991) and they reflect value differences that influence interpersonal interactions. The five cultural dimensions are:

- Individualism versus collectivism
- Power distance
- Uncertainty-avoidance versus uncertainty-tolerance
- Masculinity versus femininity
- Confucian Work Dynamism

To further understand the contrast of Chinese culture the biggest differences are presented through Hofstede's' Cultural Dimensions.

4.1 Power Distance

Power distance describes the way in which interpersonal relationship develops in hierarchical society: all individuals in societies are not equal and expresses the attitude of the culture towards inequalities amongst societies. Power distance is defined to an extent in which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations in a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede 1991).

China attains a high standing of Power Distance Index (Reisinger and Turner 2003, 105) as it is a society that considers that inequalities amongst people are acceptable and understandable. The subordinate-superior relationship tends to be diverged and there is no defense against power abuse by superiors. Society with high level of power distance value obedience, conformity, authority, supervision and co-operation creating social-hierarchy and un-equality. Individuals are influenced by formal authority and sanctions and are in general optimistic about people's capacity for leadership and initiative. The general view is that people should not have aspirations beyond their rank.

In comparison a country like Finland scores low on power-distance dimension (Reisinger and Turner 2003, 105). To characterize the Finnish style: Being independent, hierarchy for convenience only, equal rights, superiors accessible, coaching leader, management facilitates and empowers are more valued. Power is decentralized and managers count on the experience of their team members. Employees expect to be consulted, control is disliked and attitude towards managers is mostly informal and on first name basis. Communication is direct and participative.

4.2 Individualism versus Collectivism

The fundamental issue addressed by Individualism versus Collectivism dimension is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. It refers to the extent in which people emphasize their own needs. It has to do with whether people´s self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "We". In Individualist societies people are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family only. In Collectivist society's people belong to 'groups' that take care of them in exchange for loyalty.

China is a highly collectivist culture where people act in the interests of the group and not necessarily for themselves. Highly collective cultures value and emphasize group goals, rights, needs, decisions, consensus and cooperation (Reisinger and Turner 2003, 105). In-group considerations affect hiring and promotions with closer in-groups, such as family, are getting preferential treatment. Employee commitment to the organization is low. Whereas relationships with colleagues are cooperative for in-groups but they are cold or even hostile to out-groups. Personal relationships prevail over task and company. Good example of this is the Chinese concept of Guanxi: Loosely translated, guanxi is the nature of relationships towards an individual or a group. Developing and nurturing guanxi is a serious business in itself and observing the right guanxi, or "who you know up there", can make all the difference between success and failure (De Mente 2009, 30).

Finland is an Individualistic society (Reisinger and Turner 2003,105). Highly individualistic societies emphasize individual goals, concerns, rights, needs for self-actualization and development. This means there is a high preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families. In individualistic society offence causes guilt and a loss of self-esteem, the employer/employee relationship is a contract based on mutual advantage; hiring and promotion decisions are supposed to be based on merit only. Management can be described as the management of individuals only (Lewis 2007, 88).

4.3   Masculinity versus Feminity

Masculine cultures use the biological existence of two sexes to define very different social roles for men and women. They expect men to be assertive, ambitious, and competitive and to strive for material success, and to respect whatever is big, strong and fast. Masculine cultures have highly defined gender roles and promote career success (McDaniel, Porter and Samovar 2010. 206). A high score on masculinity dimension specifies that the society is focused on competition, achievement and success, with success being defined by the best in field. This value system starts already in school and continues throughout organizational behavior. Cultures that value femininity as a trait promote sexual equality and holds that the people and environment are important. A feminine world view maintains that men need not be assertive and that they can assume nurturing roles. A low score or feminine score on the dimension defines that the dominant values in society are caring for others and quality of life. In a feminine society quality of life is the sign of success and standing out from the crowd is not admirable. The fundamental issue here is what motivates people, wanting to be the best which is considered as a masculine trait or liking what one does which is a feminine trait.

China as a masculine society is a success oriented and driven culture. The need to ensure success can be exemplified by the fact that many Chinese will sacrifice family and leisure priorities to work. Service people will provide services until very late at night as leisure time is not so important. In comparison Finland is considered as a feminine society. In feminine countries the focus is on "working in order to live", managers strive for consensus, people value equality, solidarity and quality in their working lives (Lewis 2007). Conflicts are resolved by compromise and negotiation. Incentives such as free time and flexibility are favored and focus is on well-being as status is not shown. In Finnish culture an effective superior is a supportive one and decision making is usually achieved through participation.

4.4   Uncertainty Avoidance

The culture dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance refers to the extent on which the society feels threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations and tries to avoid them. Uncertainty avoidance researches the way a society deals with unknown future: should the future be controlled or not (McDaniel, Porter and Samovar 2010, 206). This ambiguity brings a certain anxiety that different cultures deal with unlike ways. High uncertainty avoidance cultures try to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity by providing stability for their members through established, formal social protocols, intolerance of deviant ideas and behaviors, emphasizing consensus, and resistance to change. These cultures are often characterized by relatively high levels of anxiety and that is why in order to mitigate these hazards there is a strong need for written rules. At the other end of the continuum are the low-uncertainty avoidance countries. In these countries uncertainty inherit in life is more easily accepted, unusual is more easily tolerated, and different ideas and people are found to be less threatening.

China has a low score on uncertainty avoidance (Reisinger and Turner 2003, 105). None the less, adherence to laws and rules may be flexible to suit the actual situation and pragmatism is a fact of life. The Chinese are comfortable with ambiguity; the Chinese language is full of ambiguous meanings that can be difficult for Western people to follow. Chinese are adaptable and entrepreneurial.

Finland scores high on this dimension and thus has a high preference for avoiding uncertainty. Countries exhibiting high uncertainty avoidance maintain rigid codes of belief and behavior and are intolerant of unorthodox behavior and ideas. In these cultures there is an emotional need for rules, even if the rules never seem to work, time is money, people have an inner urge to be busy and work hard, precision and punctuality are the norm, innovation may be resisted and security is an important element in individual motivation.

4.5   Confucian Work Dynamism

The condemnation of Hofstede's early work led later on for him to create a fifth dimension: long versus short-term orientation also referred to as "Confucian Dynamism." The long-term versus short-term orientation dimension appears to be based on items reminiscent of the teachings of Confucius, on both poles. It opposes long-term to short-term aspects of Confucian thinking: persistence and thrift to personal stability and respect for tradition (Hofstede 1992). Cultures that rank high on long-term orientation, such as China, would most likely have employee who reflect strong work ethic and show great respect for status differences. Social value and long- range goals are valued. On the other hand, the cultures that rank low on this dimension often do not place a high priority on status, try to postpone old age, are concerned with short-term results, and seek quick gratification of their needs.

5   Research Methods

The research was made in co-operation with a four star business hotel in Beijing. The closer details of the hotel are not disclosed in the research as it is not deemed necessary for the sake of the study as the focus of the research is on how to identify and diminish the effects of culture shock while encountering a new and different culture.

5.1   Qualitative Research

Qualitative methods, such as action research, case study research and ethnography, were developed in the social sciences, and were deemed to be more appropriate to the study of social and cultural phenomenon than the quantitative methods of the physical sciences, such as survey methods, mathematical modelling and laboratory experiments. The foundation for conducting qualitative analysis stems from the observation that, given the human capacity to talk, the object of understanding a phenomenon from the point of view of the actors can be largely lost when textual data are quantified (Alasuutari 1995, 8). Qualitative researchers, often associated with the education field, typically rely on the following methods for gathering information: Participant Observation, Non-participant Observation, Field Notes, Reflexive Journals, Structured Interview, Semi-structured Interview, Unstructured Interview, and Analysis of documents and material.

 When an entire culture is the key subject of a study, information is usually gathered through very large surveys and the results lead to generalizations about the way the culture communicates. Statistical means and averages describe the entire culture, but may not describe every person in that culture. In an approach where the individuals are the focus of the study; the

individuals are interviewed and observed, and the results are rich, complex information about the individual that cannot be generalized to a whole culture (Beamer and Varner 2011, 28).

The primary data for the research is qualitative data. The data was collected through participant observation and interviews conducted at a hotel in Beijing. The frame of reference for the research was collected via researching previous case-studies and studies made on culture and culture shock. A lot of older theories on culture and culture shock are still valid nowadays and many researches today have built on these same theories that are also used in this particular research.

5.2 Research Process or Conduction

The research conducted for this thesis was to research and find managing solutions to culture shock. The research was built on the basis of the main research question: "What is culture shock and how can it be managed?" The location of the constructed study and field work was in Beijing. That is why the case study chosen was a four star business hotel located in the center of Beijing that had foreign management and multiple non-Chinese employees and interns. The study also gives an overview concerning Chinese culture and values. The main research method was qualitative. The data for the study was gathered during the Fall 2014 and the results of the study are based on the authors observations and on the part-structural interviews of five western employees working at the case hotel. China can be a challenging country to search information from as the government is still being secretive with releasing information and a large amount of information is only found in Chinese in which the researcher is not fluent in.

5.2.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation has its roots in anthropological studies, where researchers would travel to distant places to study the customs and practices of less known societies. It involves participating in a situation, while, at the same time, recording what is being observed. Hence, participant observation has been associated with qualitative methods, as the data collected by this technique tend to be primarily qualitative (Alasuutari 1995. 179). It offers the chance to obtain unique insights into the organization or social group. Participant observation as a data collection method gathers special data but it also presents challenges to the researcher.

The main difficulty with participant observation is the question of objectivity. For the sake of a valid research the researcher must stay as objective as possible. Being objective means the state of being just, unbiased, and not influenced by emotions or personal prejudices (McDan-

iel, Porter and Samovar 2010, 43). As the research concerns a different culture it is also important to attain cultural sensitivity as the researcher must stay as neutral as possible.

During a six month work experience at the case hotel the author gathered information and data by observing the surroundings and making notes on similarities and differences between Chinese and Western cultures. Observation was accomplished during the sixth month period the author was employed under the hotel. The observation data was achieved perceiving the Chinese culture inside and outside the hotel. Special attention was paid upon the communication between Chinese and expatriates. Main observation data was collected at the front office and food- and beverage departments of the hotel. Documentation of the data was done via diary notes and photography. The results of participant observation are presented through contents analysis.

5.2.2   Theme Interview

Interview is a commonly used data gathering method in tourism research especially when gathering insights into respondent's opinions. Theme interview used in qualitative research is where the interviewer asks questions based on a particular topic and records the respondent's answers. The purpose of the interview is to understand the meanings attributed by the respondent (Botterill and Platenkamp 2012, 121). Generally interviews are conducted by one to one bases. The most common form of interview is a semi-structured interview in which the researcher will develop an interview guide which covers a set of topics or themes that the interview will revolve around.

Qualitative research method such as partly-structured interview is usually built around certain themes. The theory part of this study explained Hofstede's Culture Dimensions (1980) and the U-curve of Cultural Adjustments (1963): The research questions used, while conducting the interviews, were based around the topics that emerged during the previous study on similar topics concerning culture shock. The main theme areas for the questions were structured around the adaption process time periodically: Initial Optimism, Disappointment, Adaption and Recovery Period and, in case the interviewed had returned to his/hers home country, reverse culture-shock. The initial reasons for culture shock were discussed through Hofstede's Culture Dimensions theory (Hofstede, 2001):

-   Individualism versus collectivism
-   Power distance
-   Uncertainty-avoidance versus uncertainty-tolerance
-   Masculinity versus femininity
-   Confucian Work Dynamism

Questions from the interviews were used to determine the feelings and attitudes of this sample of international interns during the period of their internship in Beijing, which might impact on their greater or lesser success at interns working in hotel industry in China. The hotel manager of the case company was also interviewed as he has worked in China for a total of eight years. The discussion from the interviews were analyzed and interpreted in order to answer the research questions.

5.3   Validity, Reliability and Ethics

Validity of a research can be divided in to two categories: external and internal validity. As most of the research data used in the study is quantitative data external validity is taken into consideration (Botterill and Platenkamp 2012, 125). External validity is the validity of comprehensive inferences in systematic research that are most often based on research and research validity. In other words, it is the extent to which the results of a study can be generalized to other situations and to other people.

Critiques of interviews are largely conducted on epistemological grounds – what kind of knowing is provided by interviewing and what kind of knowledge can be gained from it? The problem with interviews is that they rely on respondents memory call. The story is recounted from the respondent's point of view only with the researches observation. The question of validity of the interview data is also raised by the possible selective memory recall of the respondent.

Participant observation as the only research data is not the most reliable study method. Such studies are, by their very nature, hard to repeat and the data they produce can be simply the opinion of one observer (Alasuutari 1995. 56). In addition, the reliability of participant observation can be further questioned in terms of the extent to which the presence of the observer actually changes the behavior of those being studied. However, while such studies may lack reliability it is evident that the validity of the data gained can be impressive. The researcher is able to get an "insider" viewpoint and the information may be much richer than that obtained through systematic observation. There are various difficulties that are magnified in participant observation; events are interpreted through the single observer's eyes. There is the problem of "going native" which means becoming so involved with and sympathetic to the group of people being studied, that objectivity is lost. Because the observer is a participant in the activities and events being observed, it is easy to influence other people's behavior, thereby raising the problem of reactivity and influencing what is being observed. People with whom one is interacting may make unreasonable demands: As a participant, one may observe illegal or forbidden behavior. Ethical dilemmas are commonplace in participant observation: Does one report on fellow employees? This was one of the ethical dilemmas the respondents

faced during the interviews and it might also affect the answers as the responds might not be completely honest.

The validity of the research is pointed out more detailed in conclusion.

6   Results

The theory part introduced the essential definitions of culture, culture shock and explains the model of cultural adjustment. For the relevance of the research the basic characterizations of Chinese culture were also presented. The second part of the thesis is the empirical research. The main research method was qualitative and the primary data was collected through participant observations. The research included structured observations and theme interviews of five foreign employees working at a four star business hotel in Beijing. The research was based on the interviews of the expatriates working in a four star business hotel in China and on the observations of the author working at the same hotel. The manager of the hotel and four expatriates between the ages of 19 to 27 were interviewed. As the main concentration of the research was to create contrast with Chinese culture all of the respondents were from different cultures. The countries included in the research were: Finland, Germany, Austria, Spain, Australia and Russia. The employees all worked at the same hotel for different periods of time, the shortest time period being three months and the longest two years. The quotations in the research results are direct quotations from the interviews and observation notes created during the period of six month the researcher worked in the hotel.

During the interviews there were several repetitive topics that affected all the interns working at the hotel. Main thesis of the interview was to discuss on how the expatriates saw and experienced culture shock upon arriving to China. It needs to be noted that there are individual differences while encountering culture shock and people generally experience culture shock in different ways (Gallois, Liu and Volcic 2011, 46), this view was supported by the interviews and observations constructed at the hotel.

"I would describe culture shock as discomfort and uncertainty one feels with a new culture."

"I do not think I really felt culture shock. Most difficult was to get accustomed to the differences in the work environment compared to my home country."

"Culture shock… is the inability to adjust in another culture."

"I guess it manifests by just overwhelming you and making you feel totally out of your depth, where everything is completely foreign and alien."

Based on the interviews and attitudes of the respondents culture shock in this case study can be defined as follows: Culture shock is the state of uncertainty and discomfort a person encounters while adjusting into a different culture.

6.1   Case Company

The case company included in the research was a four star business hotel located in Beijing. The hotel is under a global, Western brand even though the owner of the hotel is Chinese. The management of the hotel was held by two different managers. The first one taking care that the guidelines of the franchise were followed. He was appointed by the global brand, originated from a Western culture and was responsible of the foreign interns and of helping them to adapt to the Chinese work life and culture. For the sake of the research he was interviewed. He had been working as a hotel manager more than ten years and mentioned that running a hotel is the same wherever you are - only the culture, business model and local environment are different. That gave him the confidence that he can add value. According to him the best approach is to share what one knows with the local team and learn from them what one does not know focusing on making the hotel as successful as possible. The second manager was Chinese and she was the executive general manager at the hotel.

The main concentration of the research turned out to be customer service as most of the interns worked in either Front Office department or in the Food and Beverage department of the hotel. As a global brand and a business hotel there were a large amount of foreign customers staying at the hotel, especially foreign business men visiting China for the sake of business meetings and conferences. As Beijing is the capital of China there were also a lot of domestic tourists and business travelers staying at the hotel. The foreign interns were specifically hired in the hotel because of their language skills: English, German and Russian. Knowing Chinese was not a necessity for the position. Another purpose for the foreign interns working at the hotel was to teach English and Western style customer service for the Chinese colleagues.

During the internship the interns received a shared apartment, free meals and a gym membership from the hotel as a part of the work benefits. They were also paid a small monthly salary. It can be said that the foreign interns received better benefits than the local Chinese interns, which lead to some disagreements in the work environment. After the six month internship period the intern usually had the possibility to stay and work longer at the hotel, sometimes in a better position.

6.2   Adaption Process

Adapting to a new culture is a difficult process. In the second chapter the four stage adaption process to culture shock was presented and this chapter describes the same process through the comments and observations of the hotel employees.
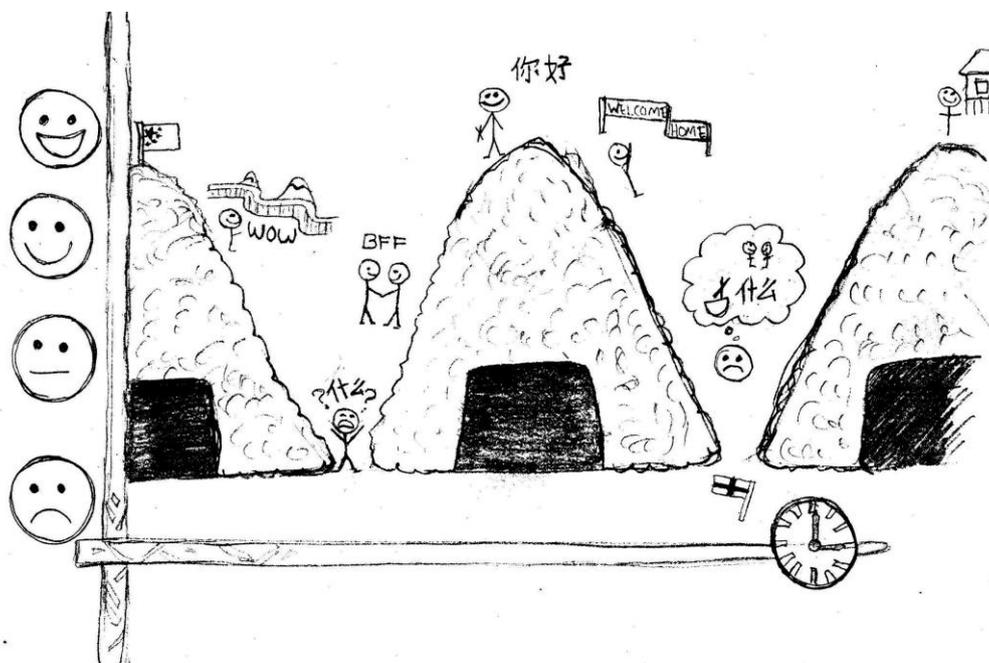

Figure 2. Draft of the final poster: The Rice Cake- curve of Cultural Adjustment (Hirvelä 2015).

6.2.1   Intial Optimism

During the research four interns working at the hotel were interviewed. Throughout the interview most of the expatriates explained having positive feelings upon arriving China: expectations and excitement upon arriving in a new country and expectant to live and see a totally new culture. As explained in the theory part of the research this is typical upon first encountering a new country – the so called "honeymoon" period were everything is still new and exciting.

"…even though I was nervous I looked forward moving to China and working in a different culture."

This kind of opinion seemed to be agreed upon within the interns as all of them had chosen to accept the possibility to work in Beijing. None of the interns had the fluent knowledge of Chinese language and they had prepared in different ways moving into a new culture:

"I actually made a list of all the places I wanted to visit in Beijing."

"Before arriving to China I was really busy so I don't think I even had the time to think about moving here."

"I did a beginners course on Chinese before arriving here."

A lot of interns were also excited to try the local cuisine and Chinese food was highly praised by the interviewed. However for some who had stayed in China for a longer period of time the food had become every day thing and getting food from their home country was preferred.

Usually the honeymoon-period is typical, especially on a short trip, however all of the interview respondents stayed in the country more than one or two weeks. It is typical to also skip the honeymoon phase all together upon arriving in to a new culture.

6.2.2 Subsequant Disappointment

The second part of adjustment is usually reached pretty quickly after moving into a new environment. This is when everything is new and weird and the expatriate is not adjusting very well to the new environment: frustration and stress is caused by the differences in cultures. However what becomes obvious was what some of the interviewed describes as an instant culture shock upon arriving to China:

"…arriving in the apartment I had the whole weekend for myself before work started. I did not know anyone and to be honest – leaving the apartment was a terrifying thought. Everything was different and unfamiliar."

"First day I went for the closest McDonald's as it was the only familiar thing in the sight."

Especially when coming from a richer western country only the Chinese street view can be shocking for the new expatriate. It is obvious that the more different the host culture is the more difficult it is to adjust to the culture.

"It was a bit shocking to see people spitting on the streets. I remember walking on the streets and a man walking just in front of me and spitting on my feet – later on my friend explained that it is normal and he did not mean it as an offence but nevertheless – it was disgusting."

Tourists entering a less developed country usually encounter more problems than those entering a country with the same economical state. The tourist-host contact is more challenging. Even though Beijing is a quickly developing country there are still a large amount of beggars on the streets. One of the interviewed shared on interesting story considering a particular beggar:

"There was this beggar man who was always in this same spot outside the hotel, once he even grabbed my hand in hopes of getting money. I had a discussion with my Chinese colleague about him and he told me that this particular man makes 10 000 RMB per month, which is five times more than I make... One time I even saw him with a brand new jacket and what obviously was a brand new haircut."

Some of the expatriates agreed on feeling shocked by the poverty as they were used on not seeing so many homeless beggars. The class differences in China are easily seen and for someone from Finland, for example, the contrast of seeing a skyscraper next to a shabby hut is a little bit startling.

As a large part of the research concerns the Chinese work culture the interview also analyzed work related issues the expatriates faced during the internship.

"My daily work was made more challenging when my colleagues did not understand me. Sometimes the customers would end up getting the wrong order from the menu as I couldn't communicate with the chef as he did not speak any English."

"In the beginning my colleagues were very shy to teach me as one; they felt uncertain about their English skills and two; as a foreigner I was allowed to do pretty much whatever I wanted. Mostly I had to figure things out by asking a lot of questions and observing my colleagues. All my closest colleagues were Chinese. Especially in the beginning I had a lot of trouble communicating with them as most of them had really poor English."

As explained in the theory part of the research – China is country that scores high on the power-distance dimension. Lot of the problems the expatriates faced while adjusting to the Chinese work culture dealt with the problems with the higher management and hierarchy.

"I learned fast that in China the managerial hierarchy is very important and from my previous work experience in where I am from I certainly was not used to such different managing styles. Especially the Deputy Hotel Manager intimidated everyone, she had the power to do whatever she wanted and most of the staff just seemed to be scared of her."

"During my first week working at the hotel I met the Front Office manager for the first time. I greeted him happily and shook his hand. After greeting me his next words was how-ever to criticize me: "You should communicate with the customers better." This person was someone who had never seen me work; naturally I was offended and angry. It took me some time to figure out that this was just a part of Chinese culture and he was showing me his position of power."

"The Executive General Manager of the hotel was the one who had most power. If she saw an employee doing something wrong – for example once she saw on employee eating during work time and this resulted in to her getting fired the very next day – she had the power to do immediate changes…"

From the participant's comments, it was obvious that in the beginning some of the interns were extremely unhappy in terms of the work environment meeting their needs. However these feelings could just be the bi-product of culture shock and not necessary have anything to do with the work itself.

The hotel manager of the case company admitted that the most struggles he had with Chinese culture were work related. This is how he described the issues he had while adjusting to the Chinese culture:

"Difference between directive and consultative management styles – yes. Directive is not my natural style - but is what most Chinese are used to from school and University. Way of doing business - yes. Little forward planning, with everything being done at the last minute. I like to try and be more organized! Helps a lot to show genuine interest in people, do your best to fix any problems as quickly as you can, understand the issue of face and respect and, finally, understand how guangxi work in Chinese business."

At this stage it is also common to have feelings of frustration with communication. In Beijing not a large percentage of population speak English also none of the interns interviewed spoke Chinese in the beginning of their internship. What made the work environment more challeng-ing was the fact that the workers in the case study hotel were from all over China- so in fact it could be the case that even they did not comprehend each other completely while speaking the different dialects of Chinese. Adding English language to the mix made communicating even more challenging.

"On my first day my colleague told me I am the first foreigner she has ever spoken to. She was from a different part of China where obviously foreigners were not that common."

"Sometimes at work I rarely spoke as the level of English my colleagues made communicating impossible…"

A big issue for some of the expatriates living in Beijing seemed to be the weather: There is a dangerous amount of pollution in the air of Beijing. The research indicates that the air was one of the biggest concerns for the expatriates as some days they were not even able to go outside. Beijing is a city of four seasons: During the winter it is very cold and windy and during the summer the weather is hot and humid. For the expatriates from warmer countries, like Spain, the cold weather was another issue.

Even though the interns faced a lot of challenges the general attitude towards China and the experience on Chinese culture was regarded as positive.

6.2.3   Adaption

Adaption is the third stage of the cultural adjustment model. That is when the expatriate is feeling more comfortable living in the new environment and the person becomes more familiar with the new culture. In this case study the expatriates living in Beijing explained their adjustment period in different ways and they had several examples on how adjusting got a little bit easier. The most feeling of success among the expatriates seemed to involve learning and getting used to speaking the language.

"The most essential and beneficial skill I could have had - was to speak Chinese. My main working language was English but some of the customers could only speak Chinese and this was obviously a problem. However when my language skill improved also my work got easier."

"In the beginning I did not know any Chinese. I had problems communicating in stores with the taxi drivers with customers and with my Chinese colleagues. Later on when my Chinese skills developed I remember feeling very happy being able to bargain with the Chinese sellers."

"…and the first time I went to the store and understood when the cashier asked if I wanted a plastic bag. I was very proud of myself."

"After I started to date a Chinese girl I learned a lot more about Chinese culture and language."

Having social communication and company is also something that helped to adjust into culture. The interns shared a common flat so it was easy to find contacts upon arriving to China. Some of them had stayed in China already a longer period and were able to ease the new interns inside the culture and give a lot of practical tips.

"I was somewhat familiar with Korean popular culture which is also very popular in China. In the beginning it was one thing that I had in common with my colleagues so the topic worked as a good conversation starter."

"Every time I had a question about Chinese culture – If I saw something I thought weird or unusual or intriguing – I would just ask about it from my colleagues or from the hotel manager."

"My colleagues are about the same age as me but seem a lot younger. Upon my arrival one of them asked have I ever been clubbing and after that proceed to tell me that only bad girls go clubbing!"

"I told my colleague that I played football when I was younger, and he proceeded to ask me why as I am a girl."

China is a highly masculine country and the interviewed in question is from a very feminine culture. The interns inclined on having problems with adapting to the gender roles in Chinese culture. However it can be said that there are a lot of individual differences also between Chinese and these are only case examples. This is how the hotel manager describes the difference between Chinese and Western youth:

"Young Chinese people especially are very similar in many ways to Western people - they will work out whether you're a good, professional person very quickly. Treat them with respect, give clear direction and opportunities to grow and develop".

Chinese culture presents a different kind of frame for daily life. However the expatriates explained that assuming daily routine helped to adapt to the strange culture as even though the environment was difference there were several familiar things that the expats admitted returning to while feeling home sick.

"Even though i was in China I was doing the same things I did at home as well: going to work, going to gym, hanging out with friends, studying..."

"If I felt homesick I would message my friends or family back at home..."

"With my flat mate we would try to cook foods from our own countries with a mix of Chinese spices."

One way to adapt is to try to find things reminding the expatriate from their home culture and country. For example the expatriates were always happy to find someone they could discuss with their own language or in general happy to meet someone from their home culture. Beijing being a global city offers food from all over the world. The expatriates explained that one way to deal with home sickness was to find a restaurant that made food from their country.

"Christmas was the hardest time for me as I have always spent Christmas with my family... That is why during Christmas I proceeded to get drunk with my friends..."

Previous research has indicated the possibility of expatriate consuming a large amounts alcohol or drugs as a way of dealing with the stress that rises with the inability to adapt. As all of the respondents are young it is hard to figure out if the alcohol use was out of regularity.

All of the interviewed it took different periods of time to adjust to the Chinese culture. During the interviews the expatriates concluded that adjusting is very dependable on individual differences and attitudes.

6.2.4   Gradual Recovery

The fourth stage of adaption is gradual recovery. The fourth part of cultural adjustment can be described as the feeling of being at home. Usually to reach this period it will take the expatriate from six month to even two years. One of the interviews said he started to feel at home in around three months. This respondent had previous friends in the country so this could have made his whole adaption period faster.

"After two month working at the hotel I started to feel at home. I had made friends, learned a little Chinese and got along well enough with my colleagues."

"It is when you start to drink hot water. In China the tap water is not drinkable and drinking hot water is considered healthier than drinking cold water. I believe I started to feel a little bit Chinese when I started to enjoy hot water."

"When I was able to use Chinese phone application: There are so many great ones! One can shop, book everything end even order a taxi via phone."

"I have to stay toilets – squat toilets – I am proud to not fear them anymore. Also I no longer wonder why the elderly in China are so fit!"

When the expatriate starts to adjust to the local culture it is common that the person might start to utilize local habits and manners. The expatriate typically in the fourth stage is well adjusted to the culture and can relate to the concerns of the host country employees but also understand the concerns of the home country. To be able to reach the fourth stage and feel fully adjusted to the new culture can take several years, depending on the culture and on the individual.

7 Development Ideas to Manage Culture Shock

There were several repetitive topics that became clear while concerning the topic of how to manage culture differences. When asked to analyze what helped with culture shock there were similarities and differences in the answers. One of the biggest advantages of getting adapted to the culture faster seemed to be the knowledge of the language. Being able to have a conversation with the locals and being able to handle everyday businesses with the help of the language seemed to be the biggest factor in adapting to the culture. Some of the respondents took Chinese language classes before arriving to China and this seemed to make a difference. Another occurring theme was making local friends or already having a familiar face in the host country. The respondents who made quickly local friends adapted quicker into the culture. Also dating a local made a difference especially with improving the language skills.

Nowadays getting to know people from other corners of the world is made a lot easier by internet. A lot of the expatriates confessed upon using internet in making new contacts in the new environment. As Beijing and China were the environment for the conducted study, Facebook and censorship must be mentioned. Facebook is one of the most common ways of communication nowadays and meeting new friends and staying in contact with the old ones it is made a lot easier by Facebook. However when travelling to China one must be prepared for the fact that Facebook is a banned website due to governmental censorship and one must be prepared for alternative methods of communication.

Beijing has a large community of expatriates and special meetings for expatriates are arranged quite often. There are also several magazines, such as Beijinger and Times Out Beijing, published especially for the expatriates living in the city. The magazines are there to inform about the current happenings in the city. One of the interns had a lot of contact with the Catalonian Community of Beijing and they had meetings and happenings organized regu-

larly, especially during their national holidays, being able to meet people from similar cultural background and being able to speak the language of his home country made him feel more content.

One of the respondents decided to drop the internship already after three months. He was the only intern not attending Chinese language lessons and this could be one of the reasons he had problems in getting adapted into the culture. During the interview the intern acknowledged the inability to adjust to the Chinese work culture and admitted that the work was not exactly what he expected – these were the main reasons for him to finish his contract at the hotel.

Reverse culture shock was also experienced and found as an issue in the research. First was the initial feeling of happiness of being able to return home and seeing friend and family however after that, the case that the former expatriate started to miss the country and hoping to return. Even previous researches have proven that upon arriving to the home country the expatriate has to realize that they have missed the life back at home and the fact that the family and friends may have also changed during the newcomer's time abroad.

The hotel manager of the case company hotel offered several advices for the interns working at the hotel. During the interview he told what gets him through the bad day:

"I like to look for the contradictions and humorous side of living overseas - not in a negative way, but just things that make you smile like the hairdresser on the street, some of the strange translations, some of the awful souvenirs and the strange motorbike taxis and so on This is the normal way of life for many Chinese and you get used to it very quickly. However, you do need to go home, wherever that is, and get a dose of something familiar every so often, to re-charge your batteries! You can counter-act this by celebrating the differences and enjoying the things which are familiar - which is the absolute best approach for anyone travelling anywhere away from their home country. What to do? Just accept that you're having a bad day: get through it and tomorrow will be better!"

Following the research the results from the interviews and observations can be dived into three main factors that cause culture shock:

1. Cultural misunderstandings
2. The language and fear of contact
3. Hierarchical differences

A very practical way to get more adjusted in to new culture is to attain as much information as possible about the country and culture. Some of the interns explained using internet to search information about Beijing and Chinese culture before and during the internship.

In order for expatriates to cope with the realities of culture shock, it is advised to use these three strategies:

1. Communication: Share the feelings of discomfort with someone
2. Routine: Keep a regular routine similar to one in the home country
3. Search for information: Not just seeing how something is done but also understanding why it is done

The core principle of training is to continue to cooperatively share knowledge, experiences and passion in order to develop high levels of competence in interpretation and other skills that are throughout the work environment (Lee-Ross and Price 2010). The last part of results summarizes the content analyze results as the interviewed noted several actions taken at the hotel to have positive impact upon adapting to a new culture:

1. Provide services to meet the needs of the expatriates and make sure they are aware of the services available.
2. Offer language training
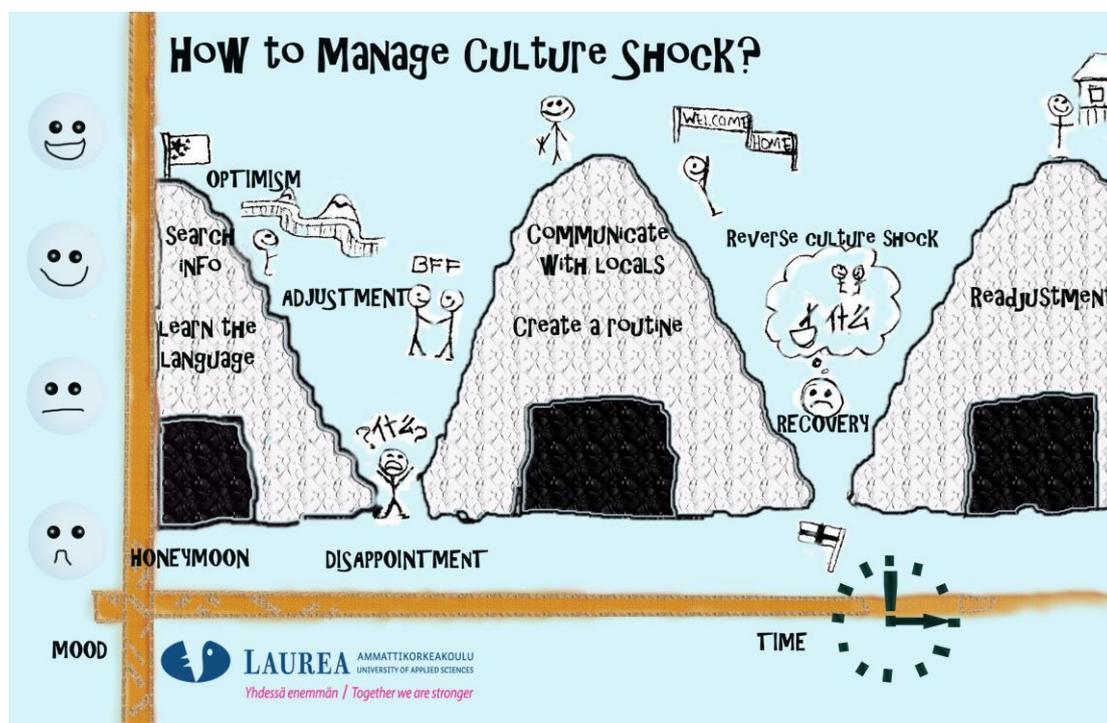3. Train personnel in cross-cultural understanding

Figure 3. Final Poster: The Rice Cake -Curve of Cultural Adjustment (Hirvelä 2015).

Figure 3 describes the process of cultural adjustment and offers recommendations on how to deal with culture shock. The results and guidelines presented in this chapter are also shown in the figure. The vertical line describes the mood of the expatriate and the direct line is a timeline. The Curve itself is drawn as three rice cakes and it describes how time affects the mood of the expatriate. Inside the "rice cakes" one can find the adaption recommendations for the expatriate. The drawings in the poster demonstrate the different adjustment stages.

8   Conclusions and Discussion

Global corporations face numerous challenges in managing their international workforces and understanding better how corporate culture influences the results in higher quality service delivery. Learning how to manage and encounter culture shock is a significant challenge in multi-cultural work environments as companies have found cross-cultural teamwork to be both rewarding and challenging. Only relatively recently workforce has been evolving to adapt and research the addition of culture as a factor on top of individual differences. Previous research has shown that a good understanding of one's own culture, values, attitudes and behaviors – including communication behavior –is the best foundation for developing the ability to understand the communication behavior of people from other countries and cultures.

Culture shock is one of the most common symptoms a foreign traveler encounters and in order to survive culture shock and to make adapting to a new culture a little bit easier this research was made. To learn about different cultures it is necessary to learn how to recognize cultural differences, understand how cultural factors influence behavior and to implement strategies that successfully target certain culture groups. Culture shock has an adverse effect on intercultural interaction as the social communication becomes less effective. The focus of this research was on how to identify and diminish the effects of culture shock while encountering a new and different culture. The case company included in the study is located in Beijing.

Chinese economy is growing as is the importance of Chinese language and culture in business situations and to react to this it is significant to learn more about Chinese culture especially in the field of hospitality. Nowadays the number of Chinese tourists is growing and Chinese are becoming the number one consumer worldwide. According to some future studies China is expected to become the number one destination for tourism in 2020 (Lockwood and Medlik 2001, 179). Quickly developing Beijing is the capital of China and despite the copious pool of labor in China, skilled workers versed in modern business practices are scarce. Most companies have to employ managers and personnel from abroad to start up their operations. Espe-

cially a lot of young people head abroad to study or for better work opportunities. Being able to adapt to a new culture faster makes the daily life for an expatriate a lot easier

The research conducted for this thesis was to study and find managing solutions to culture shock. The research was built on the basis of the main research question: "What is culture shock and how can it be managed?" The location of the constructed study and field work was in Beijing. The main research method was qualitative and the data for the study was gathered during Fall 2014. The results of the study are based on the author's observations at the hotel and on the part-structural theme interviews of five western employees working at the case hotel. Questions from the interviews were used to determine the feelings and attitudes of this sample of international employees during the period of their work experience in Beijing.

The research indicated and defined Culture Shock as a state of uncertainty and discomfort a person encounters while adjusting into a different culture. Following the research the results from the interviews and observations can be summarized into three main factors that cause culture shock: cultural misunderstandings, the language and fear of contact and hierarchical differences. For the concentration of the research certain aspects of Chinese culture are not included in the research as gathering information about China is made more difficult by the governmental censorship and the fact that lot of the information is found only in Chinese. It also needs to be noted that collecting information through observation gathers for the need of objectivity and cultural sensitivity from the observer which affects the validity of the research. The main problem with participate observation is that even if the research would be repeated it would be unlikely that the results would be hundred percent the same.

The research indicated that In order for expatriates to cope with the realities of culture shock, it is important to communicate, maintain a routine and search actively for information. The research specified that communicating plays a big role in adjusting to a new culture – both learning how to communicate with locals and staying in touch with friends and family back at home. Also the Chinese language plays a big part in Chinese culture as Mandarin is one of the main keys on understanding Chinese culture better. The research indicated that learning Chinese language made a difference in adjusting to the Chinese culture. Another method for an expatriate to help adjust faster to Chinese culture was to maintain a certain routine in order to help the expatriate adjust to the daily life in a foreign country. The expatriates working in Beijing adapted faster when maintaining the same routine as in their home countries. A big importance was also on enjoying familiar things that one would at home, like eating familiar food or celebrating cultural events. Third method to help in adjustment was the active search for information as being able to adapt into a new culture is easier when one understands the culture better: It is helpful to understand the issue of face and how guangxi works in Chinese business.

The interviewed also noted that several actions taken by the hotel management had a positive impact upon adapting to a new culture: Providing services to meet the needs of the expatriates and making sure they are aware of the services available, offering language training and training personnel in cross-cultural understanding. Most people who move into a different culture from their own, experience culture shock. It can be concluded that all the respondents working at the case study hotel experienced some form of culture shock.

Managing culture shock and adapting to a new culture depends also on individuals and on their past experiences. Most respondents to the interview encountered Asian and especially Chinese culture for the first time and thus were not familiar with the culture and environment. Just adapting to a new work place by itself is already something that can cause symptoms of the culture shock: new working environment and new working tasks. Chinese culture is very different from Western one and adjusting fully can seem impossible. The research was conducted as the author worked as an intern in a hotel in Beijing and realized the effects of culture shock first hand. The research and the presented results work as guidelines for those who are considering entering Chinese culture and for those looking for ways to deal with culture shock.

9   Reflection on Professional Development

The research was made possible by the author's interest on different cultures and cultural differences. The author was offered a scholarship for an internship place in China and applied for a position of management trainee in a hotel located in Beijing. This is why the country and culture that was decided as a research destination was picked out to be Beijing and China. The author had previous experiences on travelling and studying in Asia which made China an intriguing choice as a research destination. Culture and multiculturalism are widely researched present-day subjects that offer a lot of possibilities for research. China is a growing economy with a huge population so searching information on Chinese culture is of importance.

Collecting research data proofed to be quite easy as the researcher worked and lived in Beijing for the period of six months. As a result of six months of observations there was numerous amounts of notes and diary entries which made the analyzing of primary data challenging. Deciding on what information is relevant for the sake of the research and what is not proofed to be most challenging. There is also a large amount of previous research on culture and culture shock which required critical thinking while creating the theoretical frames for the research.

The process of combining the empirical research and the theoretical background seemed difficult in the beginning. However the researcher felt that once getting started the process became more interesting and rewarding. The poster of W-Curve was created as a creative by-product of the thesis for the use of Laurea University of Applied Sciences by a suggestion of a teacher. As the researcher enjoys learning about different cultures the process of research proofed to be a good and educational experience. The researcher definitely learned lot about Chinese culture and cultural differences and developed her professional skills in constructing a research. However if the researcher would conduct the same research again she would concentrate more on the difference that the specific hotel adds to the research and spend more time observing the phenomenon of culture shock as six months is quite a short time. The author also underestimated how time consuming the analyzing process of the research results turned out to be.

There are hundreds of hotels in Beijing some of which are strictly under Chinese management. To further continue the research, it should be repeated in different hotels in Beijing as the effect of the current hotel and their international cross-management might differ from other hotels. This would make the operational differences inside the hotel clearer. This would make it easier for the future expatriates to adapt into the new culture especially in hospitality industry. Another method would be to construct the same interview after the expatriates have stayed in Beijing for a further period of time and see how their attitudes and views have changed and developed.

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Figures

Figure 1. The U-Curve and W-curve of cultural change, adaption and adjustment over time. (Gullahorn J.E and Gullahorn J.T. 1963. An extension of the U-Curve hypothesis. Journal of Social Issues 19(3): 33-47.

Figure 2. Draft of the final poster: The Rice Cake- Curve of Cultural Adjustment. Hirvelä H. 2015.

Figure 3. Final Poster: The Rice Cake- Curve of Cultural Adjustment. Hirvelä H. 2015.

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Interview with the Hotel Manager of the Case Company**Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

How long have you worked/lived in China? Describe your work experience in China.

- 8 years in total: 1 1/2 years in Shenyang : 4 years in Shanghai & 3 1/2 years in Beijing.
- Work experience?
- Each city / region is quite different. Tier 1 cities - Shanghai / Beijing people have different outlooks than Tier 2 - Shenyang & are a bit more civilized / cultured.
- The job of running a hotel is the same wherever you are - only the culture, business model & local environment are different. That gives you confidence that you can add value.
- The best approach is to share what you know with the local team - & learn from them what you don't know - & focus on making your hotel as successful as possible.
- Young Chinese people especially are very similar in many ways to Western people - they will work out whether you're a good, professional person very quickly. Treat them with respect & give clear direction & opportunities to grow / develop,

What kind of problems did you have while adjusting to the Chinese culture?

- Food - no
- Language - no (just take time to make sure people really have understood what you are say-ing)
- Difference between directive & consultative management styles - yes. Directive is not my natural style - but is what most Chinese are used to from school & University.
- Way of doing business - yes. Little forward planning, with everything being done at the last minute. I like to try & be more organized!
- Helps a lot to show genuine interest in people, do your best to fix any problems as quickly as you can, understand the issue of face / respect (different in the West) &, finally, understand how guangxi (relationships) work in Chinese business.

When did you start to feel adjusted to the culture?

- Not sure that you ever feel 100% adjusted - there's always things that happen to surprise you!
- In my case, probably after 1 x year, when I had seen the full cycle of a typical Chinese year.

Do you think you experience/d culture shock? How does/did it manifest?

- In my case, probably no - which was helped by the fact that I had worked overseas before (not in China, but in Malaysia, which has a significant Chinese population)

- I guess it manifests by just overwhelming you & making you feel totally out of your depth, where everything is completely foreign / alien.

- I like to look for the contradictions & humorous side of living overseas - not in a negative way, but just things that make you smile (the hairdresser on the street / some of the strange translations / some of the awful souvenirs / the strange motorbike taxis etc etc).

- This is the normal way of life for many Chinese & you get used to it very quickly. However, you do need to go home (wherever that is) & get a dose of something familiar every so often, to re-charge your batteries!

What kind of advice would you give to those moving in to China and experiencing culture shock?

- You can counter-act this by celebrating the differences & enjoying the things which are familiar - which is the absolute best approach for anyone travelling anywhere away from their home country.

- What to do? Just accept that you're having a bad day: get through it & tomorrow will be better!