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**THE IMPACT OF SERVICESCAPES ON THE PRE-CONSUMPTION AUTHENTICITY**

**ASSESSMENTS OF ETHNIC-ORIENTED SERVICES**

A Dissertation in

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by

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## ABSTRACT

Authenticity, typically defined as being genuine, real, or true (Taylor, 1991), plays an essential role in the consumption of both goods and services (Jacknis, 1990; Lowenthal, 1992; Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Consumers think of the objects and services they perceive as authentic as having a deeper meaning and more value than those they see as inauthentic (Carroll & Wheaton, 2009; Frazier et al., 2009). This study investigates customers' pre-consumption authenticity perceptions and consequent patronage intention, in the context of ethnic oriented services.

This study proposes that the servicescape offers customers easily accessible cues based on which they make authenticity assessments. The three key elements of the servicescape--- physical setting, service providers, and other customers, each convey ethnic orientation. Furthermore, the impact of servicescape cues on authenticity perceptions depends on the ethnic group to which a given consumer belongs—whether she/he belongs to a society's majority ethnic group or to the referent ethnic group.

This study's empirical investigation comprised one pilot study and one main study applying a between-subjects experimental design. The hypotheses were tested in Chinese restaurants in the US. The results suggest that servicescape dimensions can induce pre-consumption authenticity perceptions of service offerings and that the dimensional cues interplay to affect authenticity assessments. A customer's ethnicity affects how she/he interprets servicescape cues and, therefore, his/her authenticity

assessment. Furthermore, perceived authenticity increases patronage intentions among ethnic customers but does so among mainstream customers only when they are already relatively familiar with the ethnic-oriented service.

This dissertation contributes to our empirical understanding of authenticity assessments. The findings presented are of both theoretical and practical significance.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The idea of authenticity, typically used to describe something considered to be genuine, real, or true (Bendix, 1992; Berger, 1973; Taylor, 1991; Trilling, 1972), plays an essential role in Western culture (Jacknis, 1990; Lowenthal, 1992). The search for authenticity is manifest everywhere in Western society (Berger, 1973; MacCannell, 1973) and has become an increasingly important concern in the face of the mass production that mitigates against the production of originals in contemporary society (Leigh et al., 2006; Rose & Wood, 2006). For both goods and services, the consumer demand for authenticity has persisted for hundreds of years such that the social and economic importance of authenticity is firmly established (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). An object or service perceived as authentic carries deeper meaning and value for those who consume it (Carroll & Wheaton, 2009; Frazier et al., 2009).

The meaning of authenticity has been the subject of ongoing debate in a wide array of situations relevant to daily consumption (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). Authenticity can be viewed in various ways, depending on what is evaluated and under what circumstances (Grayson, 2002). For example, the idea of authenticity can refer to a place that has historical meanings and/or represents certain cultures (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; MacCannell, 1973; ), a brand that presents ideal production standards and prestige (Brown et al., 2003; Leigh et al., 2006), or an experience that enables

people to find their true selves (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Wang, 1999). In this dissertation, the theoretical meaning of authenticity is in relation to the “type authenticity” of market offerings. Type authenticity indicates that a product or service offering is true to its type, genre, or category; e.g., a Japanese restaurant is indeed a Japanese restaurant rather than a steakhouse (Carroll & Wheaton, 2009). Based on Carroll and Wheaton (2009), type authenticity is one of the classical meanings of authenticity and a fundamental attribute that consumers care about. Research has shown the marketplace significance of authentic market offerings such as art crafts (Belk & Costa, 1998; Bentor, 1993), cuisines (Lu & Fine, 1995), brewing (Beverland et al., 2008), tourism sites (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Handler & Gable, 1997), souvenirs (Costa & Bamossy, 1995; Harkin, 1995) or the brand itself (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Leigh et al., 2006). Consumers tend to have more favorable perceptions of market offerings they consider authentic and are willing to pay more for them and/or engage in loyalty behavior (Chhabra et al., 2003; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010).

However, the authenticity of market offerings has not received sufficient attention in consumer research, especially with regard to consumer assessment and evaluation criteria (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Stern, 1994). Instead of occurring naturally, “authenticity” is often constructed, i.e., commercial organizations seek to give the appearance of it (Boorstin, 1961; Brown et al., 2003; Carroll & Wheaton, 2009; Goffman, 1959; Hughes, 1995; MacCannell, 1973). Therefore, an understanding of how consumers assess authenticity is of both theoretical and practical significance. Any assessment of authenticity is not only a complex perceptual process (Belk & Costa,

1998; Penaloza, 2001) but is also contingent on the specific consumption context (Beverland et al., 2008; Cohen, 1988; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Rose & Wood, 2005; Thompson et al., 2006). Different definitions of authenticity will entail different evaluation criteria for authenticity assessments. The central concern of the present research is consumers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services when making patronage decisions.

Increasing globalization means that most nations are now multiethnic, and thus the importance of ethnic-oriented services has exploded. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2008), nearly one third of the population in the US is minority, with Hispanics/Latinos accounting for 15%, Black/African Americans for 13 %; and Asians for 5 %. The growth in the number of ethnic minorities has provided commercial interests to ethnic entrepreneurs who have the knowledge to meet the special needs and preferences of ethnic consumers (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990). More and more companies are targeting their services such as dining, beauty care, health care, transportation, and banking towards ethnic groups. For example, Koreans in the U.S. can dine in Korean restaurants, open a bank account with Korean banks that have opened branches in the US, visit beauty salons and health clinics practiced by Korean professionals. Furthermore, these ethnic-oriented services often attract, and are accepted by, customers who are outside the referent ethnic customer group, the so-called "ethnic crossover" (Grier et al., 2006). For example, Chinese restaurants have become popular in the US and often rely primarily on the mainstream market to

succeed (Lu & Fine, 1995). To successfully market ethnic-oriented services, an understanding of both mainstream and referent ethnic customers is essential.

In general, (type) authenticity is essential in the context of ethnic-oriented services, as it can make a strong appeal to consumers (Grier et al., 2006). Ideally, the service should be considered genuine by its referent ethnicity and is reflective of the cultural experience of that ethnic minority group. The authenticity assessment begins during the consumer's decision-making phase of where to obtain the service. Yet, most services are high in experience qualities and offer customers a very limited amount of information that they can use in assessing service attributes before purchasing and consuming services (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001b; Zeithaml et al., 2009). Consumers can only assess exact service characteristics and quality after their actual consumption.

This dissertation proposes that the servicescape, or the environment where the service exchange occurs, offers fairly obvious cues based on which consumers make their authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services when making patronage decisions. A servicescape is a man-made physical environment (e.g., Arnould et al., 1998; Babin & Attaway, 2000; Bitner, 1992; Kotler, 1973) and can include social elements such as service providers and other customers (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003). Previous research has demonstrated the significant impact that servicescapes can have on consumer inferences about service characteristics (e.g., Baker, 1987; Eze & Harris, 2007; Lin, 2004; Reimer & Kuehn, 2005). The three key elements in the servicescape—physical setting, service providers and other customers—can each convey the ethnic orientation of service offerings to different levels. The goal of this

research is to understand how consumers use ethnic-related cues present in a servicescape to assess authenticity, and how their assessments affect patronage intention.

Furthermore, this dissertation proposes that the importance of servicescape cues for authenticity perceptions is contingent on the identity of the consumers—that is, whether the customer belongs to the mainstream (the majority in the society) or the referent ethnic group (the ethnic group of customers whom the service is targeting). Essentially, a customer's authenticity assessment emerges from his/her personal experiences (Cohen, 1988; Lu & Fine, 1995), and/or from the customer's projection of fantasies, stereotypes, and/or expectations (Bruner, 1994). Thus, different customers will have different ideas about what constitutes authenticity in any given context. Mainstream and referent ethnic customers have different levels of knowledge about ethnic-oriented service offerings, and thus can be expected to differ in their interpretations of and reliance on specific servicescape cues to assess authenticity.

Consumer characteristics not only affect authenticity assessments but also consumers' intentions to try ethnic-oriented services, particularly among mainstream consumers (Grier et al., 2006). This study proposes that cosmopolitanism, an individual trait defined as an interest in other cultures, will affect mainstream customers' intentions to purchase authentic ethnic-oriented services. Cosmopolitans want to know about other cultures without necessarily leaving his/her country of origin (Cleveland & Laroche, 2006; Hannerz, 1990).

Note that for non-referent ethnic customers (ethnic minority whom the ethnic-services are not targeting), the literature suggests that they would have similar responses to ethnic-oriented products as mainstream customers (e.g. Green 1999; Grier & Brumbaugh, 1999; Stayman & Deshpande, 1989). Yet, this study focuses its empirical investigation and discussion on different responses between mainstream and referent ethnic customer segment.

### **Statement of Purpose and Research Questions**

This study aims to examine customers' authenticity assessments of service offerings based on various cues in environments in which processes relating to services take place (the servicescape), and their consequent patronage intentions, in the context of ethnic-oriented services in the US. The servicescape cues examined in this research include physical elements (e.g., ambience and decorations with ethnic themes) together with social elements (e.g., the ethnicities of service providers and other customers). The extent to which the referent ethnic customers and mainstream American customers evince similar responses and different responses is investigated. This dissertation, however, does not examine the responses of non-referent ethnic customers (i.e., how ethnic Japanese customers evaluate Chinese restaurants in the US).

To summarize, four research questions will be addressed:

1. What ethnic-associated cues in the servicescape are likely to influence the authenticity assessment of service offerings?
2. How do referent ethnic customers and mainstream customers differ in the criteria they use in making authenticity assessments?
3. Do customers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented service offerings have a positive influence on their patronage intentions?
4. How does an individual-level trait, specifically cosmopolitanism, influence mainstream customers' willingness to patronize the perceived authentically ethnic-oriented services?

## **Contributions of the Research**

### **Theoretical Contributions**

The current research is of both theoretical and practical significance. First, this dissertation contributes to knowledge about customers' authenticity perceptions by empirically investigating the key evaluation criteria that customers use when making patronage decisions. The authenticity of market offerings has received insufficient attention in consumer research, especially regarding consumer assessment and evaluation criteria (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Stern, 1994). Beverland and Farrelly (2010) stated that research needs to address how consumers reconcile competing interpretations of what is authentic. Given that extant research discusses authenticity

mostly in a conceptual and qualitative way (e.g., Hughes, 1995; MacCannell, 1976; Taylor, 2001; Urry, 1992; Wang, 1999), a systematic empirical investigation of the quantitative properties of authenticity assessments will provide methodological triangulation. By applying the servicescape framework and experimental design, this study theoretically consolidates our knowledge about consumers' evaluations of authenticity.

Second, this study contributes to our understanding of ethnic crossover—how a product/service originally designed for a specific ethnic minority group comes to be accepted by mainstream and non-referent customers. Empirical research about ethnic crossover is relatively scant and needs more scholarly attention (Grier et al., 2006). In as much as authenticity is an inference that marketers intend for consumers to make about ethnic-oriented products (Watts & Orbe, 2002), the present study's inquiry into consumers' authenticity assessments advances theoretical knowledge about the ethnic crossover phenomenon.

Third, this research will help offer more information about consumer behavior during the choice or pre-consumption stage. The literature tends to discuss authenticity during the consumption and/or post-consumption stages; therefore, the present study's emphasis on the importance of authenticity during the choice stage has the potential to offer information that has not yet been presented elsewhere. As consumers generally seek authenticity despite having different motivations such as feeling in control, connected or virtuous (Beverland et al., 2008; Beverland & Farrelly, 2010), perceived authenticity may be an antecedent to purchase intentions. The

present study examines authenticity assessments prior to actual consumption and measures purchase intentions.

### **Managerial Contributions**

This dissertation also contributes on a practical level to the marketing and management of services. First, the empirical examination of consumers' authenticity assessments turns the relatively abstract notion of authenticity into a more concrete design guideline for companies. The search for authentic experiences is manifest everywhere in our society, and thus authenticity has become a potential resource for attracting customers (Lu & Fine, 1995; MacCannell, 1973). Successfully managing consumers' perceptions of authenticity is critical to ensuring the viability of an enterprise. To differentiate itself from its competitors, any given service company needs to emphasize the distinctive quality of the servicescape and service performance it provides. Findings presented in this dissertation, therefore, can help service companies create a service environment that customers will be more likely to consider authentic and thus be more likely to patronize than if they had reached the opposite conclusion.

Second, this study's comparison of the consumer responses of referent ethnic customers and those of mainstream customers can help cultural entrepreneurs, who use ethnicity as a vital part of their selling point of services/products, to design appropriate target marketing strategies. Cultural entrepreneurs often face challenges in their efforts to strategically create "exotic" encounters for mainstream customers

while keeping that experience within the boundaries of the cultural expectations of referent ethnic groups. For example, what Americans perceive to be an authentic Mexican restaurant can appear inauthentic for Mexicans. Therefore, the preferences of different segments of customers affect the strategic choices of management. Findings from this research can help cultural entrepreneurs to determine which kinds of customers to target and to establish marketing strategies that address the general concerns and interests of that customer base as they pertain to purchase decisions.

### **Summary**

This dissertation examines the impact of the servicescape on customers' pre-consumption authenticity assessments of service offerings from ethnic-oriented services. Drawing from the literature on authenticity assessments and servicescapes, this research investigates how physical and social elements in the service setting serve as ethnic-associated cues for making type authenticity perceptions as to whether the service offerings belong to the ethnic group on which they make their claim. Note that the impact of servicescape cues on authenticity assessments may be different depending on ethnic groups to which customers belong. A customer's authenticity assessment prior to consumption may affect his/her purchase intentions. In addition to perceived authenticity, the individual trait of cosmopolitanism will affect mainstream customers' intentions to purchase ethnic-oriented services.

The following chapter provides a review of the literature in consumer research and social sciences research relevant to the topic of this dissertation. The theoretical framework and research hypotheses are also presented. Chapter III covers the methodology and results of the pilot test. Chapter IV and Chapter V present the methodology and findings from the main study, and Chapter VI and Chapter VII present a discussion of the results, their implications, and the future research directions they suggest.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Overview**

This dissertation investigates the influence of servicescape elements on consumers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services prior to actual consumption. In this chapter, the theoretical background of the framework and hypothesized relationships are discussed. The first section introduces the concept of authenticity in service consumption. The second section reviews the current theory pertaining to the cues on which consumers draw in making their authenticity assessments. And, the third section discusses the servicescape approach to authenticity assessment. After introducing the background literature on servicescapes, I propose the impact of specific servicescape cues (physical setting, presence of service providers, and presence of patronizing customers) on authenticity assessment, along with a consideration of the ethnic group to which the focal customer belongs. The fourth section is about the marketing implications of consumers' authenticity assessments, which contains customer responses to authentic market offerings and the influence of individual traits on responses.

### **Authenticity in Service Consumption**

The idea of authenticity, typically used to describe something considered to be genuine, real, or true, is considered to be one of marketing's central themes (Brown, 2001; Rudinow, 1994; Taylor, 1991). The search for authentic experience is manifest everywhere in contemporary society, whether as a search for self, as a leisure experience such as music, or in material purchases (Berger, 1973; Fine, 2003; MacCannell, 1973). Underlying reasons include the fact that more immigrants have established roots and communities within a nation (in this case the US) (Eco, 1986), the growing prevalence of pseudo-events and media constructions (Boorstin, 1964), the predominance of mass production and globalization (Cheng 2004; Orvell 1989; Rose & Wood, 2005), and personal motivations to acquire social approval and confer status (Carroll & Wheaton, 2009; Spooner, 1986).

In the consumption of both goods and services, consumer demand for authenticity has persisted and has had a profound influence on the marketplace for hundreds of years (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Authenticity indeed has become a synonym for good and quality and has an almost sacred value (Frazier et al., 2009; Kivy, 1995). Authenticity affects markets through price, organizational dynamics, and consumption patterns (Carroll & Wheaton, 2009). However, compared to authenticity that has been researched in other fields, such as anthropology, geography, philosophy, communication, and archaeology, authenticity in consumer research terms is still not

very well understood (Penaloza, 2000). This is especially the case in the domain of service consumption.

### **Theoretical Perspectives on Authenticity**

Consumers understand authenticity in different ways depending on what is being evaluated and under what conditions (Baugh, 1988; Hughes, 1995). Literature from various disciplines investigates authenticity from objective, constructive, or post-modern approaches.

#### *Objective view*

An objective view of authenticity states that reality does exist and is distinct from reproduction. Authenticity, therefore, implies all that is original, unadulterated, without hypocrisy, and honest, such as a piece of art in a museum (Relph 1976; Trilling, 1972). The authenticity of an object or experience can be evaluated using absolute, objective criteria to conclude its degree of originality without controversies (Boorstin, 1964, Leigh et al., 2006; MacCannell, 1973; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Stewart, 1993). This point of view, which begins by accepting that an undisputable reality exists, has been contested by the rise of other philosophical movements such as constructivism and postmodernism as introduced in the following sections. In practical terms, an original object is very rare in modern society, as commodification makes everything reproducible and copies are merely additional instances of the same work (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Sternberg, 1999).

*Subjective/constructive view*

Conversely, most scholars who study authenticity agree that authenticity is not an attribute inherent in an object, but rather is better understood as an assessment made by a particular evaluator in a particular context (Bruner, 1994; Cohen, 1988; DeLyser, 1999; Haslam, 1985). Such viewpoints are rooted in a constructive or interpretive approach to human inquiry whose ontological assumption is that no unique real world exists independent of human mental activity and symbolic language (Bruner, 1986; Schwandt, 1994). Thus, researchers who adopt a constructivist approach view authenticity as involving a range of different meanings and different acceptable models, all of which represent authentic experience (Lu & Fine, 1995). Sometimes, customers prefer their subjective illusions about what is authentic no matter what objective characteristics exist that contradict their views (Cohen 1988; Lu & Fine, 1995). Thus, authenticity, according to this view, is appropriately conceptualized as negotiable from personal experiences and interpretation rather than as a fixed objective reality.

*Post-modern/existential view*

From the post-modernist perspective, a differentiation between false and true is irrelevant because there is no original to which one can turn for a reference (Baudrillard, 1983; Eco, 1986; Sternberg, 1999). Today's world is a simulation, a Disneyland, that juxtaposes the real and the fake (Fjellman, 1992). With the aid of technology, things can appear so authentic that they achieve a state of hyper-reality,

such that consumers are actually pursuing “genuine fakes” (Brown, 1996; McCrone et al., 1995). The postmodernist view, which disregards the idea that meanings of authenticity are intrinsic to things, paves the way to defining existential authenticity in consumption—a state of being true to one’s self. Scholars holding views of existential authenticity argue that consumers are seeking their own authentic selves when engaging in consumption activities, regardless of whether market offerings are authentic or not. For example, tourist activities can activate personal or intersubjective feelings, making people feel themselves to be more authentic and self-expressive than in everyday life (Neumann 1992; Wang, 1999). Reality television programs provide fantasy elements through which viewers can connect their lives to the action on screen, and so create a form of self-referential hyper-authenticity (Rose & Wood, 2005).

In sum, the objectivist view bases its authenticity assessments on facts, the subjectivist bases its assessments on feelings. Despite post-modernist attempts to bury the notion of authentic market offerings, I consider it to be another level of authenticity that addresses the issue of searching for self. Consumer demand for authenticity is reflected in the purchase of a wide variety of product and service offerings (e.g., Bentor, 1993; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Handler & Gable, 1997; Lu & Fine, 1995). Furthermore, the appeal of authenticity has not been diminished by technological advances (Dolliver, 2001). In fact, researchers have found a multiplicity of meanings associated with authenticity; authentic market offerings are an important mechanism for consumers to experience true self (e.g., Beverland & Farrelly, 2010;

Leigh, et al., 2006; Kolar & Zabar, 2006). Therefore, the notion of authenticity is still important in market offerings.

This dissertation primarily addresses the perceived authenticity of market offerings prior to actual consumption rather than focusing on existential authenticity (experiencing the true self). The true self tends to be experienced through services that induce flow (the unity between thought and action), intense joy and active customer participation such as adventurous activities and cultural tourism (Arnould & Price, 2000). Consequently, the idea of experiencing the true self is limited to certain types of services that are beyond the scope of this dissertation.

### **Typology of Authenticity**

In addition to epistemological views, authenticity can be classified according to a typology. Scholars have used different terms when describing the types of authenticity that consumers generally use to evaluate organizations or marketing offerings. In general, those discussions consider either type authenticity or moral authenticity.

#### *Type Authenticity*

Type authenticity indicates that something is true to its type (or genre or category) (Carroll & Wheaton, 2009). For example, Outback is a steakhouse as it claims, rather than a Japanese restaurant. The notion of “true-to-type” authenticity is very broad, encompassing most of the authenticity types to which scholars refer with

regard to market offerings. For example, this term can be extended to advanced knowledge, skills, and materials used in a craft, “craft authenticity” (Carroll & Wheaton, 2009), to artistic integrity and merit, “creativity authenticity” (Jones & Smith, 2005), and to commitments to traditions and places of origin (Beverland et al., 2008).

### *Moral Authenticity*

The second classical meaning of authenticity is “moral authenticity,” which conveys moral meaning about the values and choices associated with an object (Beverland et al., 2008; Carroll & Wheaton, 2009). Consumers seeking moral authenticity focus on choosing brands that in their opinions are focused on offering genuine goods and services. Examples include companies that market themselves as selling products out of the love of craft rather than for financial rewards (Beverland et al., 2008) and performers who refuse to “sell out” for commercial interests (Taylor, 1997). Moral authenticity can also be extended to employees’ behavior such as authentic smiles (e.g., Grandey et al., 2005; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006) and genuine, unpretending behavior (e.g., Schaefer & Pettijohn, 2006; Winsted, 1999).

This dissertation focuses on the consumers’ perceptions of the type authenticity of ethnic-oriented services prior to actual consumption. Business owners of ethnic-oriented services usually claim that their services belong to a specific ethnic group either through explicit marketing messages (e.g., we are a Japanese hair salon) or through the choice of services offered (e.g., Japanese hair straightening). Elements

in the servicescape provide cues based on which customers can infer the claimed ethnic type authenticity. Moral authenticity, however, would be hard for potential customers to evaluate prior to purchase, unless media reports about how specific companies conduct their businesses are available. As the literature suggests, type authenticity can be examined from both objective perspectives and subjective perspectives (Beverland et al., 2008; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Leigh et al., 2006).

### **Authenticity in Different Service Consumption Contexts**

Although the importance of authenticity to consumption experiences has been established in the literature, theoretical investigations in the services context are relatively scant. As Peterson (2005) noted, authenticity is not equally important in all contexts. In the domain of service consumption, travel and hospitality are the industries in which authenticity plays an important role.

#### *Tourism consumption*

Tourism consumption, which has emerged as a part of consumers' quests for authentic experience (MacCannell, 1976), is a context in which authenticity is particularly highlighted and has given rise to divergent theoretical discussions. Some travelers want to share in the real life of the places they visit, or at least to see life as it is really lived in a given locale (Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 1973). Tourism researchers have examined authenticity in relation to cultural/tourism sites (e.g., Goulding, 2000;

Grayson & Martinec, 2004), participation in events (e.g., festivals) (Chhabra et al., 2003) and souvenir/merchandise shopping (Chhabra, 2005; Littrell et al., 1993).

The issue of authenticity in tourism generally refers to the authenticity of toured objects and tour events, or the authenticity of tourist experiences. Though tourism researchers generally agree that authentic toured objects contribute to authentic tourist experiences, the ontological treatment of toured objects is contestable. Researchers adopting an objective approach think that original toured objects and events do exist and are not authentic when reproduced (e.g., Boorstin 1964; MacCannell 1973; Relph 1976; Theobald, 1998). Relatively more researchers, though, have adopted a constructivist approach, to argue that authenticity involves a range of different meanings depending on each tourist's definition, experience, and interpretation (Belhassen & Caton, 2006; Bruner 1994; Cohen 1988; Littrell et al. 1993; Pearce & Moscardo 1986; Redfoot 1984).

The conceptual debates between objective and constructive views of authenticity are seemingly resolved by the empirical investigations of tourism sites by Grayson and Martinec (2004). In accord with Peirce (1998), Grayson and Martinec (2004) refer to the objective view as "indexical authenticity" and the constructive view as "iconic authenticity." Surveys on visitors show that the features of tourist sites can affect evaluations of both indexical authenticity and iconic authenticity. In other words, objective authenticity and subjective authenticity are not mutually exclusive in market offerings. A lack of universal standards for authenticity assessments enables consumers to form different interpretations of authenticity, although consumers may

ultimately reach the similar level of perceived authenticity (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). Following the same rationale, this dissertation proposes that servicescape cues may induce an appearance of authenticity in service offerings that, in turn, encourages consumers to regard the offerings as authentic, through perceived evidence and /or subjective feelings.

### *Ethnic Dining*

More and more Americans evince an interest in ethnic dining, and this too may constitute a search for authentic experiences (Finkelstein 1989; Shelton 1990). While food is acknowledged to be an important factor contributing to authenticity perceptions (George, 2001, Munoz & Wood, 2009; Sukalakamala & Boyce, 2007), customers outside the referent ethnic group do not have the knowledge to determine whether the cuisine is authentic, and modifications to "native" cuisine and style of service have been shown to be necessary for the success of ethnic restaurants (e.g., the Americanization of Chinese food) (Lu & Fine, 1995). Scholarly discussion tends to focus on how authenticity can be created from the reality engineering of a themed environment, a process in which stereotypical design components are integrated to convey a feeling of ethnic culture (Beardsworth & Bryman, 1999; Lego et al., 2002; Solomon & Englis, 1994). Studies have been conducted on how companies construct environments that they hope will be perceived as authentic (e.g., Lego et al. 2002; Lu & Fine, 1995) and on consumers' picturing of an authentic restaurant and capabilities

in order to distinguish real (objectively authentic) from less authentic services (e.g., Ebster & Guist, 2004; Munoz et al., 2006; Munoz & Wood, 2009).

Relatively few studies have investigated authentic marketing offerings in other service consumption contexts. Featherman et al. (2006) investigated the authenticity of service offerings in e-service environments and recommend that website design features should infuse an effective degree of tangibility by displaying concrete evidence of the service to enhance authenticity perceptions. Other service contexts commonly examined include culture-oriented consumption that may overlap with tourism industries such as music (e.g., Maxwell, 1994; Peterson, 1997), museums (e.g., Chhabra, 2008; Trant, 1999) and education (e.g., Carver, 1996; Reay, 2002).

This dissertation investigates customers' authenticity perceptions in the context of ethnic-oriented dining services. Yet, several notable differences exist between previous studies and this dissertation. First of all, this study focuses on consumer perceptions in order to define service offerings as authentic or inauthentic and does not assume whether any restaurant can be considered objectively authentic or inauthentic. Studies by Ebster and Guist (2004) and Munoz et al. (2006) assumed that ethnic restaurants in a domestic context (e.g., Irish pubs in Ireland) are real and those in a foreign context (e.g., Irish pubs in Australia or the U.S.) are fake and tested whether customers could tell where service firms are located. Thus, authenticity assessments in this context are not really customer-oriented and the location of the service company serves as a very narrow and not particularly useful criterion for determining whether a service offering is authentic. Second, previous studies

examined the physical attributes of the service environment that customers use to evaluate authenticity and in doing so produced results that are fragmented and applicable only to a specific type of ethnic dining. For example, furniture, rugs, pottery, and art are interior elements in Mexico restaurants that are used to evoke a sense of authenticity (Munoz & Wood, 2009). Likewise, stonework, patterned fabrics, and wall-mounted lamps are important for Irish bars (Munoz et al., 2006). More comprehensive, dimension-based investigation that also includes social elements such as employees and other patrons would also help advance theoretical knowledge.

Third, these studies were qualitative or survey-based, and thus causal relationships between environmental attributes and authenticity perceptions cannot be assumed. Adopting an experimental design, the present study will help determine the influence of various servicescape dimensions with regard to authenticity assessments. Fourth, this dissertation addresses authenticity perceptions prior to actual consumption, which may be related to patronage intentions. Given the importance of having an online presence, servicescape cues are not only displayed in the physical service environment but also in the online environment. Consumers can easily acquire information about a firm's servicescape (e.g., through company websites, third-party review websites, or simply image searches) before deciding which service providers to patronize.

## **Assessment of Authenticity**

An assessment of authenticity is a complex perceptual process in which consumers use selective cues in order to make inferences (Belk & Costa 1998; Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Penaloza, 2000). Consumers rely on different cues to assess authenticity, which will lead to different perceived benefits (Beverland et al., 2008; Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Leigh et al., 2006). For example, pictures of craftspeople engaged in the production process will generate a sense of objective authenticity and provide consumers with an in situ guarantee of the genuine article (Beverland et al., 2008). Therefore, an understanding of which attributes drive the evaluation process is needed (Stern, 1994).

### **Cues for authenticity assessments**

Research studies have investigated which cues are most important to consumers' authenticity assessments, and different attributes are listed depending on the context. For example, physical characteristics and brand essence are primary cues for assessing the authenticity of retro-style brands (Brown et al., 2003). Uniqueness, originality, and workmanship are common cues for judging the authenticity of crafts (Littrell, et al., 1993; Yu & Littrell, 2003). Munoz et al. (2006) found that beyond the physical structure, the selection and placement of various cultural artifacts (e.g., artwork, photographs, newspaper clippings, beverage merchandise, and musical

instruments) contribute to the perceived authenticity of Irish pubs. Such attribute-based approaches are very context-specific.

A more systematic approach to examining authenticity assessments is category based, in which cues are classified based on their nature and their impact on authenticity assessments. Grayson and Martinec (2004) named indexical cues and iconic cues for authenticity assessment, with the former representing a factual or spatio-temporal link with something (objective authenticity) and the latter representing the phenomenological experience of one's senses or a general impression (subjective authenticity). Chalmers (2007) found that members of a distance-running group frequently discussed their authenticity perceptions with comments relating to iconic cues (e.g., experience of running) and indexical cues (e.g., historical running images). Beverland et al. (2008) and Beverland and Farrelly (2010) applied this classification to discussing the connection between consumption motivation and selection of cues. For example, consumers who want to feel in control would seek indexical cues about practicality, and those who want to feel connected would seek iconic cues about participating. Therefore, the classification of cues as either indexical or iconic appears to reflect consumers' use of different cues and provides a consolidated theoretical framework for discussing authenticity assessments.

Nevertheless, given that authenticity is socially constructed and negotiated through personal experiences and interpretations (Bruner, 1986; Schwandt, 1994), the categorization of a cue as indexical or iconic is not absolute. The categorization of cues

in extant literature is based more on the perspectives of researchers and is of much less concern to consumers. From the perspective of consumers, every cue has the potential to contribute to both objective and subjective authenticity perceptions (Grayson & Martinec, 2004), and indexicality can be achieved via iconicity (Beverland et al., 2008). This dissertation provides an alternative framework for examining authenticity assessment cues—the dimension-based servicescape approach that focuses on three key elements: the physical setting, the service contact employees, and the other customers. This overcomes the lack of systematic investigation that is characteristic of the attribute-based approach, and the subjective opinions often offered by researchers using the classification approach.

### **Individual Differences in Authenticity Perceptions**

The constructivist/subjective view of authenticity not only blurs the distinction between indexical and iconic cues, it also stresses individual differences in authenticity perceptions. Essentially authenticity is a quality perceived by individuals that emerges from their own personal experiences (Cohen, 1988; Lu & Fine, 1995), from projecting fantasies, stereotypes, and/or expectations (Bruner, 1994; Laxson, 1991; Silver, 1993), and/or from personal goals (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). Each person's judgment of authenticity is valid in its own right, no matter whether experts propose an opposite view from an objective perspective (Cohen, 1988). Littrell, Anderson, and Brown (1993) indicated that different tourists have different criteria for determining souvenir authenticity depending on their travel behavior and travel frequency. Waitt (2000)

stated that people differ in their ability to discriminate among elements that are necessary to authenticate a heritage product, and these differences vary according to each tourist's motivations, experience, and socioeconomic characteristics.

In addition to demographics and consumption contexts, consumer expertise has been an important moderator of authenticity assessments. Consumers equipped with expert knowledge make their evaluations through comparisons with their previous experiences (Fine, 1992); yet, those with little experience lack a comparative basis for questioning authenticity. Consumer expertise generally refers to a consumer's knowledge of a product category (e.g., Biswas & Sherrell, 1993; Mitchell & Dacin, 1996; Park & Lessig, 1981). Knowledge is usually assessed by referring either to subjective reports of one's knowledge level (e.g., Johnson & Russo, 1984; Park, 1976) or by referring to objective measures that test product-class expertise (e.g., Jacoby et al., 1978). Familiarity inheres in the number of product-related experiences that the consumer has accumulated, and these experiences are defined as broadly inclusive of advertising exposure and information searching in conjunction with product usage (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987). Familiarity, nevertheless, is not necessarily associated with a high level of knowledge (e.g., Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Mitchell & Dacin, 1996).

The evaluation of type authenticity in this dissertation focuses on whether the object meets the criteria for a specific type, genre, or category. The classification of type authenticity regarding both the criteria used and the degree to which observers apply them vary (Carroll & Wheaton, 2009). In the context of ethnic-oriented services, consumers' ethnic identities imply the extent to which they have knowledge of and are

familiar with services; ethnic identity, therefore, plays an important moderating role in determining how ethnic-oriented service characteristics are interpreted. Marketing research has demonstrated the importance of considering consumer ethnicity when designing advertising messages and marketing campaigns for ethnic-oriented products (e.g., Appiah, 2001; Green, 1999; Grier et al., 2006; Xu et al., 2004). This dissertation compares the authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services by the referent ethnic group (for which the service is originally designed) and those of the ethnic mainstream group (the ethnic majority) and discusses whether these two groups interpret assessment cues differently.

### **Servicescape Approach to Authenticity Assessment**

Consumers' assessments of authenticity involve a complex perceptual process and hence an understanding of the attributes that drive this process is needed (Stern, 1994). Previous research stresses the importance of the service environment in creating perceived authenticity and examines assessment cues through attribute-based or categorization-based approaches (e.g., Carroll & Wheaton, 2009; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Lu & Fine 1995; Munoz et al., 2006). However, an integrative, systematic examination of different dimensions of the service environment has yet to be presented.

As the service environment (the servicescape) offers a multitude of cues that customers can easily access to seek a shortcut to information (Baker, 1987; Baker et

al., 1994), this dissertation investigates how servicescape elements influence consumers' authenticity perceptions of ethnic-oriented services prior to actual consumption. In particular, three key dimensions of the servicescape—physical setting, service providers, and customers—are examined jointly, and consumer differences in their ethnic groups (i.e., the referent ethnic group versus the mainstream group) are also taken into account.

### **Servicescape Component**

#### *Physical Setting (Physical Servicescape)*

Since 1970s, the influence of the store or service environment on consumer behavior has been acknowledged. Kotler (1973) was one of the earliest scholars to recognize the importance of the consumption environment to customers. He used the term “atmospherics” to describe “the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his/her purchase probability” (p. 50). A seminal paper for consequent servicescape research, Bitner's (1992) conceptual study introduced the term “servicescape.” And, Bitner (1992) defined the servicescape as encompassing all the objective physical factors that can be controlled by a firm to enhance (or constrain) employee and customer actions. The servicescape thus refers to a man-made environment instead of a social or natural environment. A synthesis of various definitions (e.g., Arnould et al., 1998; Babin & Attaway, 2000) indicated that the term servicescape refers to the design of the physical environment within which

the service encounter elicits internal reactions from customers and within which their consequent approach or avoidance behaviors ensue (Ezeh & Harris, 2007).

Researchers have classified servicescape stimuli in various ways. The atmospherics of Kotler (1973) include visual, aural, olfactory, and tactile (softness, smoothness, temperature) categories, and is thus an overtly sensory-based framework. Westbrook (1981) proposed the use of layout, spaciousness, organization, cleanliness, and attractiveness. The controllable physical factors in Bitner (1992) include various elements that fall within three dimensions: ambient, space/function, and signs, symbols, and artifacts. The ambient dimension is consistent with the atmospherics discussed by Kotler (1973) that address background characteristics affecting the five senses. Space and function refers to the size and shape of the equipment and furnishings in a service setting, as well as to the arrangement of these objects, which may facilitate or hinder service delivery. Signs, symbols, and artifacts are various elements of decoration that can communicate messages about the style of the place to its users (Becker, 1977; Davis, 1984; Wineman, 1982). The importance of specific servicescape dimensions could vary for different service organizations (Bitner, 1992; Kotler, 1973).

Ambience (or atmospherics) is the most studied servicescape dimension. Scholars have studied consumer behavior in response to music (e.g., Dube et al., 1995; Dubé & Morin, 2001; Milliman, 1982, 1986; Yalch & Spangenberg, 2000), the effects of colors (Bellizzi et al., 1983; Crowley, 1993; Chebat & Morrin, 2007), the effects of lighting (Summers & Herbert, 2001), and the effects of ambient odor (Chebat &

Michon, 2003; Spangenberg et al., 1996). A few studies incorporated more than one stimuli: music and olfaction (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001a; Spangenberg et al., 2005), or color and lighting (Babin et al, 2003; Spies et al., 1997). A more detailed review of the study of ambient elements can be found in Ezeh and Harris (2007) and Kearney et al.'s (2007) articles. In general, although customers are usually unaware of the existence of ambient factors, their service evaluations and behavior can still be affected (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001a), especially when the level of ambient factor is relatively extreme, e.g., in the presence of very loud music, a very high temperature, or particularly appealing aromas (Ezeh & Harris, 2007).

Granted that spatial layout and functional elements are important in the service environment (Bitner, 1992; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994), little research has been published about their effects on customer experience. Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) found that accessibility and seating comfort are important for football and baseball games. Yoo et al. (1998) noted that good store facilities made shoppers feel pleased, while poor facilities (e.g., crowding or insufficient parking space) made them feel angry and displeased. Bitner (1992) argued that the special layout and functional elements are more important in self-service settings in which complex tasks are performed and/or in conditions in which the consumer is under time pressure.

The aesthetic design of the servicescape through symbols and artifacts, however, is considered to be more important than are functional elements, as the former contribute to a customer's sense of pleasure in experiencing a service (Auber-Gamet, 1997; Baker, 1987). Wakefield and Blodgett's (1996) study of leisure services

concludes that the appeal of a facility's architecture and decor are the primary determining factors of the perceived servicescape quality. Several studies have shown that aesthetic design factors have a positive influence on customer evaluation and behavior and that this is the case for both physical and virtual servicescapes (e.g., Bellizzi & Hite, 1992; Hall & Hanna, 2004; Nasar, 1992; Vilnai-Yavetz & Rafaeli, 2006).

Investigations of a single physical element in a servicescape, however, provide a fragmented understanding of the servicescape. Researchers, therefore, have advocated that multiple elements of a physical servicescape be explored in concert (Baker et al., 1992; Eroglu et al., 2005; Ezeh & Harris, 2007; Kearney, 2007; Spangenberg et al., 2006). Lin (2004) and Reimer and Kuehn (2005) even pointed to the need to examine the entire physical servicescape. In keeping with these observations, therefore, this dissertation does not examine a single physical servicescape element; instead, it engages with the overall aesthetic design via symbols, artifacts, and ambiance that are accessible to consumers before they make a decision to consume.

### **Social Servicescape**

In addition to the man-made environment, the presence of other individuals in the service setting, such as the service contact employees and other customers, can also influence the customer experience. Although the physical setting is the most salient feature of a situation, social elements offer additional information about a situation (Belk, 1975). The influence of a physical setting is inseparable from human

elements in the setting; that is, people, too, should be considered part of the setting (Cassidy, 1997; Schneider, 1987). Therefore, a consideration of social elements in the servicescape is justified. However, only a few scholars have observed the importance of social factors in the service setting. Baker (1987) first proposed analyzing “social factors” in the service environment in addition to ambience and design including functional and aesthetic elements. Turley and Milliman (2000) added the parallel factor of “human variables” in their review of servicescape effects on shopping behavior. Both Baker (1987) and Turley and Milliman (2000) considered the role of both service personnel and other customers when discussing consumer shopping behavior in response to the retail environment. Tombs and McColl-Kennedy (2003) established a social-servicescape conceptual model but focused only on the presence of other customers. Like physical environmental stimuli, these social elements can also facilitate or hinder consumer behavior. For example, a friendly server in a restaurant will encourage customers to have more interaction with him/her and possibly give higher tips, whereas an unfriendly, impatient server may upset customers such that they avoid any unnecessary interaction. Or, a café where customers do not smoke and speak quietly may encourage patrons to stay longer and possibly purchase more, whereas a smoking-permitted, loud café may keep certain customers away.

#### *Other Customers*

Audience factors become important when customers need to share the same service facility. Yet, the impact of other customers can be either positive or negative,

depending on the nature of the service (Baker, 1987; Zeithaml et al., 2009). The number of other customers (i.e., the crowding issue) has caught researchers' interest (e.g., Eroglu & Harrell, 1986; Grossbart & Hampton, 1990; Hui & Bateson, 1991; Machleit et al., 1994). Perceived crowding usually results in negative effects such as negative evaluations of service quality and low satisfaction levels (Bateson & Hui, 1987; Eroglu & Machleit, 1990; Hui & Bateson, 1991; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994), especially when consumers are task-oriented or have utilitarian consumption goals (e.g., Eroglu & Harrell, 1986; Eroglu & Machleit, 1990, Eroglu et al., 2005; Noone & Mattila 2009). In addition to crowd size, the nature of other customers, such as their age, income, and/or social class, also affects consumer perception of the environment (Day & Stafford, 1997; Grove & Fisk, 1997; Lovelock, 1984). Thakor et al.'s (2008) pictorial experiments found that younger customers have more negative service evaluations and reduce their repatronage intentions when other customers present in the service setting are senior (i.e. the perceived mean age of 65 years old) than when other customers are of younger.

The research cited focuses on the passive role, i.e., the mere presence, of other customers. Yet, consumers can also actively influence other customers' service experiences by being actors in the service setting (Geen, 1989). Martin and Pranter (1989) observed that service companies actively manage customer-to-customer encounters with a view to enhancing satisfaction and minimizing dissatisfaction—a process of compatibility management. Martin (1996) identified thirty-two consumer behaviors (e.g., smoking, shouting) that could adversely affect the satisfaction of co-

present customers. In a similar vein, Grove and Fisk (1997) found that customers in a theme park who do not follow the rules of conduct, by, for example, cutting in line, or who are unfriendly can also have a negative impact on the experience of others.

Tombs and McColl-Kennedy (2003) proposed the existence of an emotional contagion among customers. A customer who makes a display of his/her emotions may have an impact on the affective state of others; yet, it is noteworthy, here, that the strength and direction of the influence is contingent upon the valence of emotional display and the consumption context (private or group). Miao's (2008) series of experiments suggest that when the presence of other customers is salient, any behaviors they engage in that are incongruent with the service script will lead to negative emotional responses and ultimately dissatisfaction with the service encounter.

This dissertation focuses on the authenticity perception prior to actual consumption; therefore, it includes an investigation into the passive presence of other customers.

### *Service Personnel*

Service personnel are another social factor in the servicescape. Like co-present customers, service providers play both a passive role (e.g., appearance and dress) and an active role (e.g., demeanor, task performance, interaction with customers) in influencing customer experience. For example, the uniforms and general appearance (static cues) of airline personnel are a part of the atmospheric effects, and together with the personnel's actual performance can increase or decrease customers' overall

satisfaction (Gountas et al., 2007). Previous studies, however, do not make a clear conceptual distinction between employees as active service performers versus employees as static cues in the environment. For example, Baker et al (1992, 1994) defined the social factor as the number and the friendliness of service employees and found this factor to be associated with customers' arousal states and perceptions of service quality. Specifically, in these studies, a large number of employees who were very friendly generated arousal that positively affected the willingness of consumers to buy goods and services. The presence of a large number of very friendly employees also meant that customers perceived the service as being of high quality and also perceived the store image positively. Bonn et al. (2007) identified the social factor as the presence of friendly, knowledgeable, and service oriented employees; yet, they found that this factor had little influence on customers' return intentions or on the likelihood that they would make positive word-of-mouth reports. Kwortnik et al. (2010) advocated for social servicescape research to address the effects of employees as performers and their effects as static social cues separately. The importance of employee performance has been confirmed by numerous studies about service quality and service encounters (e.g., Brady & Cronin, 2001; Gremler & Gwinner, 2000; Han et al., 2008; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Price et al., 1995a, 1995b). Yet, research on employees as part of the static servicescape is relatively limited. Given that this dissertation examines authenticity assessments when consumers make patronage decisions, the focus in this context is on the static presence of employees.

Servicescape literature has suggested the importance of a number of different components in both physical and social servicescapes. Given the scope of ethnic-oriented services evaluation, this dissertation focuses on (1) the physical setting, an integration of ambiance, symbols, and artifacts that explicitly communicate the ethnic culture; (2) the static role of other customers, i.e., the mere presence of referent ethnic customers; and (3) the static role of service contact employees, i.e., the mere presence of referent ethnic service contact employees, to address the impact of servicescapes on customer evaluations of the authenticity of service offerings. The next section addresses the mechanisms via which servicescapes influence customer perceptions and behaviors, and why various servicescape components may affect authenticity assessments.

### **Mechanisms of the Servicescape that Influence Customer Experience**

#### *Emotion-Cognition*

The mechanisms through which servicescapes affect service outcomes have been repeatedly discussed and investigated. Since the foundational study by Donovan and Rossiter (1982), the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model presented by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) has been extensively applied in servicescape research (e.g., Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Donovan et al., 1994; Dubé et al., 1995; Mattila & Wirtz, 2006; Newman, 2007; Wirtz et al., 2000; Kearney et al., [2007] for review). In the S-O-R model, servicescape stimuli affect the emotional state of customers (mainly

arousal and pleasure) and elicit either approach (e.g., staying longer or spending more in the environment) or avoidance (e.g., desire not to explore or stay in the servicescape) responses. The S-O-R model claims that affective states play an important mediating role between servicescape stimuli and customer behavior. For this reason, the model ignores customers' cognitive processes. Researchers from the emotion-cognition school of thought claim that emotions can be present without antecedent cognitive processes (e.g., Ittleson, 1973; Zajonc & Markus, 1984). In other words, customers directly respond to environmental stimuli through the change of affective states.

#### *Cognition-Emotion*

Some service researchers follow the cognition-emotion school of thought that views cognition as a necessary but insufficient condition for eliciting emotions (Lazarus, 1991). Not finding a direct relationship between background music pleasure intensity and the store evaluations, Dube and Morin (2001) concluded that music must affect a consumer's attitude toward the servicescape before it can impact the consumer's overall evaluation of the store. Chebat and Michon (2003) tested both schools of thought, cognition-emotion and emotion-cognition, and found that an environmental cue (ambient scent) directly affects consumers' perceptions (regarding mall and product qualities) and then their affective states, thus supporting the cognitive theory of emotions.

Research and arguments with regard to the influence of servicescapes on cognitive processing is rooted in two theories: cue utilization and Gestalt psychology. Cue utilization theory (Cox, 1967; Olson, 1972) suggests that servicescapes offer an array of cues relevant to the product/service and form surrogate indicators of product/service quality (Reimer & Kuehn, 2005). Other theories, such as inference theory (Huber & McCann, 1982; Nisbett & Ross, 1980), schema theory (Fiske, 1982; Fiske & Linville, 1980) and the theory of affordances (Gibson, 1979) also view servicescapes as conveying information capable of guiding customers' service inferences and service quality predictions. Because services are intangible and cannot be evaluated prior to purchase, physical evidence provided by the servicescape helps customers predict service quality (Baker, 1987; Booms & Bitner, 1982; Ezeh & Harris, 2007; Koernig, 2003; Reimer & Kuehn, 2005). According to Baker et al. (1992, 2002), each servicescape dimension (e.g., ambience, design, and employees) can contribute to perceptions of various attributes (e.g., merchandise, service, store image, and value).

The main tenet of Gestalt psychology is that people view scenes and events as functional wholes and that the whole is different from sum of its parts (Kofka, 1935; Kohler, 1929; Schiffman, 2001). In other words, a perception cannot be meaningfully deconstructed into its elementary components (Lin, 2004). According to the Gestalt approach, customers evaluate servicescapes in a holistic way through assessing the effects of all the discrete stimuli present (Ezeh & Harris, 2007; Holahan, 1982). This is in accordance with the propositions of previous conceptual models about

servicescapes. In Kotler's (1973) model the consumer's initial reaction to a servicescape relies on his/her overall perceptions of the sensory qualities of the space before specific information (cognitive) and affective states are reached. Bitner (1992) and Lin (2004) claimed that perceptions of the holistic environment constituted the first response to the servicescape, before consumers' internal emotional responses and cognitive evaluations.

With its theoretical foundation inhering from cue utilization and Gestalt psychology, this dissertation adopts a cognitive approach to investigating consumers' authenticity assessments of servicescapes prior to their consumption.

### **Role of the Physical Servicescape in Authenticity Assessments**

Research has shown that service firms endeavor to construct a setting that reflects ethnical or cultural authenticity desired by consumers of ethnic-oriented services (e.g., Asplet & Cooper, 2000; Cohen, 1988, 1993; Litterell et al., 1993; MacCannell, 1976). Service firms can strategically use various elements in the servicescape such as lighting, colors, symbols, and artifacts to associate the service environment with the stereotypes associated with the culture the organization wishes to evoke. For example, the use of red table cloths, round tables, and calligraphy painted on the walls together suggest a Chinese restaurant. Therefore, the physical servicescape serves an important role in communicating to customers about the possibility of authentic experiences. In particular, the extent to which a physical

servicescape is ethnically themed is likely to be of great interest to consumers of ethnic-oriented services.

This dissertation investigates the physical servicescape in a holistic way, which is consistent with researchers' advocacy for an integrated examination of multiple servicescape elements (e.g., Baker et al., 1992; Eroglu et al., 2005; Ezeh & Harris, 2007; Kearney, 2007; Lin, 2004; Reimer & Kuehn, 2005; Spangenberg et al., 2006). The various servicescape elements included in the ambience and aesthetic design/decoration dimension will be examined jointly. The space/function dimension is not emphasized because it is more functionality oriented (Bitner, 1992) and less important to creating an ethnic, cultural theme. Hypothesis 1 predicts that ethnically themed service settings will have a positive impact on authenticity assessments.

H1: Ethnically themed physical servicescapes will have a positive impact on consumers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services.

Furthermore, I propose that customer ethnicity (the referent ethnicity or mainstream) moderates the influence of the physical setting on authenticity assessments, in that the positive influence of the physical servicescape is stronger among mainstream customers than among referent ethnic customers. Prior research shows that customers who are not knowledgeable about a subject matter tend to seek relevant information that can be integrated to be easily understandable in the context (Chiou & Droge, 2006). In addition, as compared to experts, they may rely heavily on peripheral cues and simple messages rather than engaging in deep levels of processing

(e.g., Bettman & Sujan, 1987; Kades et al., 1994; Mick, 1992). The ethnically themed physical environment is a vivid cue that is easy for less knowledgeable customers (i.e., mainstream customers) to process. For example, Munoz et al. (2006) found that foreign customers' (Americans and Australians) descriptions of an authentic Irish pub contained more information about stereotypical artifacts than those offered by Irish people. Therefore, I propose the following:

H1a: The positive association between ethnically themed physical servicescapes and customers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services will be stronger for mainstream customers than for referent ethnic customers.

In addition to the ethnically themed physical servicescape, I propose that the presence of referent ethnic service providers and customers are also cues on which customers base their authenticity assessments.

### **Role of Ethnic Service Providers in Authenticity Assessments**

The ethnic appearance of the service provider is an element of social servicescapes (Baker et al., 1992, 1994; Ezeh & Harris, 2007; Turley & Milliman, 2000). An individual's ethnic appearance displays his/her ascribed membership and confers on him/her the right to represent the group (Grana, 1989). Lu and Fine (1995) identified ethnic appearance as a strategic resource that under certain conditions can generate a sense of either "otherness" or "in-group cohesion" with consumers. The

ethnic appearance of a target person provides the most salient cue to observers about his/her ethnicity and corresponding cultural values. In activities related to ethnic-oriented service consumption, interacting with a service provider of the referent ethnic group is expected or even preferred when customers desire a cultural experience. Consumers perceive their tourism products and experiences to be authentic or inauthentic depending on whether those products/experiences are made or enacted by local people (Cohen, 1988; Littrell et al., 1993; MacCannell, 1976; McIntosh, 2004). The ethnically authentic service provider may create a halo effect in customers' experience. For example, according to Lu and Fine's (1995) case study, the ethnic appearance of cooks and waiters is crucial to customers' evaluation of the authenticity of food in ethnic restaurants. Therefore, the referent ethnic appearance of the service provider can have a positive impact on consumers' evaluations of the authenticity of a service offering:

H2: Ethnic congruence between the service provider and ethnic-oriented services will have a positive impact on customers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services.

Nevertheless, I propose that the focal customers' ethnicity (the referent ethnicity versus the mainstream ethnicity) moderates the influence of the referent ethnicity of the service provider on authenticity perceptions in that the positive association between the referent ethnicity of the service provider and authenticity perceptions is stronger for referent ethnic customers. For example, ethnic Chinese

customers respond more favorably to a Chinese restaurant with Chinese servers than Americans do. Research on ethnic distinctiveness demonstrates that members of ethnic minorities in the US respond more favorably to targeted appeals (e.g., ethnic congruence between product and consumer) than do members of the ethnic majority (i.e. Caucasian Americans), because of heightened levels of felt similarity (Aaker et al., 2000; Grier & Deshpandé 2001; McGuire et al., 1978). As for non-targeted appeals (e.g., ethnic incongruence between product and consumer), mainstream American customers hold less positive attitudes than ethnic customers (Aaker et al., 2000). When ethnic-oriented services are provided by referent ethnic service employees, their targeted appeals increase for referent ethnic consumers and non-targeted appeals increase for mainstream customers as well. Therefore, ethnic customers would react more positively and have higher authenticity assessments than mainstream customers. Thus, I posit the following hypotheses:

H2a: The positive impact of ethnic congruence between the service provider and the ethnic-oriented services on customers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services will be stronger for referent ethnic customers than for mainstream customers.

### **Role of Ethnic Customers in Authenticity Assessments**

The ethnic background of other customers in the service setting is beyond the service organization's control but contributes to the assessment of authenticity as well. The presence of referent ethnic customers in the service setting makes customers feel more connected with that culture such that they may perceive their

experience in this context as authentic. Taylor (2001) stated that local people can be positioned as signifiers of past events, epochs, or ways of life. Weiermair (2000) claimed that when travelers seek locally authentic services, the appearance of local people can represent the “exotic other” and illustrate service quality. Even without interacting with those local customers, travelers feel a sense a self-validation in terms of having an intercultural service experience just because of the physical presence of local customers. Munoz et al. (2006) argued that a truly authentic pub is not just about the design, cultural artifacts, and music—it is about the people who work in and patronize it. The presence of other referent ethnic customers suggests a service firm’s ethnic authenticity inasmuch as the firm draws referent ethnic customers. Therefore, I propose that the patronage of other referent ethnic customers will increase authenticity assessments:

H3: The patronage of other referent ethnic customers will have a positive impact on customers’ authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services.

In accordance with the presence of ethnic service contact employees, it is proposed that the patronage of other ethnic customers has a stronger impact on referent ethnic customers than on mainstream customers for authenticity assessments. Based on the application of distinctiveness theory in advertising research, ethnically targeted spokespersons or actors are more effective when viewers are ethnic minorities (e.g., Aaker et al., 2000; Deshpande & Stayman, 1994; McGuire et al., 1978). In the service environment, ethnic consumers tend to pay attention to the

ethnicity of employees and other consumers when assessing the relative congruency between their self-identities and a given consumption setting (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007). Therefore, following the same logic of ethnically congruent service providers, I form the following hypothesis:

H3a: The positive impact of the presence of referent ethnic customers on customers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services is stronger for referent ethnic customers than for mainstream customers.

### **Consumer Responses to Authentic Market Offerings**

Authenticity is a potential resource through which a service provider can attract customers and differentiate itself from competitors (Beverland, 2005; Lu & Fine, 1995; Rose & Wood, 2005). Authenticity can also be considered an important value, motive, or interest that plays a mediating role in behavior intentions (Kolar & Zabkar, 2009).

#### **Cognitive and Behavioral Responses**

The theorized benefits of authenticity have been subjected to very little empirical testing. Cognitively, an authentic market offering does create some perceived benefits for consumers. Grayson and Martinec (2004) claimed that tourism sites perceived to be authentic result in perceived evidence and connections to the

past and support this hypothesis with survey data. However, conceptually I would categorize perceived evidence or connection to the past as aspects of the authenticity assessment, rather than as its benefits. Their argument for the causal influence of site features perceived as authentic on perceived benefits is also contestable when both are measured from evidence collected from participants. Featherman et al. (2006) found that perceived authenticity is associated with lower risk perceptions of the service usage. Beverland and Farrelly's (2010) in-depth interviews with 21 informants suggest that feeling in control, connected, and virtuous are perceived relevant benefits of authentic brands, which reflect the consumer desire to respond to dominant sociocultural norms.

Other studies have tested the association between perceived authenticity and consumer evaluations and behavior. Chhabra et al. (2003) observed that the perceived authenticity of a Scottish festival has a significant correlation with expenditure. Yu and Littrell's (2003) survey of tourists showed that when they perceived a craft object as authentic, they were more likely to form a purchase intention than when they did not consider the object to be so. Kolar and Zabar (2006) concluded that the perceived authenticity of tourist offerings is positively related to loyalty intentions. Furthermore, perceived authenticity contributed more to loyalty intentions than satisfaction, as illustrated in studies by Gallarza and Gil Saura (2006) and Chi and Qu (2008). Bonn et al.'s (2007) visitor survey conducted in Tampa, Florida, showed that the ambiance, design, and layout of the service environment are related to positive attraction and intentions to revisit. Finally, both the perceived food authenticity and environmental

authenticity of Chinese restaurants in the U.S. are related to customer satisfaction (Liu & Jang, 2008).

Based on attitude–intention–behavior models (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), which are frequently used to understand consumption intentions and behaviors across a variety of domains (e.g., Kozup, Creyer, & Burton 2003; Martin & Stewart, 2001; Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988), the authenticity assessment of ethnic-oriented services may contribute to patronage intentions.

H4: Authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services based on three servicescape elements have a positive impact on patronage intentions.

#### **Individual Traits in Responses to Authentic Market Offerings**

The positive relationship between authenticity assessments and patronage intentions is intuitive for referent ethnic customers; ethnic customers are more willing to patronize authentic services than inauthentic services designed for them. For mainstream customers, however, the impact of authenticity assessments on patronage intentions may be contingent upon individual characteristics. Previous studies identified various individual traits that affect consumers' propensity to try products/services not associated with their own ethnic groups. In general, consumers who are not members of a particular ethnic group may be attracted to ethnic-oriented products because they seek variety outside the usual mainstream fare (Kahn, 1993), or because they have an interest in different cultures (Halter, 2000; Ray & Anderson,

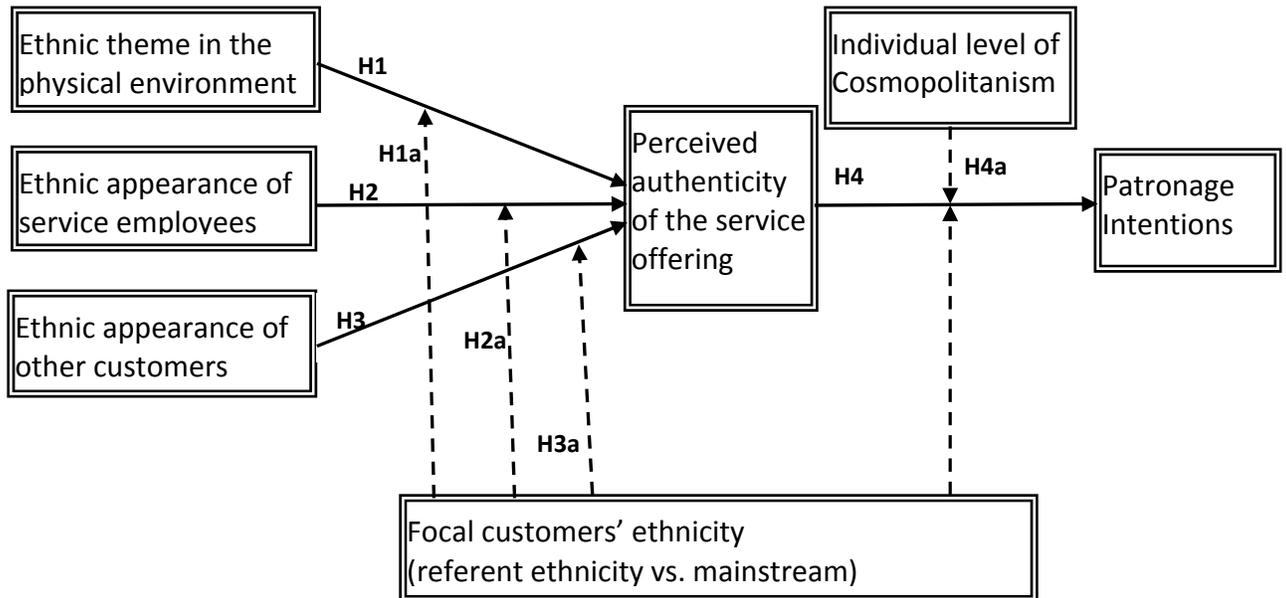
2000). Grier et al. (2006) demonstrated that white consumers who possess the individual trait of diversity-seeking are more willing to see black-oriented movies.

In this study, I propose the individual trait of cosmopolitanism as a moderator for mainstream consumers' patronage intentions with regard to authentic ethnic services. Cosmopolitanism refers to individuals' willingness to engage with cultures other than their own, and to consume cultural differences, coupled with personal competence toward other cultures (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; Hannerz, 1992; Thompson & Tambyah, 1999). Cosmopolitanism has been found to be related to the tendency to innovate (Helsen et al., 1993), exposure to external information (Gatignon et al., 1989), and consumption of various categories of products such as consumer electronics, luxuries, and food (Cleveland et al., 2009). Because cosmopolitans are more acculturated to global consumer culture, they are more likely to adopt products from other cultures and places (Alden et al., 1999; Cleveland et al., 2009; Thompson & Tambyah, 1999). Therefore, I hypothesize that mainstream consumers who are cosmopolitan are more likely to patronize authentic ethnic-oriented services than are those who are not cosmopolitan.

H4a: For mainstream customers, the positive relationship between authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services and patronage intentions will be stronger for those who have a cosmopolitan outlook.

## Summary

This chapter reviewed literature pertaining to the impact of various servicescape elements on customer authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services. Based on the literature in authenticity and servicescapes, this dissertation proposes that the physical environment, the presence of service providers and patronizing customers, all provide cues that suggest the ethnic association of services and thus are influential in evaluating the extent to which a service offering is authentic. However, a focal customer's ethnic group (the referent ethnic group versus the mainstream), which tends to suggest his/her expertise about the service offering, will moderate the impact of a specific servicescape cue. To confirm the marketing implications of perceptions of authenticity, the relationship between the perceived authenticity of a service offering and purchase intentions is hypothesized. The conceptual model is visualized in Figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1 Conceptual Model of Servicescape Cues on Authenticity Assessments of Ethnic-oriented Services Prior to Consumption**

**H1:** Ethnically themed physical servicescapes have a positive impact on customers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services.

**H1a:** The positive association between ethnically themed physical servicescapes and customers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services is stronger for mainstream customers than for referent ethnic customers.

**H2:** Ethnic congruence between the service provider and the ethnic-oriented services has a positive impact on customers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services.

**H2a:** The positive impact of ethnic congruence between the service provider and the ethnic-oriented services on customers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services is stronger for referent ethnic customers than for mainstream customers.

**H3:** The patronage of other referent ethnic customers in the physical environment has a positive impact on customers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services.

**H3a:** The positive impact of the presence of referent ethnic customers on customers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services is stronger for referent ethnic customers than for mainstream customers.

**H4:** Authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services based on three servicescape elements have a positive impact on patronage intentions.

**H4a:** For mainstream customers, the positive relationship between authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services and patronage intentions is stronger for those with a cosmopolitan outlook.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS OF PILOT STUDY**

#### **Overview of Method and Design**

This dissertation examines the effects of social and non-social servicescape elements on consumers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services when making patronage intentions. This research includes one pilot study and one main study. This chapter reports the methodology and results of the pilot study. The pilot study was designed to check for the ethnic salience of the three servicescape cues—the physical environment, the appearance of service contact employees, and the appearance of other customers. Furthermore, the authenticity assessment scale for the ethnic-oriented services was developed and tested in the pilot study.

#### **Pilot Study**

##### **Overview**

The primary purpose of Pilot Study 1 was to check the efficacy of the manipulation of the ethnic association of the three servicescape elements and to develop a scale for authenticity perceptions. The pilot study included eight versions of descriptions of an ethnic-oriented restaurant based on a planned 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects experimental design for the main study. The eight versions consisted of three

manipulated variables: (a) the ethnic theme in the physical environment (low versus high level), (b) the ethnicity of the service team (mainstream versus referent ethnicity), and (c) the ethnicity of other customers (mainstream versus referent ethnicity).

A full-service restaurant was chosen as the research context for ethnic-oriented services for the following reasons. First, ethnic-oriented restaurants are pervasive in the United States, appealing to both ethnic and mainstream customers (Lu & Fine, 1995). Second, full-service restaurants are generally pleasure-driven, and hence the impact of servicescapes on consumer behavior is more pronounced as compared to more utilitarian services (Reimer & Kuehn, 2005). Third, the notion of type authenticity (the extent to which something is true to its type or category) has gained importance in the restaurant industry during the past decade (Carroll & Wheaton, 2009). For the current work, Chinese restaurants in the US provide the context for empirical investigation. Therefore, the mainstream market refers to Americans, those born and raised in the US and who identify themselves primarily as American. The referent ethnic market refers to ethnic Chinese consumers who identify themselves as Chinese or Taiwanese, or as being from Hong Kong. Both first-generation and second-generation Chinese belong to the referent ethnic segment. This study did not investigate responses from non-referent ethnic groups (e.g. African-Americans and Latinos).

## Experimental Stimuli

To develop the experimental stimuli for ethnic associations of the three key servicescape cues, a set of photographs addressing the physical setting, the service team, and other customers was developed. Photographs are commonly employed in service research to examine consumers' reactions to service settings (e.g., Bitner, 1990; Eroglu & Machleit, 1990; Hui & Bateson, 1991).

The experimental stimuli first introduced the scenario of a newly opened restaurant. To manipulate the ethnic association of the three servicescape cues, photographs from the Web were edited after I had received permission to do so from two restaurants in New York City (Chinatown Brasserie and Mulan) and one restaurant in Philadelphia (Yang Ming). The pictures of the Chinatown Brasserie's interior design were chosen to represent a high-level Chinese theme, as the restaurant used the shades of red liberally and included bold elements such as lanterns, round wooden tables, and regal-looking columns. The pictures of Mulan's interior design were chosen to represent a low-level Chinese ethnic theme, as the restaurant used shades of white coupled with blue neon lights and did not include any artifacts depicting Chinese culture. For the manipulation of the service team's ethnicity, a prototype photo from Yang Ming was edited in order to create two versions: (1) a service team of Chinese ethnicity and (2) a service team of mainstream ethnicity. The manipulation of the ethnicity of the customers in the photograph was also achieved through editing (Chinese-origin versus mainstream customers). These photographs created static perceptual simulations of the servicescape and were intended to portray as clearly as

possible the manipulated factors. A picture showing Chinese dishes with menu pricing (entrée prices from \$9 to \$20) was displayed across all conditions to imply the ethnic orientation of the restaurant and to control for price effects. The experimental stimuli are shown in Appendix A.

### **Participants**

The participants were Chinese and American undergraduate and graduate students currently enrolled in several universities in the US, with a majority of participants from the Pennsylvania State University. Participants were recruited from a particular class (HRIM330), through the university's listservs (graduate student association, Chinese student association, Taiwanese student association), and via personal networks. Except for the HRIM330 class ( $n = 60$ ) and a few questionnaires distributed in person ( $n = 25$ ), the rest of the responses ( $n = 120$ ) were collected online via a web interface provided by SURVEYGIZMO.

Table 3.1 reports the number of valid observations per cell for the eight servicescape scenarios for mainstream and ethnic Chinese participants. The classification of participants into mainstream or ethnic Chinese groups was based primarily on the subject's personal ethnic identification, the number of years he/she had lived in the US, and his/her knowledge of Chinese culture. Participants who identified themselves solely as Americans usually had lived in the US since birth and were categorized as belonging to the mainstream group regardless of their races. Caucasian participants who identified themselves as both Americans and Europeans

and had lived in the US since birth also belonged to the mainstream group, as these people are generally perceived to be the mainstream in the American society.

Participants who identified themselves as Chinese or Taiwanese belonged to the ethnic Chinese group. Non-Chinese international students were excluded from the analysis. In total, there were 118 participants from the mainstream segment and 127 participants from the Chinese segment.

Of the 245 participants, 35% were male ( $n = 85$ ) and 65% were female ( $n = 160$ ). Males accounted for 30% of the mainstream samples and for 40% of the Chinese sample. The average age of the mainstream sample was 25.42 ( $s.d. = 5.53$ ) and that of the Chinese sample was 26.99 ( $s.d. = 3.37$ ).

**Table 3.1 Sample Size across Each Experimental Condition**

Ethnic theme in physical environment	Ethnicity of service team	Ethnicity of other patronizing customers	Cell size	
			Mainstream participants	Chinese participants
Low	mainstream	mainstream	14	18
		Chinese	16	13
	Chinese	mainstream	14	15
		Chinese	12	20
High	mainstream	mainstream	15	15
		Chinese	19	16
	Chinese	mainstream	13	15
		Chinese	15	15

## **Procedures**

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the eight scenarios. They read a two-page introduction to a newly opened restaurant and viewed five photographs (two photographs of the physical environment, one of the service team, one of the customers, and one of the menu). Having looked at the pictures, participants responded to a series of questions designed to assess the effectiveness of the experimental stimuli and to gather personal demographic information.

## **Measures**

### *Manipulation check*

The effectiveness of the manipulation of each of servicescape element was measured on a 7-point scale (the interior of the restaurant reflects Chinese culture, the restaurant hires servers of Chinese background, the other customers are mainly Chinese).

### *Authenticity perception of ethnic-oriented services*

There is no extant scale to measure authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented service offerings. Therefore, scales from Grayson and Martinec's (2004) study of authenticity assessments of tourism sites and Zhao et al.'s (2010) study of perceived brand foreignness were adapted for this purpose. In accordance with theoretical classifications of authenticity, this exploratory scale tapped into objective authenticity as well as subjective perceptions. Objective authenticity reflects factual evidence, and it was measured via responses to these propositions: "this restaurant is operated by

Chinese owners,” “Chinese customers would feel at home here,” and “this kind of restaurant could very well exist in greater China regions.” Subjective authenticity, on the other hand, reflects sensory experience, and it was measured via responses to these propositions: “this restaurant makes me feel Chinese culture,” “the appeal of this restaurant matches my impression of Chinese culture,” and “this restaurant looks very Chinese to me.” A summary measure “this is an authentic Chinese restaurant” was also used. All measurement items were on a 7-point Likert scale, asking participants to express the degree to which they agreed with each statement (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree).

#### *Knowledge about Chinese culture*

In this dissertation, I propose that the focal consumer’s cultural background (i.e., mainstream versus referent ethnic group) will moderate the impact of servicescape cues on authenticity perceptions. In addition to demographic questions, five questions tapping into Chinese culture were used to assess whether the participant belonged to the referent ethnic group or the mainstream group; the former group was expected to achieve a significantly higher average score than the latter group would. An independent sample t-test shows that the ethnic Chinese group obtained a significantly higher score (number of correct answers) than did the mainstream group ( $M_{\text{CHINESE}} = 4.41$  vs.  $M_{\text{mainstream}} = 1.62$ ,  $t(243) = 24.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### *Demographics*

At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to provide basic personal information such as gender and birth year. Furthermore, questions regarding race and ethnicity were asked to decide whether a potential customer belonged to the mainstream or the referent ethnic market. Participants were asked to specify their race and ethnic identity through a multiple-choice format. For example, a participant could choose both Chinese and American if he/she identified with both groups. The subjective measure of ethnic identity is in accordance with the recent research trend suggesting that ethnic identification is a multi-dimensional and contextual concept (e.g., Laroche et al., 1997; Oswald, 1999; Venkatesh 1995). If participants were not native born, they were asked to provide the number of years that they had been living in the US.

A sample questionnaire listing all the measurement items is presented in Appendix A.

## **Results**

### *Manipulation checks*

To check the efficacy of the ethnic association with regard to servicescape elements, a series of independent sample t-tests were performed (see Table 3.2). As expected, the participants who were shown the picture reflecting the highly thematized Chinese restaurant in terms of its interior design rated the item “Chinese

culture reflected in the interior design” higher than did those shown the restaurant that was less thematized ( $M_{low\ level\ ethnic\ theme} = 2.68$  vs.  $M_{high\ level\ ethnic\ theme} = 4.96$ ;  $t(242) = 12.15, p < .001$ ). Similarly, participants shown the photograph of the Chinese service staff rated the item “servers mostly from Chinese background” higher than did those shown the photograph of the mainstream service staff ( $M_{Mainstream\ service\ team} = 2.11$  vs.  $M_{Chinese\ service\ team} = 5.39$ ;  $t(243) = 17.57, p < .001$ ). Finally, participants who were shown the photograph of other Chinese customers rated the item “the restaurant hosts mostly Chinese customers” higher than did those shown the photo of mainstream customers ( $M_{Mainstream\ customers} = 2.73$  vs.  $M_{Chinese\ customers} = 4.87$ ;  $t(243) = 11.14, p < .001$ ). Taken together, these results indicate that the manipulation of ethnic association of each of the three servicescape cues was successful.

**Table 3.2 Independent Sample T-Test for Manipulation Check Items**

Measurement	Pictorial Stimuli				t-value significance	
	Western-level Mean	S.E.	Chinese-level Mean	S.E.		
Chinese culture reflected in the interior design	2.68	.130	4.96	.135	12.15	***
Servers mostly from Chinese background	2.11	.132	5.39	.131	17.57	***
Customers mostly from Chinese background	2.73	.119	4.87	.126	11.14	***

### *Authenticity perception*

Refined from the literature, a 7-item authenticity assessment scale for ethnic-oriented service offerings was tested in the pilot study. An exploratory factor analysis indicated that all 7 items converged into one factor (Eigenvalue = 4.19, 60% variance extracted). An investigation of the factor loadings suggested the deletion of an item with a loading less than .5 (“this kind of restaurant could very well exist in China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan”). A reliability analysis of the remaining six items indicated that the scale reliability could be improved by deleting two additional items: “the restaurant is operated by Chinese owners” and “Chinese customers would feel at home here.” The four-item scale, including all three subjective evaluations and one summary item reached a Cronbach Alpha of .92. The three deleted items tapped into objective authenticity. The results of the pilot study indicate that the subjective assessment of authenticity is the main component of authenticity assessments in ethnic-oriented services (“this restaurant makes me feel Chinese culture,” “the appeal of this restaurant matches my impression of Chinese culture,” “this restaurant looks very Chinese to me,” and “this is an authentic Chinese restaurant”).

### **Discussion**

The pilot study’s primary goal was to check the efficacy of the manipulated ethnic associations of three respective servicescape dimensions. Results from the

manipulation check indicated that there are significant perceptual differences in the ethnic association of each manipulated servicescape element—the ethnic theme of the physical environment, the appearance of the service providers, and the appearance of other customers. Participants' responses to the open-ended question at the end did not suggest the existence of any problems worthy of attention.

Another goal of the pilot study was to develop a scale for authenticity perception. A preliminary 7-item scale for authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services was developed based on the literature (e.g., Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Zhou et al., 2010). The results from an exploratory factor analysis and consequent scale reliability analysis indicated that the measurement is more solid and reliable when only subjective perceptions are included. Whereas the literature suggests that the authenticity of market offerings can be examined from both objective and subjective perspectives (e.g., Beverland et al., 2008; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Leigh et al., 2006), the objective view appears not to make strong sense in the context of the ethnic-oriented services examined in this dissertation; that is, no Chinese restaurant in the US can be considered authentic according to the objective view for the simple reason that it is not located in China. At best, the objective view would allow people to say that a Chinese restaurant in the US resembles a Chinese restaurant in China, but realistically any resemblance may be limited as ingredients, materials for decoration, the composition of the service providers and customers may differ significantly. Therefore, practically it makes sense to examine only subjective perceptions of authenticity in the context of ethnic-oriented services in a mainstream society.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE MAIN STUDY**

Chapter 4 describes the methodology of the main study. A between-subjects full factorial design was adopted to test the hypotheses. It also discusses the manipulations of the independent variables and measurements of the dependent variables.

#### **Overview of the Study and Design**

This dissertation examined the effects of social and non-social servicescape elements on consumers' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services prior to making an actual consumption decision. Based on the cue utilization theory and servicescape research, this dissertation proposes that the three key dimensions of the servicescape—physical environment, service providers and other customers—provide cues based on which consumers infer the authenticity of an ethnic-oriented service offering prior to consumption. The consumer's ethnic group (referent ethnicity versus mainstream), which reflects the extent of his/her expertise with regard to ethnic-oriented services and his/her degree of sensitivity to ethnic similarities between the consumer and the actors portraying the product (service providers and other customers) is hypothesized to moderate the relative impact of the three servicescape cues on authenticity assessment.

Hypotheses were tested in the context of Chinese restaurants in the US. The degree of ethnic associations in three key servicescape elements—the physical setting, the presence of service providers, and the presence of other customers—was experimentally manipulated. Consumer authenticity assessments, purchase intentions, and individual traits were measured.

### **Methodology of the Main Study**

#### **Experimental Design**

The study employed a  $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$  between-subjects full factorial, quasi experimental design, manipulating the level of ethnic theme in the physical setting (low vs. high), the ethnic appearance of service providers (mainstream vs. ethnic), and the ethnic appearance of other customers (mainstream vs. ethnic). The fourth factor about the ethnicity of the participant (referent ethnic group versus mainstream) was based on self-report. The experimental design offered a high level of control and the ability to manipulate variables individually. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the eight experimental conditions.

#### **Participants**

Five hundred and forty-nine valid responses were collected for the main study. Participants were ethnic Chinese and American working professionals in the US, with the majority living in Pennsylvania. Participants were recruited from various sources:

Penn State listservs (Penn State Faculty and Staff Newswire, the Chinese Association at Penn State, and the Taiwanese Association at Penn State), Chinese (or Taiwanese) professional associations in the US, a market research panel (Qualtrics), and personal networks. To address the difficulty of reaching participants outside State College, which is the town where Penn State is located, all responses were collected online via the web interface provided by Qualtrics.

Table 4.1 reports the number of valid observations per cell for the eight servicescape scenarios for mainstream and ethnic Chinese participants, ranging from  $n = 30$  to  $n = 39$ . The classification of participants into mainstream or ethnic Chinese groups was based primarily on the subject's personal ethnic identification, and other supplementary information including race, the number of years he/she had lived in the US, and knowledge about Chinese culture. Participants who identified themselves primarily as Americans, and were born in the US or had lived in the US for most of their lives, belonged to the mainstream group. Caucasian participants who identified themselves as both Americans and Europeans and had lived in the US since birth also belonged to the mainstream group, as these people are generally perceived to be the mainstream in the American society. Participants who identified themselves as Chinese or Taiwanese belonged to the ethnic Chinese group—which included first-generation Chinese and second-generation Chinese (Chinese-Americans). Participants who were non-Chinese internationals were excluded from the analysis. In total, there were 274 participants from the mainstream segment and 275 participants from the ethnic Chinese segment.

Of the 549 participants, 37% percent were male ( $n = 205$ ) and 63% were female ( $n = 344$ ). Males accounted for 37% of the mainstream sample and for 38% of the ethnic Chinese sample. The average age of the mainstream sample was 42.1 (s.d. = 10.8) and that of the ethnic Chinese sample was 34.3 (s.d. = 11.1). As Table 4.2 indicates, the groups' socio-demographic compositions were comparable with regard to education and income. The ethnic Chinese segment had a larger percentage of participants who had received some post-graduate education than did the mainstream segment, which was expected as first-generation Chinese people tend to come to the US in order to pursue a post-graduate education before finding employment.

**Table 4.1 Sample Size across Each Experimental Condition**

Ethnic theme in physical environment	Ethnicity of service team	Ethnicity of other patronizing customers	Cell sizes	
			Mainstream participants	Ethnic Chinese participants
Low	mainstream	mainstream	34	36
		Chinese	37	32
	Chinese	mainstream	34	39
		Chinese	36	33
high	mainstream	mainstream	35	34
		Chinese	34	34
	Chinese	mainstream	30	34
		Chinese	34	33

**Table 4.2 Frequency Distribution of Education and Income Levels by Mainstream and Ethnic Participants**

Socio-demographics	Level	Valid %	
		Mainstream participants	Ethnic Chinese participants
Education	Some college or less	27%	17%
	College degree	47%	39%
	Post-graduate	26%	44%
Income	\$50,000 or less	23%	24%
	\$50,001–\$100,000	46%	40%
	\$100,001 or more	20%	20%
	Prefer not to say	11%	16%

### Procedures

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the eight between-subjects scenarios when they visited the online research website. They read an introduction to a newly opened restaurant and viewed five photographs (two photographs of the physical environment, one of the service team, one of the customers, and one of the menu). The introduction and the photographs were developed in the pilot study. Having looked at the pictures, the participants responded to a series of questions assessing the effectiveness of the experimental stimuli, their authenticity assessments of the restaurant, their patronage intentions, and their personal demographics. The study ended with an open-ended question in order to elicit feedback and a thank-you

statement. The survey was designed to take approximately 10–15 minutes to complete.

## **Measurements**

### *Manipulation check*

As presented in the pilot study, the effectiveness of the manipulation of each servicescape element was measured on a 7-point scale (“the interior of the restaurant reflects Chinese culture,” “the restaurant hires servers of Chinese background,” and “the other customers are mainly Chinese”).

### *Authenticity perceptions of ethnic-oriented services*

There is no extant scale for the authenticity assessment of ethnic-oriented service offerings. Scales developed and refined based on the pilot study were used to measure authenticity assessments. Based on the results of the pilot study, subjective authenticity, rather than objective authenticity, reflects consumers’ approach to assessing authenticity in the context of ethnic-oriented services. Four items for (subjective) authenticity were measured: “this restaurant makes me feel connected to Chinese culture,” “the appeal of this restaurant matches my impression of Chinese culture,” “this restaurant looks very Chinese to me,” and “this is an authentic Chinese restaurant.” All measurement items were on a 7-point Likert scale, asking participants’ to indicate the degree to which they agreed with each statement (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). The Cronbach’s Alpha for this 4-item authenticity assessment

was 0.91. Removing any of the four items would not have increased the reliability of the scale.

#### *Patronage intentions*

A two-item scale from Thakor et al. (2008) was adapted to measure patronage intentions. The two items were “How interested are you in dining at this restaurant?” (1 = not at all and 9 = extremely), and “How likely are you to eat at this restaurant?” (1 = very unlikely and 9 = very likely). The Pearson correlation between these two items was .89 ( $p < .001$ ).

#### *Cosmopolitanism*

Cosmopolitanism, which reflects personal traits and qualities associated with an outward, worldly orientation, was measured via an 11-item, 7-point Likert scale developed by Cleveland and Laroche (2006). The scale has a Cronbach’s Alpha of .96.

#### *Knowledge of Chinese culture*

As they had proven to be effective in the pilot study, five questions regarding Chinese cultural knowledge were used to assess whether the participant belonged to the referent ethnic segment or the mainstream segment. An independent sample t-test showed that the ethnic Chinese group obtained a significantly higher score (number of correct answers) than did the mainstream group ( $M_{\text{Chinese}} = 3.77$  vs.  $M_{\text{mainstream}} = 1.08$ ,  $t(547) = 27.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### *Control Variables*

Two individual variables related to dining behavior were included as control variables for the analysis of patronage intentions. Participants were asked to indicate their degree of familiarity with dining at Chinese restaurants in the US with anchor points: 1 = not at all and 9 = extremely familiar. In response to an open-ended question, participants also provided information about the average amount of money they spent dining out per week.

### *Demographics*

At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to provide their basic personal information such as gender, birth year, education, income, and the US state in which they were currently residing. Furthermore, questions regarding race and ethnicity were asked to decide whether a potential customer belonged to the mainstream or to the referent ethnic segment. If participants were not native born, they were asked to provide the number of years that they had been living in the US. A sample questionnaire listing all measurement items is presented in Appendix B.

## **Summary**

This chapter presented the methodology of the main study and described the study's experimental design, experimental stimuli, and measurements. Chapter 5 reports the results of the statistical analyses.

## CHAPTER V

### RESULTS OF THE MAIN STUDY

#### Overview

This chapter reports the results of the statistical analyses for the main study. First, the chapter presents the results of manipulation checks. Second, it presents the hypothesis testing results for both the mainstream participants' and the ethnic Chinese participants' authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services based on servicescape cues. Finally, this chapter reports regression analyses between authenticity assessments and patronage intentions.

#### Manipulation Checks

To check the efficacy of ethnic associations in servicescape elements, a series of independent sample t-tests were performed (see Table 5.1). As expected, participants who were shown pictures reflecting a highly Chinese-themed physical environment rated the item "Chinese culture reflected in the interior design" higher than did those who looked at the pictures of a physical environment that was not as highly themed ( $M_{low\ level\ ethnic\ theme} = 2.47$  vs.  $M_{high\ level\ ethnic\ theme} = 5.25$ ;  $t(541) = 23.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Similarly, participants who were shown the photograph of Chinese service staff rated the item "servers are mostly from a Chinese background" higher than did

those shown the photograph of the mainstream service staff ( $M_{Mainstream\ service\ team} = 1.71$  vs.  $M_{Chinese\ service\ team} = 5.44$ ;  $t(540) = 33.00$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Finally, participants who were shown the photograph of Chinese customers rated the item “the restaurant hosts mostly Chinese customers” higher than did those shown the photograph of mainstream customers ( $M_{Mainstream\ customers} = 2.12$  vs.  $M_{Chinese\ customers} = 4.78$ ;  $t(513) = 21.04$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In accordance with the results from the pilot study, the manipulation of the ethnic association of each of the three servicescape cues in the main study was successful.

**Table 5.1 Independent Sample T-Test for Manipulation Check Items**

Measurement	Pictorial Stimuli				t-value significance	
	Western level Mean	S.E.	Chinese level Mean	S.E.		
Chinese culture reflected in the interior design	2.47	.088	5.25	.078	23.69	***
Servers mostly from a Chinese background	1.71	.076	5.44	.084	33.00	***
Customers mostly from a Chinese background	2.12	.078	4.78	.10	21.04	***

Although these three servicescape elements are conceptually and practically distinct, the holistic perception of the servicescape (e.g. Bitner 1992; Lin, 2004; Mattila & Wirtz, 2001a; Morin et al., 2007) indicates that the mutual influence among these manipulated servicescape elements is inevitable. Therefore, rather than using the ANOVA model for each manipulation check to three servicescape cues, I performed three 2-way ANOVA models (customer ethnicity group and the manipulated factor on

the corresponding manipulation check item) to determine whether the ethnicity of the participants affected their perceptions of the experimental manipulation. For ANOVA models on “servers mostly from a Chinese background” and “customers mostly from a Chinese background,” the ethnicity of the participant (mainstream versus ethnic Chinese) did not have a main effect or an interaction effect with the manipulated factor on the response. Both mainstream and ethnic participants perceived the ethnic appearance of the customers portrayed in the photograph stimuli in the same way. Nevertheless, the ethnicity of the participant did interact with the manipulated degree of ethnic themes on the response “Chinese culture reflected in the interior design” ( $F(1,545) = 17.36, p < .001$ ). Compared to mainstream participants, ethnic Chinese participants had significantly higher ratings on the measurement item “Chinese culture reflected in the interior design” when the ethnic theme was high ( $M_{\text{mainstream}} = 5.04$  vs.  $M_{\text{chinese}} = 5.45$ ) and had significantly lower ratings when the ethnic theme was low ( $M_{\text{mainstream}} = 2.75$  vs.  $M_{\text{chinese}} = 2.19$ ). Such results may be due to ethnic Chinese participants’ higher level of expertise as compared to the mainstream participants about Chinese interior design style; thus, the Chinese group offered relatively more stringent judgments.

### **Results of Hypothesis Testing about Authenticity Assessment**

This study proposes that three servicescape elements—the physical environment, the service providers, and other customers—influence consumers’ authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services. Furthermore, the study proposes

that the impact of each servicescape cue can be moderated by whether customers belong to the mainstream or the ethnic customer segment. To test these hypotheses, a four-factor ANOVA model, three manipulated servicescape factors plus the customer segment (mainstream versus referent ethnic Chinese), was performed. The dependent variable—perceived authenticity—was the average of four measurement items about subjective authenticity (Cronbach's Alpha = .91).

Before the ANOVA results were examined, Levene's test of equality of error variances indicated that the homogeneity assumption associated with the ANOVA test had been satisfied ( $F(15, 533) = 1.39, p > .14$ ). Table 5.2 presents the 4-way ANOVA results, and Appendix D presents the residual plots. As hypothesized, each of the three servicescape elements had a significant main effect on authenticity perceptions:  $F(1, 533) = 210.84, p < .001$  for ethnic themes in the physical environment,  $F(1, 533) = 64.344, p < .001$  for the ethnicity of the service team, and  $F(1, 229) = 21.42, p < .001$  for the ethnicity of the other customers. The authenticity perception increased when there was a high level of ethnic theme in the physical environment ( $M_{\text{low level}} = 2.62$  vs.  $M_{\text{high level}} = 4.07$ ), with a Chinese service team ( $M_{\text{mainstream}} = 2.95$  vs.  $M_{\text{Chinese}} = 3.75$ ), or when other customers were of Chinese origin ( $M_{\text{mainstream}} = 3.12$  vs.  $M_{\text{Chinese}} = 3.58$ ). As for the hypothesized two-way interactions (H2a, H3a, H4a), only customer segment and ethnic theme demonstrated a significant interaction ( $F(1, 533) = 7.28, p < .01$ ). However, this two-way interaction was not included in the interpretation due to the existence of a higher-order four-way interaction ( $F(1, 533) = 3.97, p < .05$ ). The four-way interaction suggested that mainstream participants and referent ethnic participants

had different perceptions of authenticity given different combinations of the three servicescape elements. To interpret this four-way interaction, I performed separate three-way ANOVA models (authenticity assessment to the three servicescape cues) for the mainstream and the ethnic Chinese group.

**Table 5.2 ANOVA Results of Authenticity Assessments to Servicescape Cues and Customer Segment**

Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	442.483 <sup>a</sup>	15	29.499	21.664	.000
Intercept	6134.578	1	6134.578	4505.170	.000
Segment	4.096	1	4.096	3.008	.083
Ethnic_Theme	287.092	1	287.092	210.837	.000
Service_team	87.616	1	87.616	64.344	.000
Other_cust	29.163	1	29.163	21.417	.000
Segment * Ethnic_Theme	9.907	1	9.907	7.276	.007
Segment * Service_team	.791	1	.791	.581	.446
Segment * Other_cust	.385	1	.385	.283	.595
Ethnic_Theme * Service_team	9.124	1	9.124	6.700	.010
Ethnic_Theme * Other_cust	.206	1	.206	.151	.698
Service_team * Other_cust	.828	1	.828	.608	.436
Segment * Ethnic_Theme * Service_team	.984	1	.984	.723	.396
Segment * Ethnic_Theme * Other_cust	.229	1	.229	.168	.682
Segment * Service_team * Other_cust	2.136	1	2.136	1.569	.211
Ethnic_Theme * Service_team * Other_cust	5.179	1	5.179	3.804	.052
Segment * Ethnic_Theme * Service_team * Other_cust	5.407	1	5.407	3.971	.047
Error	725.773	533	1.362		
Total	7253.819	549			
Corrected Total	1168.255	548			

a. R Squared = .379 (Adjusted R Squared = .361)

The three-way ANOVA model for the mainstream segment also satisfied the homogeneous error variances assumption with Levene's test of equality of error

variances being insignificant ( $F(7, 266) = 1.17, p > .32$ ). Table 5.3 shows the ANOVA output of the mainstream consumers' authenticity assessments of the three servicescape cues, and Appendix D displays the residual plots for this ANOVA model. The level of ethnic theme ( $F(1, 266) = 67.02, p < .001$ ), the ethnicity of the service team ( $F(1, 266) = 25.27, p < .001$ ), and the ethnicity of the other customers ( $F(1, 266) = 8.04, p < .01$ ) all had significant main effects on mainstream consumers' authenticity perceptions. The significant three-way interaction ( $F(1, 266) = 7.45, p < .01$ ), nevertheless, suggested that mainstream customers' authenticity assessments were based on the composition of the three servicescape elements.

**Table 5.3 ANOVA Results of Authenticity Assessments to Servicescape Cues (Mainstream Participants)**

Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	153.675 <sup>a</sup>	7	21.954	15.489	.000
Intercept	3222.023	1	3222.023	2273.256	.000
Ethnic_Theme	94.996	1	94.996	67.023	.000
Service_team	35.812	1	35.812	25.266	.000
Other_cust	11.401	1	11.401	8.044	.005
Ethnic_Theme *	2.054	1	2.054	1.449	.230
Service_team					
Ethnic_Theme *	.000	1	.000	.000	.988
Other_cust					
Service_team *	.152	1	.152	.107	.744
Other_cust					
Ethnic_Theme *	10.566	1	10.566	7.454	.007
Service_team *					
Other_cust					
Error	377.018	266	1.417		
Total	3733.819	274			
Corrected Total	530.693	273			

a. R Squared = .290 (Adjusted R Squared = .271)

Table 5.4 lists the mean of authenticity assessment ratings by experimental condition.

**Table 5.4 Means and Standard Errors of Authenticity Assessments across Experimental Conditions (Mainstream Participants)**

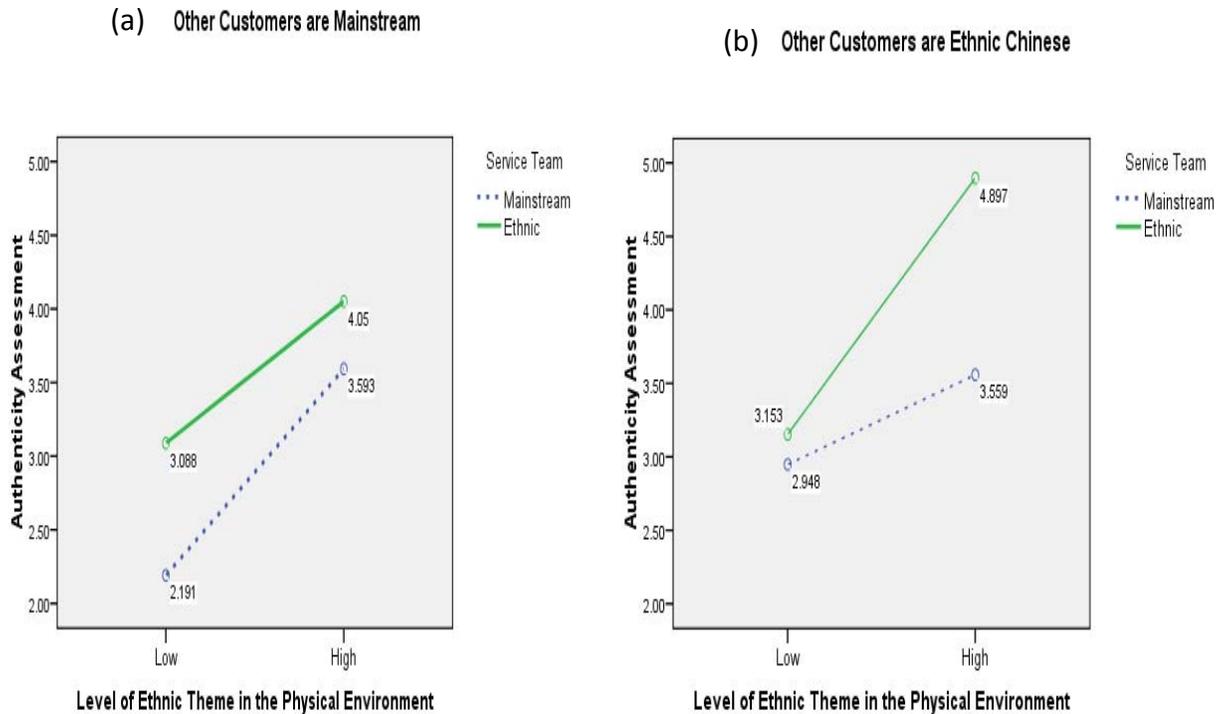
Ethnic Theme	Service team	Other customers	Mean	Std. Error
Low	Mainstream	Mainstream	2.191	.204
		Ethnic	2.948	.196
	Ethnic	Mainstream	3.088	.204
		Ethnic	3.153	.198
High	Mainstream	Mainstream	3.593	.201
		Ethnic	3.559	.204
	Ethnic	Mainstream	4.050	.217
		Ethnic	4.897	.204

Figure 5.1 provides a visual illustration of the three-way interaction. I

performed the follow-up simple simple main effects analyses in order to interpret the three-way interaction. When other customers were mainstream, the ethnicity of the service team (mainstream vs. Chinese) caused a difference in the perceived authenticity given the low level of ethnic themes in the physical environment ( $M_{\text{low ethnic theme and mainstream service team}} = 2.20$  vs.  $M_{\text{low ethnic theme and ethnic service team}} = 3.01$ ,  $F(1, 266) = 9.65$ ,  $p < .01$ ); however, the difference in the perceived authenticity due to the ethnicity of the service team became insignificant under the high level of ethnic themes in the physical environment ( $M_{\text{high ethnic theme and mainstream service team}} = 3.59$  vs.  $M_{\text{high ethnic theme and ethnic service team}} = 4.05$ ,  $F(1, 266) = 2.38$ ,  $p > .12$ ). As long as there was a high level of ethnic themes in the physical setting, the ethnicity of the service team did not

matter for authenticity perceptions. On the other hand, when the ethnic theme was low in the physical environment, the recruitment of an ethnic service team induced a higher level of perceived authenticity.

These patterns, however, were reversed when other customers were ethnic Chinese. When other customers were ethnic Chinese, the ethnicity of the service team resulted in a significant difference in perceived authenticity when there was a high level of ethnic themes in the physical environment ( $M_{\text{high ethnic theme and mainstream service team}} = 3.56$  vs.  $M_{\text{high ethnic theme and ethnic service team}} = 4.90$ ,  $F(1, 266) = 21.48$ ,  $p < .001$ ); however, this resulted in similar levels of perceived authenticity when there was a low level of ethnic themes in the physical environment ( $M_{\text{low ethnic theme and mainstream service team}} = 2.95$  vs.  $M_{\text{low ethnic theme and ethnic service team}} = 3.15$ ,  $F(1, 266) = .54$ ,  $p > .46$ ). The presence of the ethnic Chinese service team was important for authenticity assessments when the service setting was simultaneously highly ethnically themed and patronized by Chinese customers. The presence of the mainstream service team did not negatively affect the perceived authenticity of service settings that were not highly decorated with ethnic themes, as long as the patronizing customers were Chinese.



**Figure 5.1 Interaction Effect of Servicescape Cues On Authenticity Assessments (Mainstream Participants)**

As for the ethnic Chinese participants, their authenticity assessments were slightly less complex. The three-way ANOVA model among the ethnic Chinese segment satisfied the homogeneity assumption, as the Levene's test of equality of error variances assumption was not rejected ( $F(7, 267) = 1.74, p > .10$ ). Table 5.5 shows the ANOVA model output, and Appendix D shows the residual plot. The level of ethnic themes ( $F(1, 267) = 154.80, p < .001$ ), the ethnicity of the service team ( $F(1, 267) = 40.29, p < .001$ ), and the ethnicity of the other customers ( $F(1, 267) = 13.90, p < .001$ )

all had significant main effects on the Chinese consumers' authenticity perceptions.

Moreover, there was a two-way interaction between the ethnic theme and the service team ( $F(1,267) = 6.18, p < .05$ ). Table 5.6 lists the mean of authenticity assessment ratings by experimental condition.

**Table 5.5 ANOVA Results of Authenticity Assessment to Servicescape Cues (Ethnic Chinese Participants)**

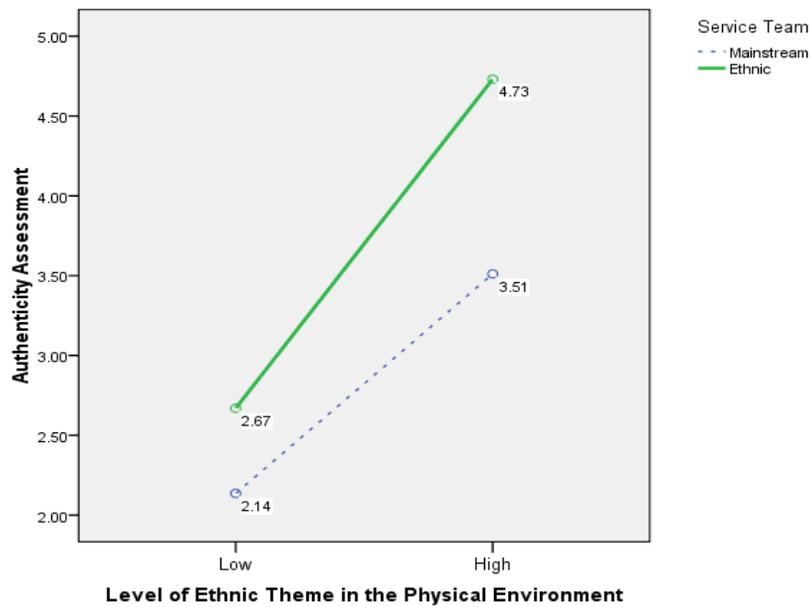
Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	284.405 <sup>a</sup>	7	40.629	31.105	.000
Intercept	2916.098	1	2916.098	2232.507	.000
Ethnic_Theme	202.198	1	202.198	154.799	.000
Service_team	52.626	1	52.626	40.290	.000
Other_cust	18.159	1	18.159	13.902	.000
Ethnic_Theme *	8.065	1	8.065	6.175	.014
Service_team					
Ethnic_Theme *	.435	1	.435	.333	.564
Other_cust					
Service_team *	2.817	1	2.817	2.157	.143
Other_cust					
Ethnic_Theme *	.001	1	.001	.001	.976
Service_team *					
Other_cust					
Error	348.755	267	1.306		
Total	3520.000	275			
Corrected Total	633.160	274			

a. R Squared = .449 (Adjusted R Squared = .435)

**Table 5.6 Means and Standard Errors of Authenticity Assessments across Experimental Conditions (Ethnic Chinese Participants)**

Ethnic_Theme	Service team	Other customers	Mean	Std. Error
Low	Mainstream	Mainstream	1.819	.190
		Ethnic	2.453	.202
	Ethnic	Mainstream	2.551	.183
		Ethnic	2.788	.199
High	Mainstream	Mainstream	3.110	.196
		Ethnic	3.912	.196
	Ethnic	Mainstream	4.537	.196
		Ethnic	4.924	.199

Figure 5.2 displays the interaction between the level of ethnic themes and the ethnicity of the service team on the authenticity assessments given by the Chinese participants. The simple main effect analysis shows that the ethnicity of the service team led to differences in perceived authenticity under the low ethnic theme conditions ( $M_{\text{low ethnic theme and mainstream service team}} = 2.14$  vs.  $M_{\text{low ethnic theme and ethnic service team}} = 2.67$ ,  $F(1, 267) = 7.58$ ,  $P < .01$ ). Nevertheless, the difference in perceived authenticity as a result of the ethnicity of the service team was larger under high ethnic theme conditions ( $M_{\text{high ethnic theme and mainstream service team}} = 3.51$  vs.  $M_{\text{high ethnic theme and ethnic service team}} = 4.73$ ,  $F(1, 267) = 38.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In other words, the presence of an ethnic service team could increase authenticity perceptions to a higher level in the ethnically themed service setting than settings that are not highly decorated using an ethnic theme. This pattern is similar to mainstream participants' responses when the other customers were ethnic Chinese.



**Figure 5.2 Interaction Effect of Servicescape Cues on Authenticity Assessment (Ethnic Chinese Participants)**

### **Results of Hypothesis Testing about Patronage Intentions of Ethnic-Oriented Services**

The preceding section reports how the participants assessed the authenticity of the ethnic-oriented services prior to actual consumption based on three key servicescape elements. The second part of the conceptual model of this study considered the relationship between the perceived authenticity of and patronage intentions for ethnic-oriented services. The perceived authenticity is hypothesized as positively influencing patronage intentions. Furthermore, cosmopolitanism as an individual trait (the average of 11 measurement items) is hypothesized to increase patronage intentions, especially among mainstream customers. To investigate the

effects of perceived authenticity on patronage intentions, multiple regression analyses were conducted.

In multiple regression models, the patronage intentions (the average of two purchase intention measurements, Pearson correlation = .89) were regressed on authenticity perceptions and individual levels of cosmopolitanism. The customer's ethnic group (ethnic Chinese or mainstream) was hypothesized as moderating the effect of perceived authenticity and cosmopolitanism on patronage intentions. However, including the dummy variable of the customer's ethnicity group and its interaction with the independent variable into an overall regression model led to a serious problem of multicollinearity, judged by the VIF value of each indicator variable. The multicollinearity problem could not be resolved by centering continuous variables. Therefore, regression models were conducted for the ethnic Chinese segment and the mainstream segment, respectively. Furthermore, the participants' familiarity with Chinese restaurants in the US and the amount of money they spent on dining out were also included as independent variables, as these were likely to influence their patronage intentions with regard to ethnic restaurants. Money spent on dining out did not serve as a significant explanatory variable in any of the regression models performed and, therefore, is not included in our discussion.

Table 5.7 shows the output of the regression model for the mainstream segment. To reduce the multi-collinearity that resulted from the interaction, all the variables were centered. The VIF value of each indicator was less than 10 and tolerance value of each was higher than .2, thus indicating that the multi-collinearity

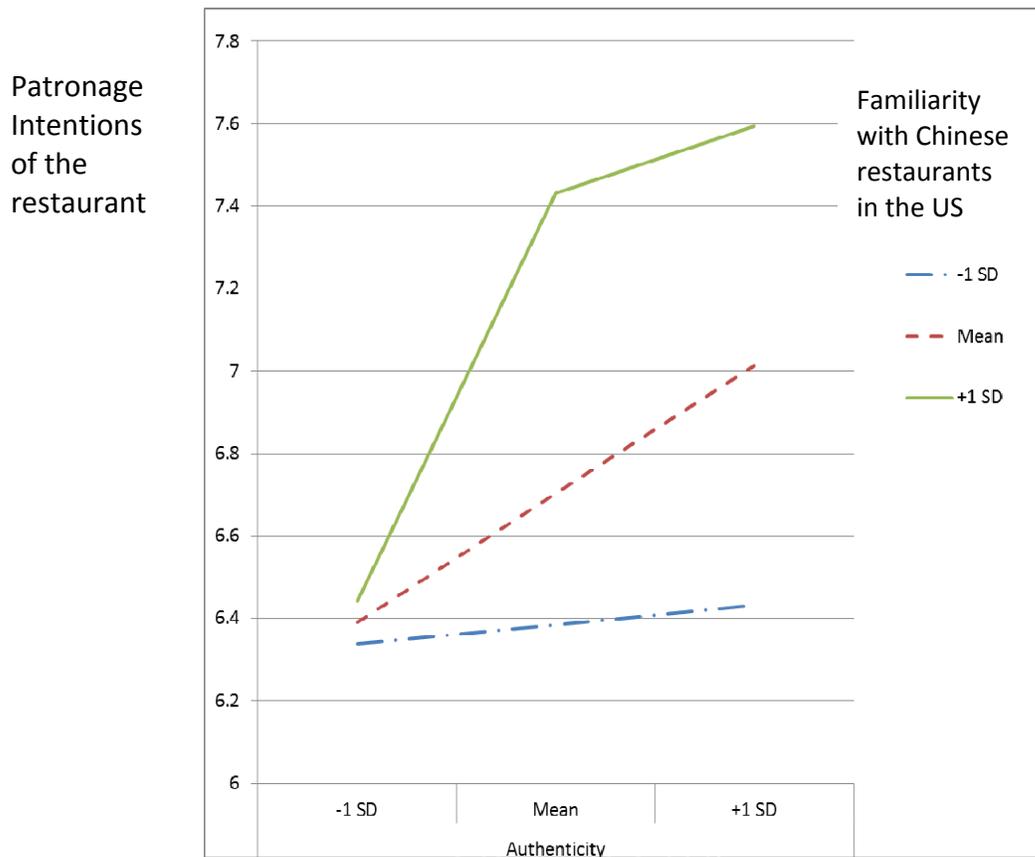
problem had been obviated. The three independent variables and the two interaction terms explained 24% of the variance in patronage intentions ( $F(5, 264) = 18.26, P < .001$ ). The results indicated that the individual trait of cosmopolitanism was positively associated with mainstream customers' patronage intentions toward the Chinese restaurant described in the scenario ( $B = .335, p < .001$ ). However, unlike the hypothesized authenticity and cosmopolitanism interaction, perceived authenticity was found to interact with familiarity with Chinese restaurants in explaining patronage intentions ( $B = .159, p < .05$ ). The residual plots of this regression model are shown in Appendix E.

**Table 5.7 Results of Regression Analyses: Authenticity Assessment, Cosmopolitanism, Familiarity and Patronage Intentions (Mainstream Participants)**

Model	Regression coefficients		Standardized Coefficients B
	b	S.E.	
(Intercept)	6.698		
Customer Ethnicity			
Perceived authenticity	.223* *	.071	.168
Cosmopolitanism	.577* **	.103	.335
Familiarity	.169* *	.059	.171
Authenticity * Customer Ethnicity	-.024	.074	-.020
R <sup>2</sup>	.257		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.243		
F-value	18.257*** (df = 5, 264)		

2. \*\*\* p-value < .001; \*\* p-value < .01

To further interpret the interaction effect between two continuous variables of perceived authenticity and overall familiarity with Chinese restaurants in the US, simple slope tests suggested by Aiken and West (1991) were conducted. The procedures involved computing, plotting, and testing separate regression lines for individuals that are one standard deviation below, at the mean, and one standard deviation above the predictor. Figure 5.3 shows the interaction effect between perceived authenticity and familiarity on patronage intentions. Suggested both by the plot and simple slope tests, perceived authenticity was positively related to the patronage intentions among participants who were relatively more familiar (+1 SD) with Chinese restaurants in the US ( $B = .29, p < .001$ ), but not among participants who were relatively less familiar (-1 SD) with Chinese restaurants in the US ( $B = -.03, p > .70$ ).



**Figure 5.3 Interaction Effect of Perceived Authenticity and Familiarity on Patronage Intentions (Mainstream Participants)**

The same regression models were performed for Chinese participants. The indicator variables were also mean-centered to reduce the problem of multicollinearity. The regression output in Table 5.8 indicates that for Chinese participants, only perceived authenticity and cosmopolitanism were positively associated with patronage intentions toward the Chinese restaurant described in the scenario. These two indicators could explain 28% of the variance in patronage intentions ( $F(2, 272) = 53.07, p < .001$ ). Both perceived authenticity ( $b = .60, p < .001$ )

and cosmopolitanism ( $b = .55, p < .001$ ) were positively related to patronage intentions. The residual plots of this regression model are displayed in Appendix E.

**Table 5.8 Results of Regression Analyses: Authenticity Assessment, Cosmopolitanism, Familiarity and Patronage Intentions (Chinese Participants)**

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Regression Coefficients			Regression Coefficients		
Model	b	S.E.	B	b	S.E.	B
(Intercept)	5.985	.103		5.987	.103	
Perceived authenticity	.613***	.068	.463	.602***	.068	.454
Cosmopolitanism	.503***	.108	.250	.548***	.104	.272
Familiarity	.140	.089	.085			
Authenticity * Cosmopolitanism	-.079	.074	-.057			
Authenticity * Familiarity	-.031	.058	-.028			
R <sup>2</sup>	.291			.281		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.278			.275		
F-value	22.088*** (df = 5, 269)			53.07*** (df = 2, 272)		

Note. 1. centered variables were used to perform the regression analysis.

2. \*\*\* p-value < .001; \*\* p-value < .01

### Summary

This chapter presented the results of the statistical analyses for the main study.

The hypothesis testing results in the authenticity assessment and the patronage intentions were reported. The results indicate that mainstream customers and ethnic

Chinese customers were different in their authenticity assessments based on the composition of the three servicescape cues. Both groups evaluated the ethnic themes in the physical environment and the ethnicity of the service team jointly to determine the authenticity perception before making an actual consumption decision. The pattern for mainstream participants, however, changed when other customers were mainstream as well; that is, the presence of Chinese service team could not increase the perceived authenticity when the service environment was ethnically themed. As for patronage intentions with regard to services assessed as authentic, Chinese customers would increase their patronage intentions with regard to authentic ethnic restaurants, whereas authenticity would stimulate patronage intentions for mainstream customers only when they were relatively familiar with the ethnic offerings. Chapter VI presents a discussion of the results.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS**

Chapter VI discusses the results of the main study and offers theoretical explanations for them. The chapter begins with an overview of the empirical study and then offers a discussion of authenticity assessments and patronage intentions.

#### **Overview of the Empirical Study**

The objectives of the empirical study were (1) to investigate whether ethnic-associated cues in the servicescape are likely to influence consumers' authenticity assessments of service offerings in the pre-consumption stage; (2) to examine how referent ethnic customers and mainstream customers differ in their reliance on specific servicescape cues when assessing authenticity; (3) to test whether customers' authenticity judgment of ethnic-oriented service offerings has a positive influence on their patronage intentions; and (4) to establish whether an individual-level trait, specifically, cosmopolitanism, can influence mainstream customers' willingness to patronize ethnic-oriented services that they consider to be authentic.

The empirical study in this dissertation included one pilot study and one main study of between-subjects experimental design. The pilot study was designed to develop experimental stimuli in the context of Chinese restaurants in the US for the main study. In order to test hypotheses, the main study manipulated the degree of ethnic association of three servicescape cues: physical environment, service providers,

and other customers. Authenticity assessments, patronage intentions, and individuals' level of cosmopolitanism were measured. Participants were recruited from both the mainstream and the ethnic Chinese segment.

## **Discussion**

### **Servicescape Dimensions of Authenticity Assessment**

Adopting the dimension-based approach, this study investigated how three key servicescape dimensions—the ethnic theme of the physical environment, the ethnic appearance of the service providers, and the ethnic appearance of other customers—influence customers' pre-consumption authenticity assessments of ethnic-oriented services. The results support H1, H2, and H3, which state that the ethnic association suggested by each of these servicescape elements can have a main effect on increasing authenticity assessments of ethnic service offerings. These results are in accordance with numerous studies in the literature that stress the importance of the physical environment to consumers' authenticity assessments (Asplet & Cooper, 2000; Cohen, 1988, 1993; Ebster & Guist, 2004; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; MacCannell, 1976; Munoz et al., 2006; Varlander, 2009). Social servicescapes—including both service providers and other customers—have also received scholarly attention with regard to authenticity construction, mostly through conceptual and qualitative matters (Lu & Fine, 1995; Taylor, 2001; Varlander 2009; Weiermair, 2000). The present empirical study supports the conclusion that social servicescapes are vital

also to consumers' perceptions. Overall, in comparison with the attribute based and classification-based approaches, the dimension-based servicescape approach demonstrates empirical significance and provides a more condensed and more objective framework through which to investigate consumers' authenticity assessments, as discussed in Chapter 2.

In as much as authenticity is a socially constructed concept and is determined via a negotiation process (Cohen 1988), individual differences are prevalent in authenticity assessments. Consumers are active creators of authenticity and have different criteria for authenticity depending on their personal experience, expertise, expectations, and/or goals (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Bruner, 1994; Chhabra, 2005; Fine, 1992). In the context of ethnic-oriented services, a customer's ethnic group could be a primary factor in explaining individual differences in authenticity assessments. Hypotheses 1a, 2a, and 3a propose that the influence of a specific servicescape dimension on authenticity assessment varies depending on whether the customer belongs to the mainstream or the referent ethnic group. It is proposed that mainstream customers rely more than referent ethnic customers on the physical environment to assess authenticity due to the former's lower level of expertise (H1a). On the other hand, it is proposed that referent ethnic customers rely more on the ethnic appearances of service providers and other customers to assess authenticity as a result of their distinctiveness in the society and thus more positive perceptions about the congruency between the self-identity and consumption setting (H2a, H3a).

The empirical study supports the notion that a customer's ethnic group influences how servicescape cues are used for authenticity assessments but that they do so according to more complex patterns than those hypothesized herein. The differences between the authenticity assessments of the mainstream customers and those of the ethnic customers did not result from one single service dimension, but from a combination of servicescape cues. Previous authenticity research has rarely investigated the joint and interactive effects of different cues in the service environment. Nevertheless, according to Gestalt perceptions of environmental psychology, people respond to their environments based on the total configuration of stimuli, rather than individual, discrete stimuli (e.g., Holahan, 1982; Kofka, 1935; Kohler, 1929; Schiffman, 2001; Mattila & Wirtz, 2001a). Servicescape researchers have also advocated for an integrated examination of multiple servicescape elements (e.g., Baker et al., 1992; Eroglu et al., 2005; Ezeh & Harris, 2007; Kearney, 2007; Lin, 2004; Reimer & Kuehn, 2005; Spangenberg et al., 2006). The present study's findings suggest that consumers, irrespective of their ethnicity, use a holistic approach to assessing authenticity. Servicescape dimensional cues may have interacted with each other to affect perceived authenticity. The authenticity assessments of the Chinese participants were affected by the interplay of two servicescape cues (the ethnic theme in the physical environment and the ethnic appearance of the service team), whereas the authenticity assessments of the mainstream participants were affected by the interplay of all three servicescape cues.

### **Authenticity Assessments of the Ethnic versus the Mainstream Participants**

For ethnic customers, the presence of other referent ethnic customers provides a direct positive influence on perceived authenticity. Yet, the different combinations of the physical environment and the ethnicity of the service team lead to different degrees of perceived authenticity (see Figure 5.2). The positive influence of the ethnic service team on perceived authenticity was stronger when the service environment was also ethnically themed ( $M_{\text{high ethnic theme and mainstream service team}} = 3.51$  vs.  $M_{\text{high ethnic theme and ethnic service team}} = 4.73$ ,  $t(267) = 6.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ). When the service environment was not ethnically themed, the presence of the ethnic service team had only a small level of positive increments on authenticity assessments ( $M_{\text{low ethnic theme and mainstream service team}} = 2.14$  vs.  $M_{\text{low ethnic theme and ethnic service team}} = 2.67$ ,  $t(267) = 2.75$ ,  $p < .01$ ). An additional post-hoc linear contrast shows that if the ethnic association can only be manifested in either the physical environment or by the service team, the ethnic environment would have a more significant positive impact on authenticity assessment than would the ethnic service team ( $M_{\text{low ethnic theme and ethnic service team}} = 2.67$  vs.  $M_{\text{high ethnic theme and mainstream service team}} = 3.51$ ,  $t(267) = 4.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

The results suggest the importance of ethnic congruency among the ethnicity of the service offering, the physical environment, and the service providers. When a firm provides ethnic-oriented services, it should construct its physical servicescape and social servicescape accordingly in order to appear as authentic as possible. Incongruent environmental cues tend to result in lower perceived unity or less coherent ensemble effects (Bell et al., 1991); therefore, without the matching ethnic

association in the other servicescape dimension neither the ethnically themed servicescape nor the ethnic service team could stimulate perceived authenticity. Servicescape research has shown the positive impacts of congruent servicescape attributes on consumer perception and behavioral intentions, such as the congruence between scent and music (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001a; Spangenberg et al., 2005) and congruence between color and lighting (Babin et al, 2003; Spies et al., 1997). Such studies demonstrate the congruence between attributes within the same ambient factor, whereas this study suggests a higher level of congruency between the overall physical servicescape and the constructed social servicescape—the presence of service providers. The presence of other ethnic customers served as an independent piece of information with its main effect on authenticity assessments for referent ethnic participants.

On the other hand, mainstream customers' authenticity assessments were based on the interplay of three elements, as illustrated by Figure 5.1. The ethnic appearance of other customers affected how the customers assessed authenticity from the combination of the physical environment and the service team. When other customers were ethnic, the mainstream participants showed evaluation patterns that were similar to those evinced by the Chinese participants. The presence of the ethnic service team (compared to the mainstream service team) only led to significant increases in perceived authenticity when the service environment was ethnically themed ( $M_{\text{high ethnic theme and mainstream service team}} = 3.56$  vs.  $M_{\text{high ethnic theme and ethnic service team}} = 4.90$ ,  $t(266) = 4.64$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The presence of the ethnic service team did not increase

the perceived authenticity when the service environment was not ethnically themed ( $M_{\text{low ethnic theme and mainstream service team}} = 2.95$  vs.  $M_{\text{low ethnic theme and ethnic service team}} = 3.15$ ,  $t(266) = .73$ ,  $p > .46$ ). These patterns reversed, however, when the other customers were mainstream. When other customers were mainstream, the presence of a Chinese service team did not increase the perceived authenticity in the highly ethnically themed environment ( $M_{\text{high ethnic theme and mainstream service team}} = 3.60$  vs.  $M_{\text{high ethnic theme and ethnic service team}} = 4.05$ ,  $t(266) = 1.54$ ,  $p > .12$ ). The lack of ethnic cue in the company-constructed servicescape resulted in a significant decrease in perceived authenticity ( $M_{\text{low ethnic theme and mainstream service team}} = 2.19$  vs.  $M_{\text{low ethnic theme and ethnic service team}} = 3.09$ ,  $t(266) = 3.11$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Compared to the ethnic Chinese participants, the mainstream participants incorporated the presence of other customers in their evaluations of authenticity based on the company-constructed servicescape. When other customers were mainstream, the authenticity perception did not increase even when the company had constructed an ethnic-congruent servicescape with ethnic themes in the interior design and the presence of ethnic service providers. However, when the other customers were referent ethnic, an incongruent servicescape (low level of ethnic themes and mainstream service team) could still achieve a certain level of perceived authenticity. This implies that a service firm's efforts to construct a seemingly authentic servicescape are likely to be undermined if the firm does not attract referent ethnic customers, and yet the lack of an ethnically congruent servicescape is unlikely

to undermine the firm's perceived authenticity provided that it attracts ethnic customers.

To sum up, both customer segments assessed the company-constructed servicescape (the ethnic theme in the physical environment and the ethnic appearance of the service team) holistically, but they differed in their treatment of information regarding the ethnic appearance of other customers. Ethnic participants considered the ethnic presence of other customers to be an independent piece of information, whereas mainstream customers applied the information about other customers to their authenticity assessments based on the company-constructed servicescape.

The discovered differences in the information processing between ethnic and mainstream participants could be explained by their different levels of expertise about the service offerings. A consumer's prior knowledge has been shown to influence information processing of stimulus-based cues and consequent product evaluations and preferences (Brucks, 1985; Lynch et al., 1998). Cues used to judge products can be intrinsic or extrinsic; intrinsic cues are physical attributes associated with the product itself, and extrinsic attributes are market-determined and can change without altering the physical make-up of the product (Cordell, 1997; Olson, 1977; Olson & Jacoby, 1972). Research has shown that low-expertise consumers are more likely to use extrinsic or contextual cues to infer product quality than are expert consumers, as a lower level of knowledge hinders efforts to judge products based simply on intrinsic attributes (Marks & Olson, 1981; Mattila & Wirtz, 2001b; Park & Lessig, 1981; Shimp & Beardon, 1982).

In this study, the presence of other customers is an extrinsic cue, and the company-constructed servicescape is an intrinsic cue. Mainstream customers who had relatively low knowledge had to rely on the extrinsic cue of other customers to determine their evaluation of intrinsic cues. This also echoes the point that low-knowledge consumers rely more on recommendations to form product attitudes than do high-knowledge customers (King & Balasubramanian, 1994). Therefore, the mainstream customers' relatively low level of expertise as compared with the referent ethnic customers' high level of expertise resulted in different information processing—information processing whereby the mainstream customers used external cues (the presence of other customers) to adjust their service evaluations from internal cues (the company-constructed physical and social servicescape).

### **Patronage Intentions of Authentic Service Offerings among the Ethnic versus the Mainstream Participants**

Another purpose of this study was to find out whether the perceived authenticity, stimulated by the three servicescape dimensions, would affect consumers' patronage intentions with regard to ethnic-oriented services. Scholars have stated that authenticity can serve as a competitive advantage for firms and a product appeal to consumers and thus be capable of driving consumers' behavioral intentions (e.g., Beverland, 2005; Kolar & Zabkar, 2009; Lu & Fine, 1995; Rose & Wood, 2005). However, there have been few empirical investigations into the relationship between consumers' authenticity perceptions and behavioral intentions, and the pre-

consumption stage has been particularly neglected. The findings of the present study indicate that the perceived authenticity of ethnic-oriented service offerings can be a driving force for consumer patronage, and yet the patterns of this positive influence were not the same for the two groups.

For ethnic Chinese customers, perceived authenticity was a significant and direct factor driving patronage intentions. Given their higher level of knowledge about service offerings, it is natural that when they want consumer services oriented toward their own ethnic group, they would like to have authentic ones. Individual level of cosmopolitanism was another factor that was positively associated with patronage intentions with regard to ethnic-oriented services. Cosmopolitanism typically refers to a willingness to consume culturally oriented products and services and to engage with different cultures, possibly coupled with some knowledge of the other culture (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; Hannerz, 1992; Skrbis et al., 2004; Thompson & Tambyah, 1999). Yet, its influence on buying behavior is not limited to other ethnic products. Cleveland et al. (2009) found that this individual trait is also associated with a high level of consumption of traditional food and beverages. Therefore, that Chinese consumers who were cosmopolitan had higher patronage intentions toward the Chinese restaurant is in accord with the results of previous research.

For mainstream participants, cosmopolitanism was also a positive factor that directly influenced their patronage intentions of ethnic oriented services. People with a high level of cosmopolitanism have the ability to consume and appreciate cultural

symbols and practices that originate outside their home countries (Skrbis et al., 2004; Thompson & Tambyah, 1999). Thus, it is not surprising to find that cosmopolitanism was also positively related to the patronage intentions of ethnic-oriented services for mainstream participants. Nevertheless, the hypothesis that authentic service offerings stimulate stronger patronage intentions among people with a high level of cosmopolitanism was not supported (H4a). Instead, consumers' familiarity with ethnic services moderated the relationships between perceived authenticity and patronage intentions. As Figure 5.3 shows, authentic service offerings only stimulated patronage intentions when people were relatively familiar with ethnic services. Although cosmopolitanism could encourage mainstream customers to consume ethnic-oriented service offerings, it was consumers' familiarity with the product that allowed them to appreciate the authentic offerings. As Lu and Fine (1995) proposed, for clients outside the ethnic group, culinary traditions must appear to be both exotic and familiar.

## CHAPTER VII

### THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This chapter discusses the theoretical contributions and managerial implications of the findings. In addition, the limitations of the research are addressed. The chapter concludes by offering suggestions for future research.

#### Theoretical Contributions

##### Overview

This study provides an empirical investigation of consumers' preconsumption authenticity assessments based on three key servicescape dimensions. Scholars have called for more research on consumer assessment and evaluation criteria of market offerings (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Stern, 1994) and most of the existing studies are conceptual and qualitative (e.g., Beverland et al., 2008; Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Hughes, 1995; MacCannell, 1976; Taylor, 2001; Urry, 1992; Wang, 1999). By applying the servicescape framework and an experimental design, this study provides theoretically consolidated knowledge about consumers' evaluations of authenticity. In addition, this study investigated responses not only from referent ethnic customers but also from mainstream customers, thus contributing to theoretical understanding about ethnic crossover—how a product/service originally designed for a specific ethnic minority group is accepted by mainstream customers (Grier et al., 2006). Third, by

examining the relationship between perceived authenticity and patronage intentions this study offers new information about consumer behavior in the pre-consumption stage.

### **Consumer Authenticity Assessment Approach**

The primary theoretical contribution of this study is to propose a servicescape dimension-based approach to investigating authenticity assessment. Instead of focusing on specific attributes, which tend to vary according to context (e.g., Littrell et al., 1993; Munoz et al., 2006; Yu & Littrell, 2003), or category of cues classified by researchers a priori (e.g., Beverland et al., 2008; Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Grayson & Martinec 2004), the servicescape approach provides a theoretically condensed and systematic framework for investigating how consumers assess the authenticity of market offerings. Though the product offering itself is crucial in determining authenticity (e.g., the taste of ethnic food) (George, 2001; Lu & Fine, 1995; Liu & Jang, 2008; Munoz & Wood, 2009; Sukalakamala & Boyce, 2007), this study demonstrated the usefulness of servicescapes in creating a certain level of perceived authenticity before consumers actually patronize a given service.

Second, while most studies consider authenticity assessment as it occurs during the experience or post-experience stage (e.g., Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Liu & Jang, 2008), this study demonstrates that perceived authenticity is theoretically important in the pre-consumption stage. With the advance of information technology, consumers have the ability to assess servicescape online prior

to patronizing; for example, prospective customers can look at photographs or videos of the restaurant setting that show the physical environment, service providers, and possibly other customers as well. Or, if the services are nearby, they may form some impressions about the servicescape when they pass by. Servicescape research has shown that the positive perception of servicescape may serve as a background cue that leads to positive perceptions of other focal product and service attributes (Chebat & Michon, 2003; Morin et al., 2007; Reimer & Kuehn, 2005).

Furthermore, this study provides preliminary evidence for a possible interaction between various servicescape cues that, in turn, affects authenticity assessments. Whereas certain studies address the importance of both the physical servicescape and the social servicescape for authenticity assessments (e.g., Lu & Fine, 1995; Munoz et al., 2006), their methodologies did not allow them to discover the interplay between different cues. Through a controlled experiment, this study showed that evaluation cues from the company-constructed servicescape, including the physical environment and service providers, jointly affect customers' authenticity perceptions. Consumers' evaluations of the company-constructed servicescape as a whole reflect the gestalt approach of environmental psychology (Holahan, 1982; Kofka, 1935; Kohler, 1929; Mattila & Wirtz, 2001a).

### **Individual Differences in Authenticity Assessments**

In stressing the importance of individual differences in authenticity assessment, authenticity research has established that various sources of individual differences,

including expertise, expectation, and motivations, influence how customers interpret assessment cues on which they base their judgments (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Bruner, 1994; Cohen, 1988; Lu & Fine, 1995; Laxon, 1991; Silver 1993). In the context of ethnic-oriented product offerings, the ethnic group to which customers belong plays an important role in their interpretations of ethnic cues embedded in the product offerings (Grier et al., 2006). This study supports the idea that a consumer's ethnic group is an important consumer characteristic pertinent to evaluations of ethnic-oriented services.

Most studies propose that the feeling of ethnic distinctiveness (i.e., the salient ethnic group membership for minorities) and non-distinctiveness (i.e., the mainstream group in society) explains the different responses to ethnic cues evinced by the referent ethnic group and the mainstream group, respectively (Aaker et al., 2000; Grier & Deshpande, 2001; McGuire et al., 1978). Referent ethnic groups tend to respond more favorably to ethnic cues targeting them because of the heightened level of felt similarity that arise from ethnic congruence between product and self-identity (Grier et al., 2006). This study, nevertheless, indicates that the level of expertise about service offerings provides another point to consider in understanding the role of the customer's ethnic group in product and service evaluation.

This study demonstrates that it is possible for the referent ethnic group and the mainstream group to evince a similar level of authenticity perception and yet process servicescape cues differently. Research has shown that compared to high-expertise customers low-expertise customers rely more on extrinsic product information to infer

quality and to form attitudes (Marks & Olson, 1981; Mattila & Wirtz, 2001b; Park & Lessig, 1981; Shimp & Bearden, 1982). This study shows that referent ethnic customers (high expertise) treat the presence of other customers (extrinsic information) as an independent piece of information, whereas mainstream customers (low expertise) rely on the presence of other customers to determine their overall authenticity perceptions of the company's constructed servicescape. This finding contributes to the development of theoretical knowledge about how consumers evaluate servicescape cues.

### **Patronage Intentions**

A number of studies have suggested that a product or service offering perceived as authentic carries deeper meaning and has more value for its consumers (e.g., Carroll & Wheaton, 2009; Frazier et al., 2009; MacCannell, 1973), and this study builds a positive relationship between consumers' perceptions of authenticity at the pre-consumption stage and their patronage intentions. Even before actual consumption, a perception of authenticity simply derived from the servicescape could drive consumers' patronage intentions. Therefore, perceptions of authenticity are of great theoretical importance in the pre-consumption stage.

This study also contributes to the literature about ethnic cross-over. Consumers' ethnic identities not only affect their attitudes toward ethnic product offerings but also their intended consumption (Grier et al., 2006). This study indicates that an authentic service offering would be appealing for all referent ethnic customers

and yet only for mainstream customers who are already relatively familiar with ethnic oriented services. In general, increased usage of or familiarity with a product results in increased consumer expertise and a propensity to try new products (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Steenkamp & Gielens, 2003). Thus, when investigating mainstream customers' patronage intentions of ethnic-oriented services, dispositions, such as cosmopolitanism, and social behavior, such as product usage, need to be considered.

### **Summary**

This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of consumer authenticity assessments by providing a quantitative and systematic investigation into the context of ethnic-oriented services. The research findings address several research gaps by (1) providing a servicescape dimension approach to examining customers' authenticity assessments, (2) demonstrating the interactive nature of authenticity assessment cues, (3) presenting the moderating effect of individual differences on authenticity assessment, and (4) testing the relationship between pre-consumption perceived authenticity and patronage intentions.

### **Managerial Implications**

This research also has several important managerial implications for service firms, particularly cultural entrepreneurs interested in designing services targeting

specific ethnic groups or in using the ethnic orientation as the selling point of their services. Several implications are discussed in the following sections.

### **Servicescapes and Authenticity Assessments**

First of all, this study demonstrates that key servicescape dimensions—physical environment, appearance of the service team, and appearance of other customers—can provide ethnic cues based on which customers assess the authenticity of service offerings when making patronage decisions. To differentiate themselves from their competitors, service companies need to emphasize the uniqueness and special quality of the servicescape and their service offerings. In the context of ethnic-oriented services, the notion of authenticity is important unless service firms intend to create a fantasy service setting (e.g., Disneyland) or position themselves as a place of fusion. Yet, what is perceived as authentic must conform to consumers' mental frames of how things should be (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). This study suggests that providing an ethnically themed physical environment, recruiting ethnic service providers, and attracting ethnic customers are all helpful in creating the sense that a service offering is authentic. Even for ethnic dining services where food is the core product, constructing an ethnically congruent servicescape is important.

In addition, this study shows that consumers judge the company-constructed servicescape (the physical environment and the presence of service providers) in a holistic way. In order to be perceived as authentic, the company may have to ensure that the physical environment and the service providers are ethnically congruent.

Reducing one of the two elements (e.g., using a low ethnic theme in the physical environment but recruiting ethnic service providers, or using a high ethnic theme in the physical environment but recruiting mainstream service providers) will be much less effective in eliciting high authenticity assessments. This requirement for ethnic congruency in the company-constructed environment is found among both the referent ethnic customers and the mainstream customers.

The presence of other referent ethnic customers is shown to have positive effects on perceived authenticity. Mainstream customers even rely on the ethnic presence of other customers in evaluating the company-constructed servicescape. Even though the presence of other ethnic customers is not within direct control of the service firm and depends on some situational factors, such as the location of the restaurant, the composition of the population, and timing, service firms can give the impression that “ethnic customers patronize this restaurant” through marketing efforts. For example, service firms can use testimonials from ethnic customers and photographs showing ethnic consumers on the company website and other promotional materials. However, patronage of other ethnic customers as an absolute (i.e., “only ethnic customers consume services here”) may deter mainstream customers from visiting, as they may not feel comfortable in an environment that is exclusive to one ethnicity.

### **Perceived Authenticity and Patronage Intentions**

This study shows that authenticity perception, even when based entirely on servicescapes, can have a positive influence on consumers' patronage intentions. Furthermore, authenticity is not an abstract notion; it can be pursued through service design practices that can help create potential revenues. However, for mainstream customers, perceived authenticity becomes a driving force in consumption only when they are relatively familiar with the service offerings. Some other factors are more important for attracting mainstream consumers who have little experience to authentic ethnic services. For service firms that rely on mainstream customers for revenue, a balance between perceived authenticity and familiarity is important. For example, ethnic-oriented service firms in the US may create a seemingly authentic servicescape even though they provide both ethnically authentic and Americanized offerings. For example, some Chinese restaurants provide a wide variety of food choices so that both Chinese and mainstream customers can find food they like.

### **Summary**

In summary, this study suggests that for companies providing ethnic-oriented services, it is of central importance to construct an ethnically congruent servicescape. In doing so, a company improves its chances of attracting customers who will support the authenticity of the service in the eyes of both referent and mainstream customers. Perceived authenticity prior to patronage can drive consumers' buying behavior. Yet, for mainstream customers who have little experience with a particular ethnic-oriented

product, a balance between perceived authenticity and perceived familiarity is also important.

### **Limitations**

As in all research, some research concessions were inevitable, and thus this study has some limitations and presents some opportunities for future research. Several limitations associated with this study are discussed in this section.

First, to ensure internal validity, this study may have compromised its external validity by developing photograph-based stimuli and a hypothetical scenario about a newly opened restaurant to test its hypotheses. A field study is costly and involves many uncontrollable factors particularly in the social servicescape. Extraneous servicescape elements in the field setting, such as the noise and temperature of the service environment, how crowded the setting is, and the behavior of other customers, may have rendered the findings less valid than it would have been from a scenario-based experimental design. On the other hand, photographs are commonly employed in service research to examine consumers' reactions to service settings (Bitner, 1990; Eroglu & Machleit, 1990; Hui & Bateson, 1991). A field study would support the external validity of this study's findings.

Second, the notion of authenticity measured and discussed in this study is based on the idea of the subjective perception of "type authenticity"—whether service offerings belong to the ethnic group as it claims, and yet did not cover other theoretical perspectives or other typologies of authenticity (e.g., objective, existential,

or moral authenticity). The focal discussion regarding subjective type authenticity is based on the context of pre-consumption ethnic-oriented service evaluation, in which other types of authenticity are either hard for consumers to investigate at this stage or may not even make sense. By nature, the authenticity assessment is highly context-specific (Bruner, 1994; Cohen, 1988; DeLyser, 1999; Haslam, 1985), and thus the focus on a specific context for the theoretical investigation of authenticity is essential. Other approaches to authenticity, such as existential authenticity that relates the self to the consumption experience (Wang, 1999), are also theoretically compelling. Studies with such a focus would be more suitable in service consumption context that is temporarily extended, emotionally affectionate, and physically closed (Arnould & Price, 1993, 2000).

Third, this study focuses on one industry type—full-service ethnic-oriented dining services. This industry was selected in part because of its prevalence in the US and because the notion of type authenticity has gained importance in the restaurant industry during the past decade (Carroll & Wheaton, 2009). More importantly, the impact of servicescapes on consumer behavior is more prominent in hedonic services such as full-service dining than in utilitarian services (Reimer & Kuehn, 2005). The impact of servicescape cues on perceived authenticity needs to be replicated in service contexts that are less hedonically driven.

Fourth, the data for this study were collected online, and samples were recruited from multiple sources including university faculty and staff, personal

networks, and market research panels. Data were collected in this way because of the difficulty recruiting a sufficient number of Chinese working professionals in a college town like State College. The results suggest that socio-demographic variables from mainstream and referent ethnic participants were relatively comparable. Yet, the data quality from the online sampling and data collection may still be of concern, especially as the study used an experimental design. More coherent sources of research participants, a paper-and-pencil survey or a lab environment may achieve better data quality.

Fifth, this study investigated consumer responses to ethnic-oriented services for the mainstream and referent ethnic customer segments. Consumer responses from non-referent ethnic customers (ethnic minorities that the ethnic-services are not targeting) were not empirically tested. Although the literature suggests that non-referent ethnic customers have similar responses to ethnic-oriented products as compared to mainstream customers (e.g., Green, 1999; Grier & Brumbaugh, 1999; Stayman & Deshpande, 1989), this suggestion requires further research before it can be considered conclusive for the research context and hypotheses of this study.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

This study paves the way for developing more research about authenticity in service consumptions. The previous section indicated some future research directions

that would address the limitations of this study. Furthermore, some possible interesting avenues are discussed in this section.

First, future research could examine the mediating process between servicescape characteristics and consumers' authenticity assessments. This dissertation uses low- versus high-level expertise to explain the differences between the authenticity assessment patterns of the referent ethnic and those of the mainstream customers. This explanation is plausible given the support from literature about information processing and the discovered significant differences in knowledge about Chinese culture between two groups of participants. Yet, more direct mediating processes could exist. Concepts such as perceived familiarity may serve as a mediating route. For referent ethnic customers, authenticity may indicate familiarity in a positive way, whereas for mainstream customers authenticity may have negative associations with familiarity. Further study about the mediating process of consumers' interpretations of cues and authenticity judgment would enrich the authenticity literature.

Second, this study discusses the authenticity perception induced from the servicescape, and future research could extend the notion of authenticity into the experience itself. In particular, it would be interesting to see if perceived authenticity induced by the servicescape also affects the perceived authenticity of the service provision or the experience itself. The dual model of environmental perceptions (e.g., Morin et al., 2007; Ohno, 1980, 1985, 2000) suggests that the background cue (the

service environment) can affect the perception of the focal cue (e.g., the serve offering itself). Thus, the perceived authenticity induced from the servicescape may create a halo effect in consumers' focal evaluations.

Furthermore, in addition to perceived authenticity, future studies could investigate more responses to ethnic-oriented services, including emotional responses and cognitive evaluations. Studies of ethnic appeals in advertising usually focus on overall product or advertisement attitudes (e.g., Aaker et al., 2000; Forehand & Deshpande, 2001; Green, 1999; Grier & Deshpande, 2001; Holland, 1999), and in these studies, the advertised products are generic and yet marketing communications are ethnically targeted through the use of ethnic language and/or ethnic spokesmen. This dissertation, nevertheless, examines customer responses to ethnic-oriented products and perceived authenticity is a key concept in this regard. Future studies could investigate other customer responses such as their emotions and overall impressions. These additional responses may be distinct from or highly related to the perceived authenticity. Either way, such an examination would extend scholars' understanding of the notion of authenticity.

Finally, this study touches on the intercultural service encounter between consumers and the servicescape and an extension of this would be to investigate intercultural communication between the mainstream customer and the ethnic service provider. Existing research claims that interacting with a service provider from a different cultural background is not very pleasant for customers (e.g., Barker & Hartel,

2004; Kulik & Holbrook, 2000; Paswan & Ganesh, 2005; Sharma et al., 2009).

Customers in those studies, however, were sojourners or immigrants who represented the minority in a society. In the context of ethnic cross-over, though, as in the present study, where the customers and the servers are of different ethnicities, the customers are in the mainstream and the service providers are in the minority. Thus research on intercultural service communication in this context may provide different results.

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## Appendix A

### Instrument of the Pilot Study

Experimental Stimuli with **lower level** of ethnic association in all three manipulated servicescape dimensions—the ethnic theme in the physical environment, the appearance of service team, and the appearance of other customers

*Evaluate whether you would patronize the restaurant described below...*



A restaurant named “**AVENUE**” just opened two weeks ago. Located in a downtown area with parking available, **AVENUE** is easily accessible by both public transportation and car.

**AVENUE** restaurant



In addition to the dining environment, the restaurant owner is also concerned about the quality of service. The service team in **AVENUE** went through extensive training before beginning work.



**The service team in AVENUE restaurant**

**AVENUE** is actively seeking new customers by offering delicious and affordable menu items. They are also trying to get feedback from customers in order to improve their services and food.



**Customers at AVENUE restaurant**



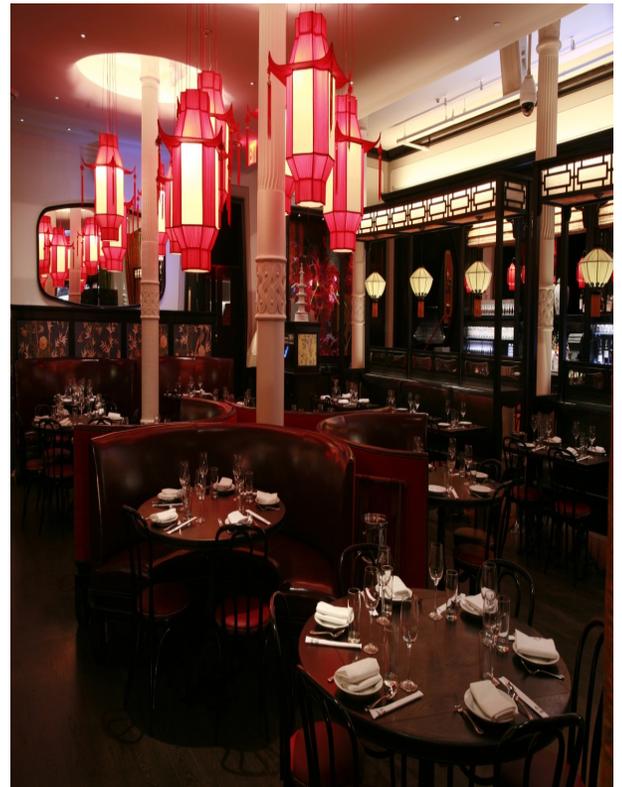
**Entrees range from \$9 to \$20**

Experimental Stimuli with **higher level** of ethnic association in all three manipulated servicescape dimensions—the ethnic theme in the physical environment, the appearance of service team, and the appearance of other customers

*Evaluate whether you would patronize the restaurant described below...*

A restaurant named “**Hu Tong**” just opened two weeks ago. Located in a downtown area with parking available, **Hu Tong** is easily accessible by both public transportation and car.

**Hu Tong** restaurant



In addition to the dining environment, the restaurant owner is also concerned about the quality of service. The service team in **Hu Tong** went through extensive training before beginning work.



**The service team in Hu Tong restaurant**

**Hu Tong** is actively seeking new customers by offering delicious and affordable menu items. They are also trying to get feedback from customers in order to improve their services and food.



**Customers at Hu Tong restaurant**



**Entrees range from \$9 to \$20**

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Section I: Please answer the following questions based on the descriptions you just read about HU TONG restaurant

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about HU TONG.

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>			<b>Strongly Agree</b>			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This restaurant is operated by Chinese owners	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This restaurant makes me feel Chinese culture	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chinese customers would feel at home here	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This kind of restaurant could very well exist in China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The appeal of this restaurant matches my impression of Chinese culture	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This restaurant looks very Chinese to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This is an authentic Chinese restaurant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Based on the pictures you saw about HU TONG ...

	Not at All			Very Much			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does the interior design of the restaurant reflect Chinese culture?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Are the servers mostly from a Chinese background?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does this restaurant host mostly Chinese customers?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does this restaurant offer Chinese food?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Are prices of entrees affordable?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section II: Below are some questions about Chinese culture. Please select the answer that you consider most true.

**Which animal does not belong among the 12 animals of the Zodiac?**

snake  cat  pig  ox

**What does the color yellow imply?**  good luck  bad luck  adult content  official content

**On what date of the lunar calendar is the MOON festival, during which people eat moon cakes?**  March 15th  August 15th  October 15<sup>th</sup>  Any date with the full moon

**When a Chinese friend asks "Have you eaten yet?", what does he mean?**

inviting you for dinner  just greeting  just curious  inviting you to visit his place

**When you receive a red envelope from a Chinese person, what do you get inside?**

a love letter  fortune cookies  cash  candy

Section III: General Information

1. Please indicate your gender:  Male  Female
2. In what year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Please specify your race:
  - American Indian/Alaska Natives  Asian  Black  Pacific Islanders  White
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
4. How would you identify yourself? (**Check all that apply**, e.g. choose both Chinese and American if Chinese-American )
  - African  American  Chinese  European  Hispanic-Latino  Indian  Japanese
  - Korean  Other: \_\_\_\_\_
5. If you are not native-born, how many years have you been living in the USA? \_\_\_\_\_ years

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire of the Main Study

Experimental Stimuli are identical with those presented in Appendix A. There are 8 scenarios in total, with either lower or higher level ethnic association in each of the three manipulated servicescape dimensions—the ethnic theme in the physical environment, the appearance of service team, and the appearance of other customers.

Section I: Please answer the following questions based on the descriptions you just read about HU TONG restaurant

- How interested are you in dining at this restaurant?

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Extremely
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- How likely are you to eat at this restaurant?

Very Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very Likely
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- How difficult do you think it will be to communicate with the waitstaff at the restaurant?

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Extremely
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----------

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about HU TONG.

	Strongly Disagree							Strongly Agree						
This restaurant makes me feel connected to Chinese culture	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The appeal of this restaurant matches my impression of Chinese culture	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This restaurant looks very Chinese to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This is an authentic Chinese restaurant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Based on the pictures you saw about HU TONG ...

	Not at All				Very Much		
Does the interior design of the restaurant reflect Chinese culture?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Are the servers mostly from a Chinese background?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does this restaurant host mostly Chinese customers?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does this restaurant offer Chinese food?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Are prices of entrees affordable?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section II: Please answer the following questions based on your personal opinions and understanding

Below is a list of descriptions about people. For each one, please indicate how often you think the description is *true of you*.

	Never True				Always true		
I am interested in learning more about people who live in other countries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I like to learn about other ways of life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I enjoy being with people from other countries to learn about their unique views and approaches	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I like to try restaurants that offer food that is different from that in my own culture	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I enjoy exchanging ideas with people from other cultures or countries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I like to observe people of other cultures, to see what I can learn from them	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I find people from other cultures stimulating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When travelling, I like to immerse myself in the culture of the people I am visiting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When it comes to trying new things, I am very open	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I enjoy trying foreign food	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Coming into contact with people of other cultures has greatly benefited me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Below are some questions about Chinese culture. Please select the answer that you consider most true.**

**Which animal does not belong among the 12 animals of the Zodiac?**

snake  cat  pig  ox

**What does the color yellow imply?**  good luck  bad luck  adult content  official content

**On what date of the lunar calendar is the MOON festival, during which people eat moon cakes?**  March 15th  August 15th  October 15<sup>th</sup>  Any date with the full moon

**When a Chinese friend asks "Have you eaten yet?", what does he mean?**

inviting you for dinner  just greeting  just curious  inviting you to visit his place

**When you receive a red envelope from a Chinese person, what do you get inside?**

a love letter  fortune cookies  cash  candy

Imagine you dine out to try Chinese cuisine. How important it is for the restaurant to be AUTHENTIC?

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Extremely
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----------

### Section III: General Information

1. Please indicate your gender:  Male  Female

2. In what year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Please specify your race:

American Indian/Alaska Natives  Asian  Black  Pacific Islanders  White

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. How would you identify yourself? (**Check all that apply**, e.g. choose both Chinese and American if Chinese-American )

African  American  Chinese  European  Hispanic-Latino  Indian  Japanese

Korean  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. If you are not native-born, how many years have you been living in the USA? \_\_\_\_\_ years

6. How familiar are you with dining at **Chinese restaurants in the US**?

Not at all      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      Extremely

7. On average, how much money do you spend dining out (for lunch and dinner) every week?  
\$\_\_\_\_\_

8. What is your highest education level?

9. Where are you currently employed?

- University (as staff)    University (as faculty)    Private, for –profit companies  
 Non-profit organization  
 Local/State/National governments                       Self-employed  
 Others: \_\_\_\_\_

10. How much is your annual household income?    \$25,000 or less    \$25,001-\$50,000  
 \$50,001-\$75,000    \$75,001-\$100,000    \$100,001 or more

11. Which U.S. state do you reside in now? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Implied Informed Consent Form



#### Implied Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research The Pennsylvania State University

**Title of Project:** Customer assessment and patronage intentions of services

**Principal Investigator:** Chen-ya Wang  
201 Mateer Building  
University Park, PA 16802  
(215) 275-5790; [cxw940@psu.edu](mailto:cxw940@psu.edu)

**Advisor:** Dr. Anna Mattila  
224 Mateer Building  
University Park, PA 16802  
(814) 863-5757; [asm6@psu.edu](mailto:asm6@psu.edu)

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research study is to explore customers' evaluations of new services.
2. **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to answer survey questions concerning how you evaluate new services, as described in the beginning of the survey. You can complete the survey either online or via paper and pencil.
3. **Benefits:** You will be exposed to current topics of interest to researchers in service industry. You might have a better understanding of how different factors affect your service evaluation and patronage intentions.
4. **Duration:** It will take about 15 to 20 minutes to complete the survey.
5. **Compensation:** A drawing for 4 Target gift cards worth \$20 each will be held when the data collection is complete. The email address is only being requested for the purposes of compensation and will not be associated with the data.
6. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The survey does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. In the event of any publication or

presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

7. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Chen-ya Wang at (215) 275-5790 with questions, complaints or concerns about this research. You can also call this number if you feel this study has harmed you.
8. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Completion and return of the survey implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to take part in the research.

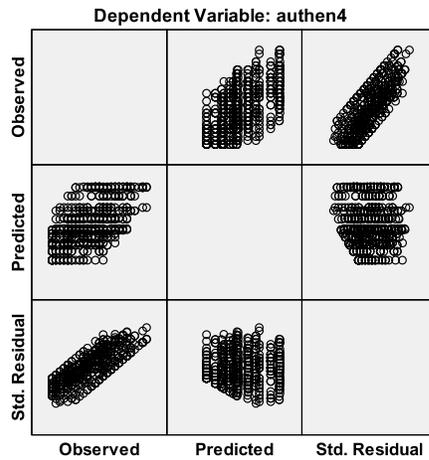
Please keep this form for your records or future reference.

If you are completing the survey online, please print a copy of the consent form to keep for your records.

## Appendix D

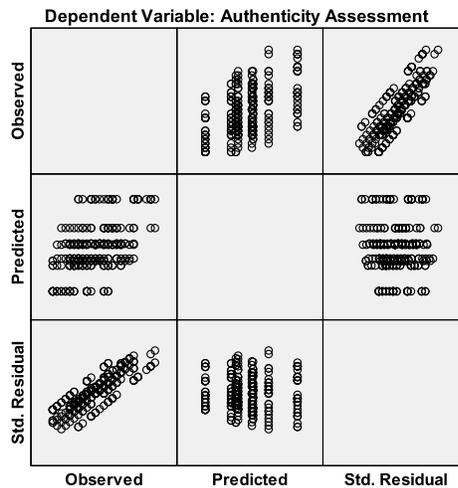
### Residual Plots of ANOVA Models

- (1) Residual Plots of four-way (Participant ethnic group and level of ethnic associations in 3 servicescape dimensions) ANOVA model on Authenticity Assessment



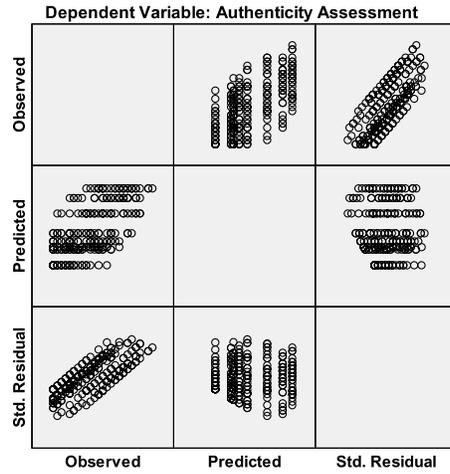
Model: Intercept + Segment + Ethnic\_Theme + Service\_team + Other\_cust + Segment \* Ethnic\_Theme + Segment \* Service\_team + Segment \* Other\_cust + Ethnic\_Theme \* Service\_team + Ethnic\_Theme \* Other\_cust + Service\_team \* Other\_cust + Segment \* Ethnic\_Theme \* Service\_team + Segment \* Ethnic\_Theme \* Other\_cust + Segment \* Service\_team \* Other\_cust + Ethnic\_Theme \* Service\_team \* Other\_cust

- (2) Residual Plots of three-way (level of ethnic associations in 3 servicescape dimensions) ANOVA model on Authenticity Assessment—Mainstream Participants



Model: Intercept + Ethnic\_Theme + Service\_team + Other\_cust + Ethnic\_Theme \* Service\_team + Ethnic\_Theme \* Other\_cust + Service\_team \* Other\_cust + Ethnic\_Theme \* Service\_team \* Other\_cust

(3) Residual Plots of three-way (level of ethnic associations in 3 servicescape dimensions) ANOVA model on Authenticity Assessment—Chinese Participants



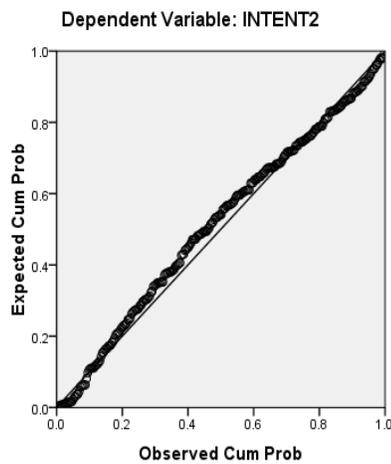
Model: Intercept + Ethnic\_Theme + Service\_team + Other\_cust + Ethnic\_Theme \* Service\_team + Ethnic\_Theme \* Other\_cust + Service\_team \* Other\_cust + Ethnic\_Theme \* Service\_team \* Other\_cust

## Appendix E

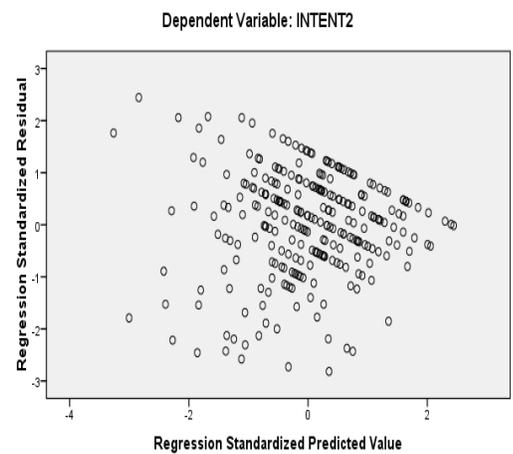
### Residual Plots of Regression Models

(1) Residual Plots of Regression Model on Patronage Intentions —Model 1 among Mainstream Participants

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

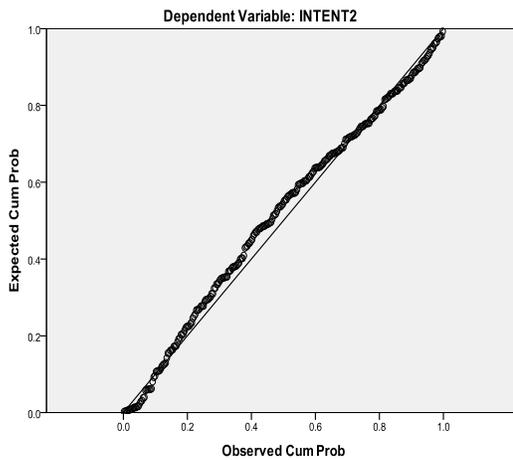


Scatterplot

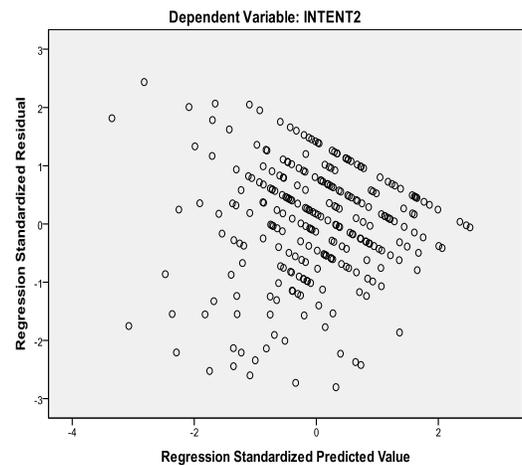


(2) Residual Plots of Regression Model on Patronage Intentions —Model 2 among Mainstream Participants

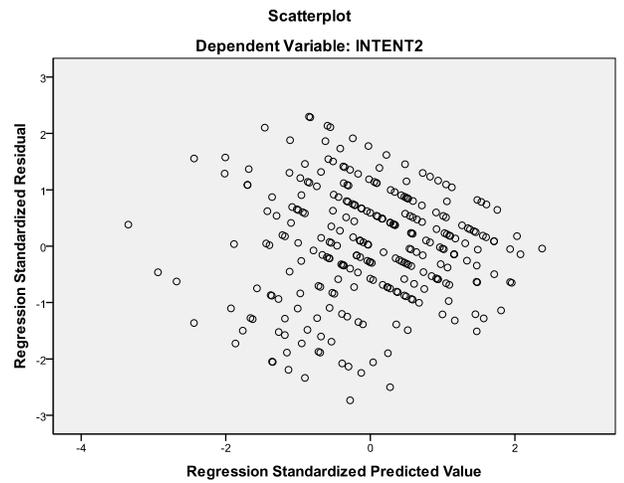
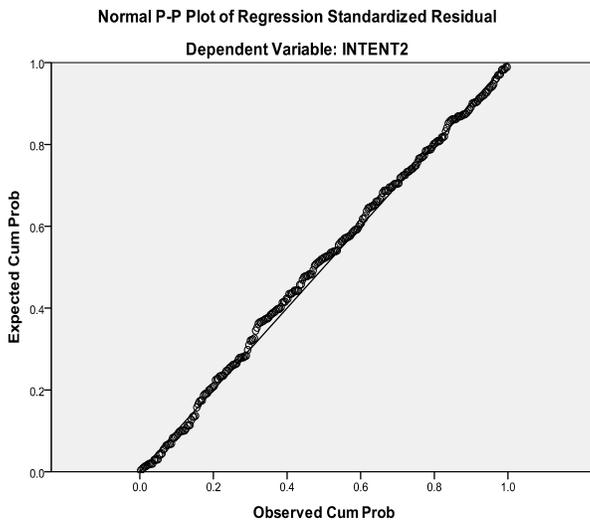
Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual



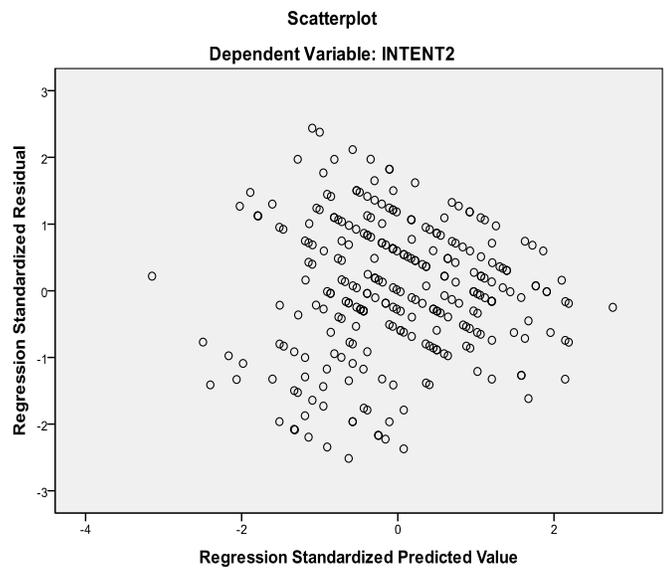
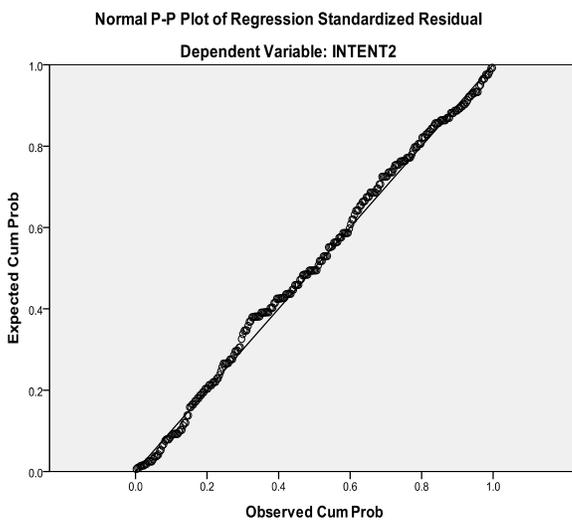
Scatterplot



(3) Residual Plots of Regression Model on Patronage Intentions —Model 1 among Chinese Participants



(4) Residual Plots of Regression Model on Patronage Intentions —Model 2 among Chinese Participants



## **VITA**

Chen-Ya Wang was born and raised in Tainan, Taiwan. Chen-Ya earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in International Business from National Taiwan University and a Master of Science degree in International Management from the University of St. Gallen. Before pursuing a doctoral degree in Hospitality Management at the Pennsylvania State University, she worked in research institutions specializing in design research and sociological research. Throughout her doctoral studies, Chen-Ya taught courses in service/hospitality marketing and conducted research focused on service encounters.