

**HOW INTERNATIONAL MARKETING STRATEGIES
POSITION THEMSELVES TO INFLUENCE MEN CONSUMERS
IN LOCAL ISLAMIC CULTURES: A STUDY IN RELATION OF
GENDER'S BEHAVIOUR AND PREFERENCES**

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ABSTRACT

Despite global economic turbulence in 2008, revenue results for global spas industry were surprisingly increased up to 8.5 percent from expected. This includes the spa industry in Malaysia which endured significant growth for the past seven years. In 2011, the spa industry contributed revenue to RM20.7 million (approximately £3.76 million) to Gross National Income (GNI).

It targets to generate RM830 million (approximately £151 million) in 2020 (Malaysia Performance Management and Delivery Unit, 2012). Spas in Malaysia have been progressed for more than 200 percent since then and International hotels have been created more demands on the spas (Jamin et al., 2015).

This study explores the implications of International Marketing Strategies (IMS) towards Muslim men-only in changing their preferences and behaviours through spas consumptions. In Malaysia, a study suggesting men have become the dominant sex using spa services despite previous cultural stereotype with 59 percent of male spa goers.

This study investigates whether IMS affects the gender masculinities in men's everyday lives and it also affected their preferences and decision to consume spas services. This study builds on previous marketing, gender and culture studies and adds to these knowledge and theory by understanding on how IMS position themselves in Islamic Cultures and the effects on men's experiences of changing and adapting gender roles in new subculture.

This study discovers about IMS that seemed as important to masculinities in Islamic Cultures, which not been explored before. The study's contribution to knowledge focuses on the experiences and perceptions of the men interviewed. It crucially located in opposition to current strategies that influenced men into the new subculture of masculinities.

It develops from past research in gaining insights on men's individual experiences of gender roles. It also presents how men behaviours and preferences created a much-needed subculture in Islamic Cultures, real life transforming from existing gender roles.

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One thing I have learnt throughout this journey was the perseverance. I almost lost in this journey. I had a gut to run away from everyone that I have in my life, even I had guts to leave my children behind because I cannot cope with the pressure. I had thought that all challenges encountered will be the end of everything. Everything seemed so dark and gloomy. I preferred to hide rather than being seen. Most prominently, that the events happened to me did not get to decide when my story is over. Only Allah does.

It takes is just one of Allah's words to take precedence over the rest. I must continue to choose to hope over fear, belief over doubt and effort over despair. Thank you, Allah, for every blessing that You have generously poured into my life. Especially the amazing husband whom You destined for me through this journey.

To my husband, I admire you in many ways. The patience and tolerance that you have showed me really inspiring me. You keep encouraging me to finish what I have started earlier. You have been with me from the beginning and keep on supporting me morally. I am all alone, juggling life as a wife, a mother and a student are never easy especially when I found out that I was pregnant with second child. The emotions to do research have been roller-coaters, and I got no support from everyone, but my dearest husband convinced

me that everything will be fine. After delivered my second born, we must return to our home country as I did not get extension to stay due to end of sponsorships, it leads to more depressions. Yet, my husband is still there to lift me up and support me mentally and emotionally to finish this programme.

Few episodes of second born been admitted into hospital due to sickness had delayed my writing process and again I felt like my world has end, depressions became severe and I need to seek help from professional as my husband seems no longer my rationale to stay in this programme but he has been a good system support to ensure I will finish my research. After viva examination, more episodes of my second born been warded in the hospital and my husband needed to undergo minor surgery. Again, I lost in this journey.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is all my own work and the sources of information and material I have used including on the Internet have been fully identified and properly acknowledge in the guidelines.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMA	American Marketing Association
CLSI	Cultural Lifestyle Inventory
ELU	English Language Use
EMAC	European Marketing Academy
EMC	Ethnic Consumer Market
EU	European United
EXM	Exposure to Marketing Activities
FTU	Facilities, Transformation, Usage
GBP	Great British Pound
GE	General Electronic
GMM	Global Mass Media Exposure
HR	Human Resource
HQ	Head Quarters
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IHIP	Intangibility, Heterogeneity, Inseparability, Perishability
IC	Islamic Culture
ISD	Integrated Strategy Development
ISPA	International Spa Association
MEG	Marketing Education Group
MNCs	Multinational Companies
OPE	Emulate Global Consumer Culture
RM	Ringgit Malaysia

TMU	Traditional, Moderate, Urban
SIN	Social Integration
SME	Small Medium Company
STP	Segmentation, Target Market, Positioning
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
WWW	World Wide Web

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CHAPTER 1

Research Overview

1.0 Introduction

In this new brave realm that is booming so fast, the level awareness of health and wellbeing is increasing, and it shapes people's lifestyles (Voigt and Pforr, 2013; Bahauddin, 2008). It means that the trend of consumptions and productions towards healthy lifestyle has changed. People go to many places that provide facilities or services to improve their healthy lifestyle such as spas to have balance life practices (Kucukusta and Denizci Guillet, 2015; Guo et al., 2015; Mak et al., 2009; ISPA, 2008; McNeil and Ragins, 2005).

Interestingly, spas are no longer known as feminised domain as the numbers of male spa goers also have been increased (Little, 2013; EL-refae, 2012; Mak et al., 2009; Monteson, 2003; Binkley, 2002). With the rise of male spa goers, it has driven multinational companies such international hotels around the world to cater to men's needs and desires (Tsai et al., 2012; Koh et al., 2010; Mandelbaum and Lerner, 2008; McNeil and Ragins, 2005; Monteson and Singer, 2004). Considering this, many industry practitioners have introduced spas especially wellness facilities and spas as part of the hotel services (Voigt and Pforr, 2013; Loureiro, Almeida and Rita, 2013; Voigt et al., 2010; Pilzer, 2007).

Wellness facilities and spas in tourism industry are expected to be new essential value of societies and potential huge market in twenty-one centuries (Kucukusta and Guillet, 2014; Voigt and Pforr, 2013; Heung and Kucukusta, 2013). The business industries all over the world have facing with tremendous revolution, attracting new segments and markets, especially in marketing function in promoting or introducing wellness spas especially in tourism industry and to males (Monteson and Singer, 2004; McNeil and Ragins, 2005).

Therefore, marketing becomes an important aspect in organisation which reflected the successfulness of one business, regardless in which industries its operated, either small or multinational companies (Lovelock and Wright, 2014). Although the idea of the important of marketing in MNCs is growing, yet very few studies have incorporated between marketing strategy with the concept of culture and customers, highlighted on gender preferences in services industries particularly in the tourism industry (Jafari et al., 2014; Jafari and Scott, 2014; Tsai et al., 2012; Gentry and Harrison, 2010; Allen, Gupta and Monnier, 2008; Poria, 2008; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006; Fuat Firat, Dholakia and Venkatesh, 1995).

The long-debated issues focused on whether international marketing adapting or not to different cultures before implementing marketing strategy (Hill and Jain, 2007; Brown et al., 2005; Kennedy, 2002; Steenkamp, 2001; Hofstede 1994; Webster Jr, 1992; Ferraro, 1990; Dickson and Ginter, 1987; Levitt, 1960). According to Saur-Amaral et.al, (2012), previously, many researchers have been argued on the topics such; how service or product value impacts on quality perceptions while marketing or promotion issues affect cultures and genders especially in tourism related industry are still remain under study.

The questions which arise from marketing and promotion issues in cultures that linked to gender are how marketing changes not only consumer behaviours, but also gender preferences and values in different cultures? International marketing strategy tends to affect the outer layers which include artefacts and values (Pickett-Baker and Ozaki, 2008; Khare, 2011; Khare, Pandey and Bhardwaj, 2014; Allen et al., 2008; Torelli et al., 2012), while this research tries to investigate on how marketing can make profound changes in cultural values.

This supported by East et, al. (2013) when they explained that the research on understanding consumer behaviour from the lens of marketing have been extensively discussed yet very little insights on how marketing alters consumer behaviour without breaking its values Islamic cultures.

Hence, it is worthy to study on these two-fold issues in marketing strategy and culture in Malaysia as most of studies been conducted are from Western perspectives (Li, 2010; Gomes, 1999). This research tries to address a gap and add an extension to existing body of knowledge in marketing areas through a comprehensive explanation on the relationship between these two concepts, and its impacts in services industry focusing on spas in tourism industry in Malaysia.

According to Malaysia's Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 1971; Malaysian government has been formulated national cultural policy and all those MNCs need to follow the principle such:

- i. The national culture of Malaysia must henceforth be based on the cultures of the people and indigenous to the region.
- ii. Elements from other cultures which are judged suitable and reasonable may be incorporated into Malaysia 's national culture.
- iii. Islam will be an important element in the national culture.

Source: (JKNN, Accessed on 1st February 2016; Gomes, 1999)

Even Malaysian government has formulated the policy, yet the implementation is still moderate. As MNCs have brought their home practices and transferred it in Malaysian market through its powerful marketing strategies. In results, Muslims' consumers have been adapted with western cultures even Islam is strong in Malaysian culture since colonisation periods (Zawawi and Ibrahim, 2010; Henderson, 2003; Kahn, 1997; Gomes, 1999; Warner, 1932).

The issues of changing the local cultures become crucial point of strong debate and political conflicts (Sian et al., 2010; Kamaruddin and Kamaruddin, 2009; Kahn, 1997). Thus, it is very important to provide in-depth understanding on how MNCs succeed in changing not only consumer behaviours, but also adjusting the roles of gender and in richer culture values such norms and beliefs.

Appropriate and credible research are desired to provide in-depth insights by examining marketing strategies, organising, implementing and controlling marketing efforts (Kotler, 2012). This research draws with current emerging literature as well as engaging with theoretical works in marketing studies to investigate the culture changes through powerful marketing strategy implemented by MNCs. Precisely, this research explores on how marketing strategy can change consumer behaviour without breaking the local culture values within the context of gender, ethnicity, religious and norms. The anecdote of this research revolves around the growth of male spa goers and the way which men consumers comprehend and interact with the spa's consumptions through marketing strategy influences.

Spas consumptions have been associated with beauty rather than health and wellness and been conquered by women consumers. However, since 2008, the number of male spa goers has been increased up to 31 percent worldwide and in 2012, 58 percent of spa goers are men. Given these significant changes of male spa goers, a greater comprehension on how MNCs marketing strategy effects on consumer behaviour and preferences has become significant. The selection of the study pursues to provide in depth understanding across numerous socio-cultural forces in a country that is predominantly Islamic.

1.1 The Changing Environment

The concept of spas is commonly used in academic learning, yet its notion is hard to define accurately. Spa is defined as a place dedicated to wellbeing that encourage for renewal body, spirit and mind, and at the same time it is considered as the best place for relaxation through different professional services (Garrow, 2008), a place for healing through water, and a place for relaxation (Cohen, 2008), a centre for healing and nourishing not only for mind but also for body and spirit (Sinaga and Mielniczak, 2006), and mostly known as a place that offer services and treatments for spa goers to live in healthy lifestyle and longer.

Keri, et.al, (2007) in their research found out that spas' services are no longer for beauty purposed but becoming as a centre for healing and nourishing. Mak et al. (2009) supported these changes by stated that people nowadays go to spa for pampering, fitness, pleasure, health, and wellness.

The global spas specially in tourism industry is not new in this era particularly among international hotels of MNCs yet it still at immaturity phase even the industry is growing rapidly and at progressive stage (Kimes and & Singh, 2008) and they are offering multiply spas globally (Cohen, 2008). Regardless of global economic turbulence and subprime crisis in 2008, revenue results for global spas industry were surprisingly boosted up to 8.5 percent from expected.

It includes spas industry in Malaysia which has endured with tremendous growth for the past seven (7) years. In 2011, Spas in Malaysia have made a significant contribution to revenue to RM20.7 million to Gross National Income (GNI) and was targeted to generate RM22 million in 2012 (Malaysia Ministry of Tourism, 2012). Spas businesses in Malaysia have been developed for more than 200 percent since then (Jamin et.al, 2015).

Besides, spas businesses were incorporated and labeled to create a new global industry, in conjunction of industries, traditions and therapeutic practices (Cohen, 2008; Wilson, 2003). Spas also merged with other fields such as architecture, property development, landscape design, fitness, and leisure as well as traditional medicine (Cohen, 2008). These services added values to spas industry and marketers look at these changes as an opportunity to growth in marketplace and increase business revenues.

Hence, spas are no longer operated only in boutique spas but also in hotels and resorts (Tsai et al., 2012; Anderson, 2006; Panchal, 2012; Madanoglu and Brezina, 2008; Kucukusta, Pang and Chui, 2013; Bahauddin, 2008; Nahrstedt, Weiermair and Mathies, 2004; Keri, Ottenbacher and Baker, 2007a; Tawil, 2011).

For example, in Malaysia, the previous spas providers (local or multinational) linked spas services with traditional heritage such traditional building, indigenous method and specific cultural values but it has been changed by integrating with western values (Bahauddin, 2008). Figure 1 and 2 will explain on the previous traditional spas and Figure 3 explains the spas at one of the five stars international hotels in Malaysia.

Figure 1: The Spa treatment available from a natural setting (source: Bahauddin (2008))

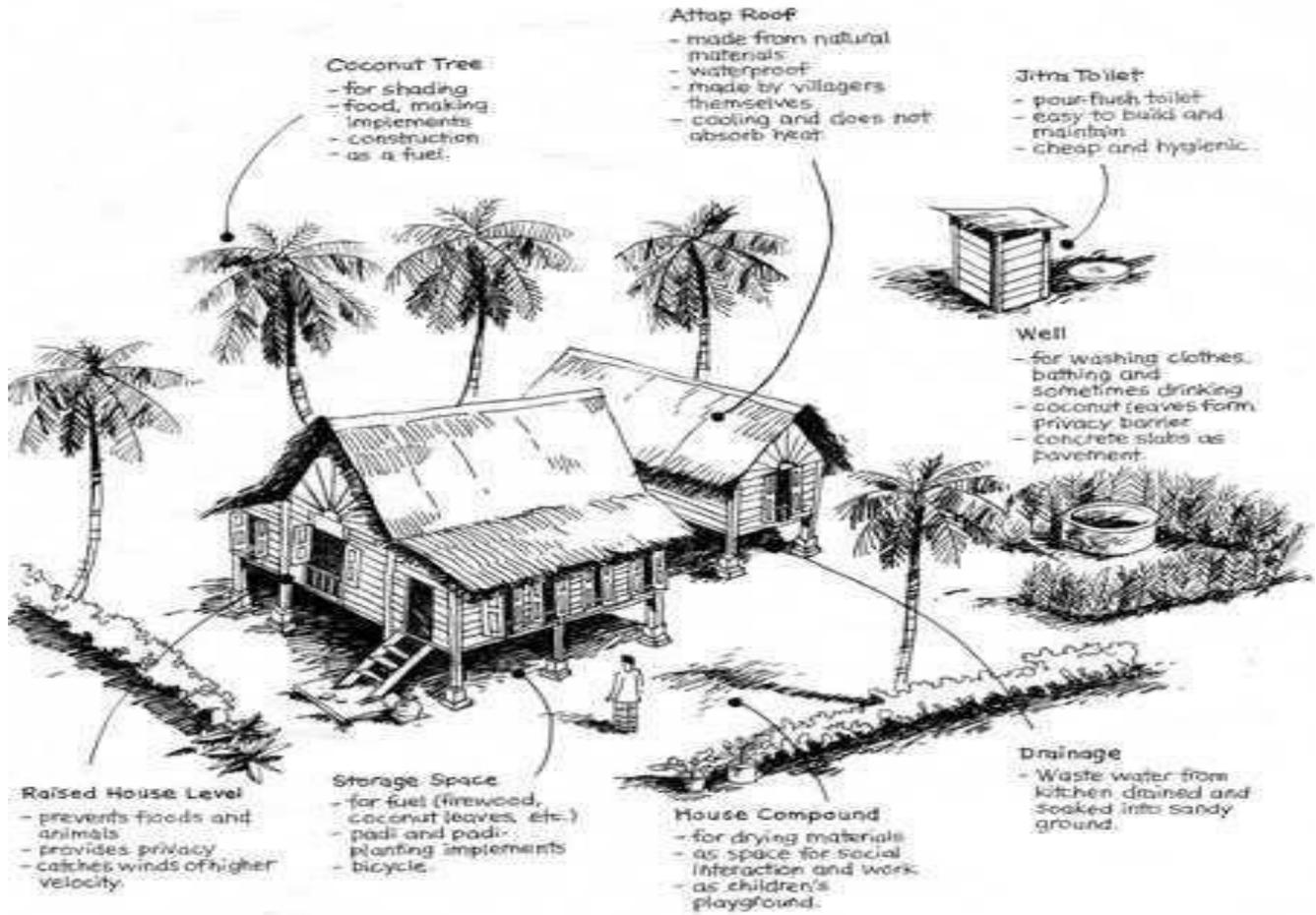


Figure 1 above shows the traditional spas space where it was offered at traditional house and had to be surrounded with traditional herbs. Traditional herbs had been used as part of the spas' treatments.

Figure 2: The space for spas treatments separated by gender (source: Bahauddin (2008))

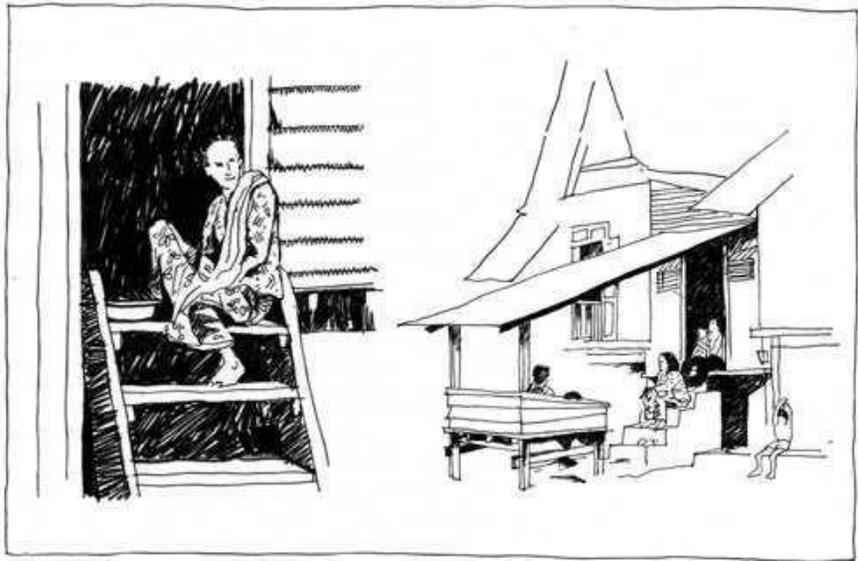


Figure 2 shows that space for males and females had been separated where males had been consumed spas treatments at open space or at front of the house meanwhile females at the back of the house (Bahauddin, 2008).

**Figure 3: The present spas space at The Westin Langkawi Resort & Spa
(Source: Personal collections)**

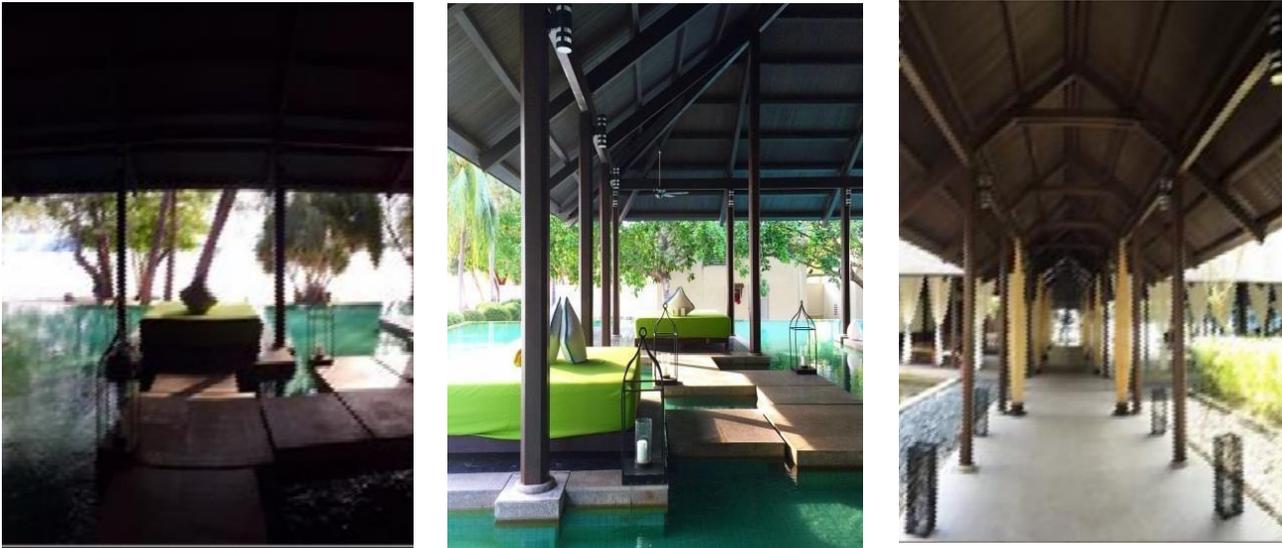


Figure 3 shows the present spas at The Westin Langkawi Resort and Spa, Malaysia which owned by the Starwood Company from U.S. Spas are not necessary surrounded by traditional plants and the space is shared by both males and females.

This research explored on how MNCs took the advantage on traditional spas and how they transformed traditional spas to the modern and exquisite spas in order to create more demands especially for male spa goers. This research assumed that physical evidence and products (services) in marketing mix plays an important role to influence consumers' preferences. The services of spas offered in hotels and resorts are usually to create a new spa trends that can cater market demand (Guillet, Zhang and Gao, 2011; Moore, 2010). The evolution of the spas industry worldwide will be further discussed in chapter 2.

Besides, the evolving of health and wellness spas services in tourism industry serves to underpin the increasing number of global spas goers especially men (Cheung, 2012; Bodeker and Burford, 2010; Gustavo, 2010; Mak et al., 2009). The services of spas have been enjoyed and consumed not only by women spa goers but also there is a growth of men spa-goers in US, Europe and Asia (Chen et.al, 2013; Cheung, 2012; Tsai et al., 2012; Tawil, 2011; Cohen, 2008; Tabbachi, 2008; Anderson, 2006; Binkley, 2002).

Evidently, women are more dominant in the spa market but the report from the International Spa Association (ISPA) in year 2008 discovered that there is increasing number of men across the world are seeking for spas. Men are summed out of 31% from total numbers of spa goers (Kucukusta and Denizci Guillet, 2015; Mak et al., 2009).

Together with this state of trends in social phenomena (men and spas services), marketing has created a sphere of demands for men and this is reinforced by a change in the social roles of men in modern Malaysian

society where increasing numbers of male spa goers which were once dominated by women (Yaman et al., 2012; Dahlan, Zakaria and Shamsudin, 2011). The demands for spas are to stay abreast with the trends from being beauty spas to the rise of modern spas especially hotel-based and wellness spas and the changes in spas consumers including gender and preferences (Elrod et al., 2015; Lo et.al, 2014; Lo and Wu, 2014; Yaman et al., 2012; Tabacchi, 2010).

There is a new demographic for marketers to start considering and focusing on men customers in marketplace (Schlessinger, 2007). More than 70 percent of global spas offer services aimed for men (Elrod et al., 2015). In Malaysia, a study found that 59 percent of spas consumers were men (EL-refae, 2012). This shows that it is relevant to analyse how powerful international marketing strategy is changing not only consumer behaviour or consumer preferences but also changing local culture in other host countries. However, spas businesses still encounter with challenges to cater men spa -goers due to the price restriction are various and there is no minimum or maximum of standard priced controlled by Malaysian government (Jamin et al., 2015).

There are differences in marketing strategy and activities such as promotion, advertising, services and products for both males and females market based on spa-market segmentation (Chen et al., 2013). Previous studies assumed that men market is just similar as women market and nothing much different with both segment (Lertwannawit and Mandhachitara, 2012). From that point of view, this research argued that marketing strategy for men and women on spas consumptions is different. Gender has impact on purchase intention thus the marketing strategy for both men and women are different too.

Previous research supports this argument where they found out that gender has considerably different in purchase intentions and they explained that measuring consumer's gender is important for marketers in

order to promote their products or services (Davis et al., 2014; Locker, 1992; Davis and Van den Oever, 1982). Robust marketing strategy gives benefit in spas industry as it helps marketers to differentiate the needs and desires of each customer (Koh et al., 2010).

International hotels that provide spas services need to understand on how men use and choose their services. The trends are changing, and it cannot guarantee that male spa goers' market can sustain popular. Without any strategies and plans, a good market can be less important and less favourable. It is the responsibility for industry practitioners' particularly international hotels to educate and reinforce the purposes and benefits of spas through their marketing strategy. It helps marketers to provide a working model of gender-based segmentation (Tabacchi, 2010). Additionally, market future direction and marketing strategy will help the market of the spas to sustain, besides supporting managers as marketing tools and as sources of profitability.

There is a significant gap on literature review on how far the international marketers cater male market in my knowledge. This is supported by Saur-Amaral et al. (2012) who identified that marketing issues on gender are not pursued especially in tourism industry. Therefore, research in marketing focusing on changing consumer behaviour in tourism areas should be sought. Then, published academic research is noticeable lack of information specifically concentrating on male spa goers and the recent emergent trends, also few empirical data that exists supported the current realities (Lo and Wu, 2014; Grbac, Damijanić and Šergo, 2013; Tsai et al., 2012; Tawil, 2011; Brey, 2010; Tabacchi, 2010; Mak et al., 2009).

This research gap has been caught attention as a good opportunity to explore more on marketing strategy and consumer behaviour in tourism industry. Hence, this study investigated further and provide insight in depth on how powerful marketing strategies altered not only consumer behaviours but also greater culture

values through spas consumptions. A thorough comprehension on marketing mix that influences male spa goers would give better picture for spa market and compliment the marketing strategy chosen.

1.2 The Motivation

It started when I visited spas during my stay in one of five stars hotel in Langkawi, Kedah ten years ago back in 2009. I felt amused and at the same time surprised when I saw few Malay men had massages next to my room. No one men in my family interested with spas.

Hence it ignited the curiosity in me to understand why these men decided to consume spas services as it was very uncommon in my culture. Spas always for women, at least to my opinion back then. It was so hard to get information about the motivation of these men consuming female-dominated services. I started seeking information to comprehend their behaviours and understand the current trend in spas industry.

The changing behaviours in Malay culture inspired me to explore the effects of marketing strategy in relation of gender and culture context for my research. Men experiences towards marketing exposure and articulating their story became my aim. This research is full of the rich experiences that men and managers have shared, exciting change in men's behaviour and preferences towards spas services and themselves.

1.3 The Values of The Research

This research is motivated by previous study on the growth and survival of multinationals in the global alcoholic beverages industry (Lopes, 2003) and the anecdote of marketing that involved with societal process to create services to consumers (Kotler, 2012b) (which will be explained in chapter 2). In her

research, Lopes (2003) examined the evolution of MNCs in alcoholic beverages industry which expanding in various sectors such wines, spirits and beer, and at the same time investigated the role of brands as reflections of growth and survival of the MNCs.

Thus, this research replicated Lopes (2003) key features of research but at different industry and perspective. First, this research looked at spas industry that has very little attention from previous scholars. Second, it focused on the evolution of spas from traditional to wellness spas and how MNCs are dealing with this evolution which not only to create new market segment (male-spa-goers) but also influencing consumers in related to gender roles. Lastly, this research tried to extend into the existing knowledge on the implications of marketing strategy towards consumer behaviour by changing local culture without breaking its values.

There is a significant value of the research to the new knowledge for academics and marketers especially in spas industry and it can contribute to tourism industry as well. The research gives benefits to all the stakeholders with more understandings in relation of academics and in the areas of international marketing, consumer behaviour and tourism management. In addition, it provides further insights for marketer and industries including marketing activities, pattern of trends, segmentation, and marketing strategies.

For academic standpoint, this research contributes in-depth knowledge and understanding of many ranges of international marketing strategy and the diverse cultures in both home and host countries. This research could give information on how MNCs perceived cultures, what motivates them to penetrate host country in creating demand on the spas services together with how they implemented its marketing strategy to change cultures and influence consumers.

Besides, by providing dynamic relationship with marketing and culture, it helps to understand how consumers in home country different with host country and how these consumers reacted towards marketing strategy implemented by MNCs.

From previous research, majority researchers were looking at the growth of spa industry worldwide (Tawil, 2011; Sekliuckiene and Langviniene, 2009; Madanoglu and Brezina, 2008). Few of the previous researcher look at male spa goers in Western countries and Hong Kong (Tsai et al., 2012; Cohen, 2008; Anderson, 2006; Anderson and Tabb, 2002; Binkley, 2002).

Those who studied about male spa goers were looking only at what factors motivate spa goers go spa and largely amount of research have been discussed on US and Western spas (Cheung, 2012; Panchal, 2012; Pesonen and Komppula, 2010; Mak et al., 2009). But very few studies looked at on marketing strategy in spas especially in East Asian countries (Ali and Zhou, 2014; Rasid and Azman, 2013; Azman and Chan, 2010; Koh et al., 2010; Sekliuckiene and Langviniene, 2009; Stein et al., 1990). There is still very little research being carried out on how the changes in consumer values in different ethnic cultures happened especially among the Asians.

For marketers and practitioners' perspective, this study helps marketers to identify any potential development in spas businesses and the impacts of this strategy for the next future business trends in Asian countries. Besides, this research aids public audience to have more information and gain beneficial knowledge related to cultural factors that affect consumers' perception among MNCs perspectives. This paper enhanced on purposed areas and the most important is this thesis is going to integrate all the ideas in one research.

This research added into understanding on how marketing strategy changes consumer behaviour preferences from multi-ethnicity in Malaysia and deeper cultures without breaking its culture values and how MNCs create demands through its powerful marketing strategy.

It is significant to indicate that Malaysia is racially heterogeneous, which means the Malaysian people are dominated by various races such Malays, Chinese, Indians, and other minority ethnic groups. It mixed in diverse cultures, religions, and practices within a distinct collective system. Malaysia gives a decent platform to further research on cultures and consumers as it provides an opulent cultural tradition and variety of religious.

This research is an explorative study of marketing on various ethnic cultures, and their impacts on consumers' behaviour consumptions. This thesis contributed into two interrelated gaps in the marketing and consumer research literatures: the scarcity of study on marketing and consumers' behaviours and consumption in East Asian countries; and the paucity of study on men consumers and the changing of the gender roles in a country where Islam is predominant. According to Jafari and Süerdem (2012), for the past eleven years of Marketing Theory 's publications, there is very limited literatures on marketing linked to Islamic societies.

1.4 The Aims of Current Research

Based on the previous determination of the values of the research in spas businesses in Malaysia, the broad aim of this research is:

To explore how marketing strategy position themselves to influence men consumers in local Islamic cultures in relation of gender behaviours and preferences.

This research targeted to address the gap in existing literature on the impacts of marketing strategy towards consumers preferences in relation to gender's attitudes, beliefs and norms and added new knowledge on how international marketing strategies successfully transformed the roles of gender in Malaysia from Asian perspectives. This research also tried to examine on how Western cultures and practices embedded and been accepted in Islam country such in Malaysia.

The shifting socio-economic setting of Malaysia, marketing has, in recent times, been viewed as significant to the transformation of modernity in present life making. Thus, it is essential to understand the articulation of the powerful marketing strategy in creating new demand and changing the traditional male character within the social structures and norms associated with multi-ethnicity consumer culture in Malaysia. Therefore, to attain this research aims; it had set aside and translated into research objectives in order to support the analysis of the research problem.

1.5 The Objective

This research is intended to achieve three objectives:

- i. To establish and thoroughly articulate the components of marketing mix strategy implemented by MNCs in creating new social trends and demands for spas services in Malaysia market.
- ii. To examine the effects of marketing in changing consumers behaviours and preferences towards spas services.

- iii. To investigate how marketing mix strategies reflected these services and shape Malaysian cultures in relation to gender and ethnicities.

1.6 Research Questions

Malaysia is a predominant Islam country, but consumerism promotes westerns models and practices in many businesses marketplace such fashion, fast-food, beverages and alcohol, sports and even in tourisms (Sian et al., 2010; Zawawi and Ibrahim, 2010; Kamaruddin and Kamaruddin, 2009; Mokhlis, 2009; Gomes, 1999). From this perspective, there is a rise set of questions regarding international marketing that transfers its western practices into Malaysian local culture. The main research question is:

Through creating and changing demand for male-spa-goers, how do marketing strategies position themselves in Islamic culture in Malaysia without breaching its values especially in relation to gender behaviour and preferences?

- i. What cause these changes happened and when they did start?
- ii. How MNCs do marketing strategies by taking account of standardisation and localisation of culture?
- iii. Do international marketing strategies consider religion in Malaysia prior implementation?

The discussion on how these sets of questions have been constructed and been further explained in chapter 2 and 3.

1.7 Scope of Study

This research encompassed the International Hotels (US and Non-US country of origins) based on star ratings given by Ministry of Tourism Malaysia. The participants of this research included men and top-level managements in various International Hotels. This research focused on numerous marketing strategies used by MNCs to change the local culture especially the roles of gender without breaking its value.

1.8 The Definition of Wellness in Spas and Tourism Industry

The term of wellness concept has been introduced back in 1959 by Halbert Dunn. Dunn (1959) defined wellness as the optimal wellbeing of man featuring body physical, spirits and mind and the need to complement with his environments. Then, Myers et.al, (2000) demarcated that wellness is the finest state of health which can be attained through healthy lifestyle.

This definition supported Dunn's definition where poor lifestyle affects various health issues hence optimal wellbeing is equally as the finest state of health. Later, wellness definition was further expanded as a centre of health containing the synchronisation not only physical and body or mind and spirit but also with self-responsibility towards physical fitness, physical appearance, health nutrition, relaxation, mental activity and environmental sensitivity (Mueller and Kaufmann, 2001).

However, there is no precise definition of wellness as it can be differently interpreted by diverse languages and cultures. Generally, it can be concluded that despite numerous definitions provided, that the key to wellness is associated with holistic wellbeing (Konu and Laukkanen, 2010). Taking Mueller and

Kaufmann's definition on wellness as state of health that harmonised with self-responsibility, this research expands the definition as *the sum of holistic wellbeing featuring the balancing of spirits and mind, body image and physical fitness appearance, healthy mental activity such relaxation and stress-reliever through spas consumptions.*

Therefore, wellness spas have been introduced in tourism industry across the countries due to the demand of individual concerns on health and wellbeing (Hartwell, 2014; Rasid and Azman, 2013; Puczkó, 2010; Middleton and Lickorish, 2007; Pilzer, 2007; Nahrstedt, Weiermair and Mathies, 2004). It is important to understand how MNCs that provide spas services distinguish the term of wellness in tourism industry in order to create effective marketing strategy to cater different market segments.

1.9 Nature of the Research

This explorative-based study considered the differences in implementation of marketing strategy articulated by international hotel top managers were varied in their home cultures and practices. The research drew upon the theoretical foundation laid by scholars of marketing strategy and cultures to investigate managers' approach on strategies across nations into spas businesses.

This research attempted to contribute into the theory development of the behavioural side of marketing mix strategy process such standardisation and localisation. Using existing literature, this research tried to make clear relations between marketing strategy implementation and approaches to consumer cultural dimensions such gender, ethnicity and religions that have yet to be explored by previous related research.

The implementation of marketing mix strategy has been long-standing, conceded, articulated, and studied yet the debates on how the exact components of marketing mix entailed, their specifics of approaches, and to what extent these strategies overlap in implementation, remain limited.

There are debates that when implementing marketing strategy, managers or stakeholders engaged in classifying future trends and direction. This marketing- culture strategy development in relation of gender and social categorisation is grounded in both theory and empirical evidence. Chapter 2 and 3 evaluated the concepts and relationships between marketing, culture, and gender.

It is essential to highlight that this research is exploratory in nature. The approach followed in this research entails of identifying theoretical relations between implications marketing strategy to culture changes constructed by prior research studies and existing literature.

1.10 Methods of Research

In order to achieve those aims and objectives, this research carried out qualitative approach for research method. Qualitative research is the best strategy for a researcher who has inquisitiveness through the real-life observations with multiple realities situation and trying to understand that particular events, then elaborate the interpretations which is captured from the perception of individuals being studied and concerned on its meaning (Willig, 2013; Bryman, 2012; Marshall and Rossman, 2010).

Qualitative research helps the researcher to apprehend in depth the situation and phenomenon through the people perspectives that being premeditated (Gravill, 2014; Ritchie et al., 2013). It also gives better, and diverse information needed from different experience and perception from everyone. Besides, it allows the

researcher to collect, analyses and integrates all the data effectively and efficiently in order to give insight on the concept of marketing strategy by learning how culture been influenced by marketing strategy and how each international hotel implement its marketing strategy in Malaysian market in order to create and cater men market segment.

This research conducted interviews with men consumers and managers at international hotels selected. Interviews are perceived as the genuine conversation between the interviewer and interviewee(s) nurtured with decent rapport and less structured (Cassell, 2015; Bryman, 2012; Symon and Cassell, 2012). Semi structured interviews were designated as the researcher had particular topics to be covered but at the same time might discover new information during the session when the interviewees responded to the questions (Creswell, 2013; Bryman, 2012). It led the researcher to ask questions that not included in the interview guide to catch up with interesting points raised up by the interviewees.

As this research needs to understand on the approaches effect to cultural alterations, a better feeling of semi-structured interview is considered to encourage more open responses and more participation from the interviewees. The process of scrutinising, examining and extracting data was to develop codes and capture themes (Clarke and Braun, 2013; Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013; Aronson, 1994).

1.11 Thesis Structure

This research comprised of nine chapters for the overall thesis structure.

Chapter One: Explains the introduction of the research, the changes in environment and briefly linking marketing and culture for MNCs, describes aims and objectives and summarise the key literatures in the fields of marketing strategy in spas industry.

Chapter Two and Three: Provide on an extensive literatures review in marketing, culture, and gender together with the relationship between these literatures. It outlined the literatures on the implementation marketing strategy in both home and host country. It further discussed on how strategies have impacts on culture and how it led to decide whether to standardise or localise its strategy by taking gender and social categorisation into consideration.

Chapter Four: Provides on the research context which is Spa Industry in Malaysia.

Chapter Five: Highlights on methodology of research such this research used qualitative approach. Then, this chapter explains the philosophical point of view adopted and justified why it served the research purposes. This chapter also discusses on the appropriate research instruments, research design and type of data analysis methods.

Chapter Six: Discussed on Analysis of research

Chapter Seven: Discussed on how consumers become interested with the services provided by the International Hotels.

Chapter Eight: Explains overall discussion on all marketing, culture, and gender perspectives.

Chapter Nine: Determines thesis conclusions by summarising the research questions, research aims, and objectives with relevant research findings. Then, it further discusses on recommendation, future implications, and contributions of the research to the existing body of knowledge. Lastly it acknowledges few limitations of this research.

1.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter gives an overall explanation and brief outline of the research process and the content of current study. It identified the research and knowledge gaps, described the problems, and explained the purposes of this research. Moreover, it described the changes in environment and justified the needs to undertake this research.

Then, it clarified the rationale of its aims and objectives with specific research questions and hypotheses that have been tested. A brief research methodology also been explained in this chapter. As a final point, this research illustrated overall thesis structure that will be presented. In conclusion, this introduction chapter describes brief explanations on the purposes of this research and how it has been undertaken.

CHAPTER 2

Marketing Strategy and its Implications

2.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter discussed on critical review of how marketing and marketing strategy have been conceptualised in academic literature, considering at how definitions have been developed and how it fits into this research. For that purposes, this research argued that marketing (in this case related to culture) is not one way construct, rather two ways constructs where it needs to follow and adapt with host culture but also at the same time marketing able to change host local culture in relation to the role of gender behaviour and preferences among men consumers.

This argument of various explorations within norms, beliefs, role of gender and social categorisation highlights the powerful of marketing strategy in changing behaviour and the degree of intensity of men to consume spas services. This chapter also deliberated the critical review on the implementation of marketing strategy which focused on marketing mix and its impacts towards consumer behaviour and culture. This research took position where marketing has an ability to change local culture without breaking its values through appropriate strategy implementation.

This research has been motivated by the definition of marketing by Kotler (2012) where he explains that: —*Marketing is a societal process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering, and exchanging products and services of value freely with others.*— Kotler (2012b, p. 4).

The above definition shapes this research concept where marketing can influence consumers by creating demands through particular products or services and it gives values to those consumers. Marketers have the capability to create demand even consumers do not need it at the first place. Through appropriate marketing strategy, it has power to influence and change consumer preferences to consume spas services and at the same time delivers values to gender and social categorisation.

Kotler (2012) also suggests that marketing process is significant in influencing consumer behaviour in marketplace. The process comprises on analysing marketing opportunities, researching and selecting target markets, designing marketing strategies, planning marketing programmes, and organising, implementing and controlling the marketing effort (Kotler, 2012b, p. 50).

Although there is growing nexus on the important of marketing and designing marketing strategy for multinational companies operating in host countries, yet little research has been done on how designing marketing strategy effects on consumer behaviour and indirectly alters local culture (Clemons, 2008; Jamal, 2003b; Zou and Cavusgil, 2002).

Existing studies discussed on how culture is important in order to design marketing strategy (Alvesson, 2013; Yarbrough, Morgan and Vorhies, 2011; Slater et al., 2010; Van Heerden and Barter, 2008), and culture determines in standardisation or localisation marketing mix strategy (Chatzithomas et al., 2014; De Mooij, 2013; Jiang and Wei, 2012; Vitkauskaitė, 2011; Zakaria and Abdul-Talib, 2010) yet there is lack of studies on understanding how international marketing not only able to influence consumers' preferences towards the services created but also changes the role of gender especially in Asian countries from MNCs focal lens.

Thus, this chapter sets out to explore in depth on how Multinational Companies (MNCs) implement their marketing strategies in changing and influencing men to consume spas without breaking the culture values in Malaysia context. Through thorough exploration and investigation, it helped to give insights on how this social phenomenon (the rise of male-spa-goers) occurred and how these changes from the marketing exposure (of being traditional men to masculine men) did not break the religion values, beliefs and norms.

The aims of this chapter are first; to deliver an extensive review of relevant literature for this research. Second, concerns with the arguments on the process of implementation marketing strategy and examining the main variables underpinnings for the implementation marketing strategy for MNCs in tourism industry specifically spas businesses (Moorman and Miner, 1998; Varadarajan and Jayachandran, 1999).

Lastly, to provide in depth insights and explain how this marketing strategy influences and changes consumer behaviour specifically targeting for men segment in spas and tourism marketplace where marketing strategy gives implications towards local culture which resulting men learnt and adapted with new foreign culture, also known as acculturation (Cleveland and Laroche, 2007). (Acculturation will be discussed in chapter 3).

This chapter is presented into two main sections include marketing strategy, marketing mix and its implementation. Next, this section articulated on overview of spas, spas in Malaysia, history of Malaysia and its tourism industry. This showed how spas consumptions by male spa goers started worldwide and spread in Malaysia.

2.1 Marketing and Conceptualising of Marketing Strategy

This section discussed on the context of marketing strategy and reviews the evolution of marketing strategy from traditional to alternative definitions and justified the definition of marketing strategy from this research standpoint. Before it further debated on the concept of marketing strategy, it first deliberated on the several of definitions of marketing strategy.

2.1.1 Definition of Marketing Strategy

Even though there are numerous definitions of marketing strategy in marketing literature, still there is no specific and ideal definition for marketing strategy as every definition vary, reflecting different view and studies (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010; Varadarajan, 2010; Li et al., 2000; Schnaars, 1998). The definitions are evolving along the studies such Bourgeois (1980, p. 27) defined marketing strategy as —*The organization's choice of domain or change of domain that occurs when, for example, a firm diversifies into or exits from particular products or markets.*

While Barney (1997, p. 26) defined marketing strategy as” *A business ‘ fundamental pattern or deployment of marketing resources in its interactions with customers and competitors for the purpose of achieving specific organizational objectives”.*

Followed by Noble and Mokwa (1999, p. 57) described marketing strategy as” *the communication, interpretation, adoption, and enactment of a marketing strategy or strategic market initiative. Strategic decisions in the functional areas of product, promotion, distribution, pricing, and the sales force” (Hunt and Derozier, 2004, p. 11).*

Then, Kotler (2012) defined marketing strategy as *“the way in which the marketing function organises its activities to achieve a profitable growth in sales at a marketing mix level. How product, price, promotion, and distribution are to function in a coordinated way to overcome resistance to meeting marketing goal”* (West, Ford and Ibrahim, 2015, p. 35).

The first two definitions explained that marketing strategy is a decision of an organisation to achieve its objectives through certain products in marketplace and being competitive with competitors yet at the same time these products can reach their consumers (Barney, 1997; Bourgeois, 1980). Meanwhile, the other four definitions explained that marketing strategy is an organisation decision activity which involved with marketing mix to ensure that objectives and profits are achieved concomitantly (West et al., 2015; Kotler, 2012b; Hunt and Derozier, 2004; Noble and Mokwa, 1999).

In other hand, several scholars differ in their marketing strategy definitions such the capabilities of companies to react to competitive market conditions (A. Griffith et al., 2014), offering a desired future for every company (Sudarshan D., 1995), echoes the companies' superlative decision on making the most profitability profit which by achieving its marketing objectives and goals which basically distresses on its marketing mix strategy (McDonald and Wilson, 1999) and a globally incorporated yet outwardly decisions on how the company respond to its consumers in very ambitious marketplace (Bradley, 2005).

Throughout the definitions, it explains that there are flexible numbers of terms in defining marketing strategy. Although different authors have put different emphases into their definitions, there are general agreements on marketing strategy definitions on achieving long-term objectives associated with people and profits. For example, Kotler (2012) and Hunt (2004) stressed out on how organisation and functional areas can achieve marketing goals which it always involves with people or employees.

However, these definitions did not explain the relationship of marketing strategy with consumer behaviour as part of organisation's objectives or goals. It lacks in explaining that marketing mix components are able to change consumer behaviour and at the same time attain company's goals.

This research borrowed Kotler, McDonald and Wilson on implementing marketing mix activities to successfully achieve company's goals and making profits by unifying both definitions and expands in order to fit into this research. This research defines marketing strategy as "*the abilities of the company to apply its assets in marketplace through marketing mix together with taking standardisation and localisation into consideration by satisfying its customers in order to achieve the company goals and objectives*".

The consideration of this definition underlies in this research is in line with the objective of this research. Marketing can thus be the process of developing and implementing a strategy to plan and coordinate ways of identifying, anticipating and satisfying consumer demands, in such a way as to make profits. It is this strategic planning process that lies at the heart of marketing. Next section will discuss on the concept of marketing strategy.

2.1.2 The Concept of Marketing Strategy

There are conflicting in distinguishing what comprises of marketing strategy and marketing management as several studies explained that marketing strategy is part of marketing management and the other studies distinguished that marketing management is different from marketing strategy (Varadarajan, 2010; Svensson and El-Ansary, 2006).

“The concept of marketing strategy lacks clarity in the sense that in one breath the literature counts segmentation, targeting, differentiation, and positioning as marketing strategies and in the same breath recounts the marketing mix elements 4 Ps, i.e. product, pricing, promotion and place (distribution), as strategies” (Svensson and El-Ansary, 2006, p. 267).

Above statement explained that existing literatures on marketing strategy overlook to differentiate what components comprise in marketing strategy and management. This is due to the enormous research on marketing are first, focusing on marketing strategy related issues in the realms of product, price, promotion and place (4Ps), and segmentation, target market selection and positioning (STP).

Then, prior research focused on organizational level phenomena that influence marketing strategy in important ways (e.g., corporate culture, organizational learning, and knowledge management). Third; they debated on issues at the interface of corporate and marketing strategy (e.g., synergy and horizontal acquisitions), business and marketing strategy (e.g., order of entry strategy and strategic alliances), and corporate, business, and marketing strategy (e.g., multimarket competition; and financial valuation of brands in the context of mergers and acquisitions).

Fourth, research focusing on strategy at the corporate level (e.g., diversification and divestitures) from the perspective of how corporate strategy has an impact on and is impacted by marketing strategy, and the strategic role of the marketing function in organizations at the corporate level. Last; research focusing on strategy at the business unit level (e.g., generic competitive strategies) from the perspective of how strategy at the business unit level influences and is influenced by marketing strategy, and the strategic role of the marketing function in organizations at the business unit level (Varadarajan, 2010, p.125).

Therefore, this research argued that marketing strategy in spas businesses involves with appropriate marketing mix activities, the decision to standardise or localise its marketing mix in order to influence consumers' behaviour and preferences towards particular services and alters the host cultures. It further discussed on concept of marketing in marketing strategy for business services.

One of the objectives in this research is to investigate on how US and Non US multinational companies implement their marketing strategies in order to cater men market segment focusing in spas industry and to what extent this process assure their successfulness in reaching their goals and objectives in Malaysia context which has been addressed in Chapter One.

2.1.2.1 The Concept of Marketing in Marketing Strategy

Marketing concept begun in 1950s when it was first introduced to American businesses as part of the management (Kotler, 2012b; King and Baker, 2001; Barksdale and Darden, 1971; Levitt, 1960). Quite a few numbers of companies have adopted marketing concept in management but the widely attention in literature focused on marketing concept by General Electronic (GE) Company management where its company identified the importance to reinforce marketing procedures in 1950 (King and Baker, 2001; Barksdale and Darden, 1971). According to Barksdale and Darden (1971), one of the basic features restructured by executive of GE Company was :

“The recognition of marketing as an integrated function of business concerned with the entire process of developing and distributing products to satisfy consumer wants” (p.29).

Since then, the notion of the marketing concept in every company management has grown up (Kotler, 2012b; King and Baker, 2001). The beginning of marketing can be divided into three periods; firstly since the expansion of the marketing concept of the mass market roughly in 1850, secondly, the rise the modern marketing concept circa 1960, and the shift from the prominence upon the business to the relationship around 1990 (Baker and Saren, 2010).

During 1950s, American businesses conquered world markets and were perceived as long-term business orientation that emphasises on product development and manufacturing quality rather than marketing mix programmes such as price, and promotion (Schnaars, 1998; Levitt, 1960). In 1985, American Marketing Association (AMA) suggested that marketing concept compromises with marketing mix activities. Until recently, marketing is incorporated with consumers which are defined as below:

“Marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to consumers and managing customers’ relationships in ways that only benefit the organization and its stakeholder” American Marketing Association (2013) (AMA).

This new version of definition builds from earlier definition: *“The process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives”* American Marketing Association (1985).

The new version of definition is parallel with what have been said by the GE Company stated by Barksdale and Darden (1971) where marketing is about how company can satisfy its customers in order to benefit the company and shareholder. This is supported by McGee and Spiro (1988), who agreed that marketing lies on customers’ satisfaction where every business focused on how to fulfil customers’

needs and wants by analysing the company's best strategy such as analysing their marketing mix activities.

This means, the new version of definition by AMA is the improvement from its previous one by adding consumers as the key to the marketing concept. In order to satisfy or responding to customers, every company needs to consider on which marketing mix activity should be implemented such types of products or services that they need to develop or offer; or to what extent customers are willing to pay for the price of products or services.

Kotler (2012) supports that marketing has significant relationship with consumers as consumers satisfied their needs and wants from various products or services introduced in market that matched with them. This idea is supported by (Pels and Grönroos, 2009; Grönroos, 2006b; Tsai, 2005) where they highlighted that in the last fifty decades ago, marketing researchers have agreed on marketing incorporated with existing and potential consumers.

In contrast, conventionally, marketing practitioners have not engaged with consumers due to the consumer behaviour was unfathomable, thus marketing was about selling the products and the matter of promotion where they offered products or services over trial and error in order to ensure goods been accepted in the marketplace (Firat et. Al, 2005).

The previous studies on finding a different roadmap for marketing definition also argued that marketing is all about selling the products (Grönroos, 2006b) and sales through promotion (Curry, 2009). It is understood that company offered products by not considering customers' needs and desires. However, this research follows AMA and Kotler definitions where marketing is beyond selling and sales as it constitutes the analysis of customers' needs, various decisions on the types of products that need to be made and offered, about the propensities of the product use and the experiences of product use, about

the place and how to promote the product, and approximating the product price (McCarthy & Perreault, 1990).

Thus, this research unified AMA and Kotler's definition as both definitions reflect the changes that the marketing evolution has undergone and best fit to this study by defining marketing as:

“An organisation function consists of creating and offers new products or services by understanding what customers want based on gender preferences and delivering through effective communication channels that can be reachable significantly to customers in order to satisfy their needs and desires and at the same time organisation can achieve its profitable growth”.

The reason lied by adopting both definitions to fit this study is due to understanding that marketing is about to fulfil what customers' wants and need in order to warrant company's profit but it must be through the right and effective communication channels. If not, all those creating new products or offers new services will end up being wasted.

This is supported by (Kotler, 2012b, p. 4) highlights that the aim for marketing is: *“To know and understand the customer so well that the product or service fits him and sells itself”*. For example, the application software industry such IBM is in a persistent turmoil to compete with other new companies in developing and designing new programs in attempt to cater their existing and potential customers by introducing new and up-to-date competitive application packages in the market (Tsai, 2005). Here, marketing enhances the final value to the product and able to persuade the customers that this is precisely what they have been looking for, even if they had not thought about it before.

From the above example, it rapidly becomes clear and supported the definition of marketing from AMA and Kotler which the notion of marketing incorporated with consumers is growing and how every company can and need to engage with their consumers in order to form competitive business market for competitors, niche market-players, and other challengers (Fuat Firat et al., 1995). Therefore, it is sensible to explore how every MNC engages with the consumers through marketing dimensions which will be discussed next.

Marketing is incorporated with three dimensions include tactics, strategy and culture which is adopted and structured into this research in next sections (Webster Jr, 1992; Brown et al., 2005). Webster Jr. (1992) explained that every firm needs to understand the current trends in marketplace, offers new products or services that meet consumers' satisfaction and how excellent marketing mix accountable in creating and influencing consumers' preferences. These processes able to alter cultures (Webster Jr, 1992). Brown et al. (2005) strongly recommend that future marketing scholars and marketing practitioners should address the gap on the integration of tactics, strategy, and culture in marketing strategy.

These relations of marketing mix, whether to pursue with standardise or localise approach in altering local culture are supported from previous studies (Webster Jr, 1992; Brown et al., 2005); which the first dimension of marketing is described as tactics or also known as marketing mix where the tactics were imbedded from the concept of four Ps in marketing mix such product, price, promotion and place (Lovelock and Wright, 2014; Svensson and El-Ansary, 2006) (which will be explained in next section).

Second, it also has strategy to guide the tactics such as how the companies want to formulate specific strategy for each P which supported by (Grönroos, 2006b) that marketing associated with strategy. Lastly, the last dimension in marketing is a culture where known as an expression of marketing concept

that supports in altering consumer behaviour and compromise with the culture values and norms (Brown et al., 2005; Deshpande, Webster Jr and Jr., 1989).

Before it further discusses on the impacts of marketing strategy towards consumer behaviour and culture, this chapter deliberated on marketing in services to differentiate between marketing for goods differ from services as spas are one of the services business in tourism industry.

2.1.2.2 Marketing in Services

It is vital to study service in marketing as service contributes not only for the country's GDP but also contributes to the economy of world and services companies still gaining market share and profits even during economy turmoil (Kunz and Hogleve, 2011).

“When a good is purchased, the buyer acquires an asset; when a service is purchased, the buyer incurs an expense” (Rathmell, 1966, p. 33). The quote is reflecting what the services are about. Services and goods are two different dichotomies. Rathmell added;

“Services are acts or processes and are produced as they are consumed, they cannot be inventoried, and there can be no merchant middlemen since only direct sales are possible” P.35.

This shows that marketing for goods and services need to be distinguished as services and goods were produced in two different ways.

For instance; Copeland (1923) was first introduced the characteristic of goods include good of convenience, shopping good and specialty goods while Bucklin (1963) in other hand distinguished the characteristic of good segregated into two which are durable and durable goods. By introducing these

characteristics of goods, many previous scholars have illustrated the marketing strategy tools to aid in market the products.

It is understandable that the different between goods and services are; when consumers get the benefit from goods through its physical characteristic such brand image while services benefit is obtained from the nature of services performance (Lovelock and Wright, 2014). Lovelock and Wright defined services as:

“an act or performance that creates benefits for customers by bringing about a desired change in or on behalf of the recipient”(Lovelock and Wright, 2014, p. 1), and *“a process or performance rather than a thing”*(Lovelock and Wright, 2014, p. 13).

However, the conventional marketing studies have been emerged with the products-orientation at a prodigious rate hence it is vital to study services in marketing (Shostack, 1977; Wilson et al., 2008; Lovelock and Wright, 2014). In US, services contribute to the main economy yet academic scholars still debate on how services could be fitted in marketing context (Lovelock and Gummesson, 2004; Kotler, 2012a).

In other hand, the gross domestic product (GDP) from service sector contributes about 71% of the European Union (EU) in 2006 (Wilson et al., 2008). While in Malaysia, according to Deputy Finance Minister, it contributes about 6.4 percent in 2014, the fifth most contributors' sectors after construction, manufacturing, agriculture and private consumption (BERNAMA, 2014).

There are long-standing debates to distinguish services marketing and goods marketing due to the traditional of marketing mix introduced for products applied to services and even firms are muddled with their business operations (Lovelock, 1983; Shostack, 1977, Bowen and Ford, 2002).

“service-based companies are confused about the applicability of product marketing, and more than one attempt to adopt product marketing has failed” (Shostack, 1977, p. 73). For example, Shostack made a comparison between airlines and automobiles. Even both are transportation, but they are different. A car has physical attribute that reduces a service while airlines travel only can be experienced. Hence, product knowledge and service knowledge cannot be attained in similar ways.

This is in line with Gronroos (1978) who argued that services companies are not similar with the companies that market the tangible goods and service industry encounter with formidable marketing issues rather than goods industry. He then described services as; *“Services are activities, not things, although physical goods or things may be needed either to support or facilitate the service consumption”* (Grönroos, 1980, p. 37).

Later, Gronroos explained that: *“services emerge in open processes where the customers participate as co-producers and hence can be directly influenced by the progress of these processes. Traditionally, physical goods are produced in closed production processes where the customer only perceives the goods as outcomes of the process”* (Grönroos, 2006a, p. 319).

Gronroos (1978) conducted a research in few services industries in Sweden and Finland and results illustrated that marketing services is really a challenging job as consumers tend to confuse on what services should they buy or get. Marketers in other hand made the services inaccessible for consumers with less information. Although it is a challenging, yet existing literatures showed very limited tools to help services companies.

This is due to that huge amount of literatures are focusing and provide evidence for good industries. The most arduous issues in service marketing are the relationship of the marketing mix planning. As most of marketing mix programs are designed for tangible goods.

According to Gronroos (1978, p. 589), there are three confusions of service marketing including;

- (1) The faltering service concept – where the concept of service is confusing without clear distinction of understanding between selling the service and selling the goods as selling both services and goods may incorporate alongside.
- (2) The opinion that everybody is in service – the notion of all marketing is service marketing becomes common. Marketers are assumed that consumers are not buying either goods or services but values of satisfaction from their consumption experiences.
- (3) The view that marketing research helping companies in goods industries would help service firms equally well – the marketing tools for manufactured goods introduced from previous research are assumed as similar tools for service businesses. It may lead to great confusion.

For all companies that been investigated, they are facing an analogous issue which related to intangibility of the services and how to construct service structure and to form services into physical offerings through marketing mix. For example, a case of barber shops as a business service.

These shops provide services for relaxation and personal care. The aesthetic space (physical evidence) such as interior and exterior of the shop influence the experience of the consumers. Consumers buy the experience of having cozy and ample space rather than getting haircut. People in this case are the barbers need to be well trained and their appearance plays the role to influence the consumers' perceptions (Gronroos, 1978). Therefore, the traditional marketing mix introduced for goods- orientation may not suit for services businesses.

Meanwhile, the other perspective says that the diversity of the service sector makes it difficult to come up with managerially useful generalizations concerning marketing practice in service organizations (Lovelock, 1983, p. 9). She added that, segregating the groups of goods aid managers to have insights on the consumers' behaviour and their needs besides helping the managers to comprehend the retail distribution channel structures.

Hence it is essential to distinguish the services characteristics as the strategy of each group of services may be different. For instance, marketing strategy for airlines services may differ with the strategy for insurance services or with hotels sectors. This idea of distinguishing the strategy for services is parallel with Lovelock, 1983 as she illustrated that;

“By identifying the target of the service and then examining how it is "modified" or changed by receipt of the service act, we can develop a better understanding of the nature of the service product and the core benefits that it offers” (p.12).

Service is different with goods where services are produced as consumers consume while goods are bought from the shelf and consumers use if they perceive the goods are appropriate. Also, service can be tangible and intangible. For example, teaching is a service, yet the process of teaching occurs in the classroom. Being in the classroom is considered as a tangible action (Lovelock, 1983).

To decide on appropriate strategy, the issues such as whether marketing efforts can change consumer behaviours and preferences are worth to investigate therefore, marketers should understand customers and their needs prior to proceeding with the implementation to combat with the issues on services. Rather than debating on the existing issues to differentiate between goods and services, it is better to investigate how service businesses can educate or influence its customers to consume its services industry.

Referring to Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1985), why it is important to understand how services can influence the behaviours of consumers in services consumption due to several factors such as delivering services to satisfy consumers depends on employees and consumers actions, the service quality depends on many uncontrollable factors and there is uncertainty of knowledge whether the services that have been delivered are similar as the services that have been planned and been promoted.

They Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) articulated that services have four characteristics include:

- i. Intangibility (I) - the services cannot be seen in material or not being physical.
- ii. Heterogeneity (H) - services is difficult to standardize.
- iii. Inseparability (I) - services offering and consumption occur concurrently.
- iv. Perishability (P) - services are not long lasting and the performance of the services cannot be fixed itself.

From the characteristics of services that have been articulated, IHIP are fit to this research concept as it can be significantly related to spas services. Spas services cannot be seen only been experienced (Intangibility) (Lo, Wu and Tsai, 2015; Karmarkar, 2014; Bjurstam and Cohen, 2010), spas services is still lack with the global standards such its operations and regulations due to the industry is still struggling to compromise what are spas characteristics (Heterogeneity) (Kimes and & Singh, 2008), spas businesses create and provide services, and sell experiences and journeys concomitantly (Inseparability) (Lo et al., 2015; Lo, Wu and Tsai, 2014), spas treatments are not lasting, it can be a repetition consumptions and from supplier's side, spas providers need to keep on improving the spas services by offering various treatments and better therapists performance (Perishability) (Karmarkar, 2014; Fioravanti et al., 2010; Tabacchi, 2010).

However, some services may not match with what have been promoted as companies are producing both tangible and intangible products hence it exacerbates to differentiate between good and service (Bowen and Ford, 2002). To differentiate the two terminologies, Bowen and Ford (2002) explained that services cannot be kept not even to own but only can be experienced goods are tangible while services are not. Until now, there are little studies investigated on the effect of differentiating between goods and services even though there are growing nexus on the importance of defining each characteristic.

This statement is parallel with Lovelock and Gummesson (2004, p. 24) which explicated that “*neither marketers nor operations specialists created the distinction between tangible goods and intangible services*”. Services involved directly with people or producers of the services and consumers while products are not necessarily engaged directly with consumers and producers.

Consumers can buy goods from retailers or other distributors channel rather than producer or manufacturer that produced the products (Karmarkar, 2014). There is an urge for future research to investigate on how organisations may attract, engage, educate or influence consumers who already have knowledge on services or potential customers who do not possessed any clue to consume the services or co-produce the experience from the first consumptions (Bowen and Ford, 2002).

There is no indication that have been validated on the characteristics of services and on how companies formulate and implement their strategy and how consumers make selections (Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004). In providing the evidence of services characteristics, Moeller (2010) critiques on four characteristics introduced by Parasuraman et al. (1985). The IHIP framework is considered weak as the inseparability of production and consumption of the services and perishability can be addressed through technology-based communication for example using web-based. Customers not even can differentiate between IHIP of services and good base (Wilson et al., 2008).

The characteristics of services need to be paralleled with the periodic of times. Moeller contributes to the extension characteristic of services by looking at facilities, transformation, and usage (FTU). Facilities refer to the resources such as machines, persons and knowledge which can be tangible and intangible. Transformation refers to the modification from the previous changes in services such as transforming customer resources to direct service provision. Usage refers to the customers benefit from the transformation of provider.

Moeller (2010) disagreed with Parasuraman et. al, (1985) due that intangibility of the services has been criticised as tangible products which have been used in services for instance airline services, the plane, food provided and even the crews on the plane are tangible. He then suggested that marketing scholars should be able to distinguish the implementation of different offerings to differentiate between services and good.

For instance, the car rental services, according to previous researchers that support IHIP, this business considered service as single entity by eliminating the reality. Hence, with FTU, it integrates that this business offers services and good at the same time. Even the rental car is a service business, but the car is a tangible good. Therefore, the gap between services offer and services reality should be addressed as it may not match between services that have been promoted and services that have been delivered.

Similarly, Keh and Pang (2010) agreed that many scholars differentiate products with services by IHIP framework. The IHIP paradigm is feeble as IHIP fails to distinguish between products and services effectively. In line with Moeller (2010), service can be separated and inseparable during the process. For example spas services, consumers experienced massage when the service occurred while consumers who sent the broken laptop to the shop to be repaired, and collected only once the laptop had been fixed, the service of repairing occurs without the presence of the customers in the shop. Which means consumers did not experience the repairing services (Keh and Pang, 2010).

Nevertheless, Hellén and Gummerus (2013) argued that consumers can differentiate the tangibility and the intangibility of the services. To address the gap between tangibility and intangibility aspects of services, academic scholars need to examine on the perception of consumers towards these two aspects. What consumers perceived about services.

By understanding what have been perceived as services, marketers can influence consumers to consume services by offering both tangible and intangible services elements. They concluded that *“it is essential to provide better understanding on the issues of to what extent marketers should frame their offerings as either tangible or intangible”* (Hellén and Gummerus, 2013, p. 143).

Lastly, Baron, Warnaby and Hunter-Jones (2014) illustrated that there are five phases of research on service. First phase which is from 1988 and prior, explains on the implication of service towards economy development and categorizing the concept of services marketing such service quality, service design, and customer satisfaction towards services.

For example, Gronroos (1978) did a case study on inclusive tours marketing in Finland and Sweden. He suggested that in tourism businesses, hotels need to link with Airline Company in order to provide auxiliary service and meet consumers' satisfaction. With the relationship of hotels and airlines, consumers can enjoy more benefits where they can travel via airplane and stay in the hotel with discounted price.

Phase two from 1988 until 1997, the emergent of service marketing with other areas such empirical research on the reliability and validity of the service measurement, the development of service management concept, and the impact of consumer with services towards company performance. In this phase, the construction of service marketing started to be sound and robust. For example; the seminal

work from Parasuraman et al. (1985) on the tools to aid services businesses measure consumers satisfaction in order to achieve the businesses' profitability.

In phase three which started from 1998-2003, more academic scholars started to concentrate on the consumers experiences and changing role from the consumption of services such how marketers can change the consumer behaviours through the technology used in services industries. For example, the implications of Internet and introducing world wide web (www) to consumers helped consumers to have new virtual shopping experiences (Berthon et al., 2012).

The last stage from 2004 till present, literatures focused on integrating marketing approach through service. The last stage broadens the views such as in investigating on how service shapes customer trends, how globalisation of services effect on the culture. For example, on fast food services such as McDonald and Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) from US created a trend to dine in restaurant compared to dine at home in Sri Lanka and indirectly changed the local cultures of Indian people (Rasanthika and Gunawardana, 2013). This stage is really closed to spas services where marketers created various spas for health and wellness thus the rise of male-spa-goers occurred in spas marketplace (Tsai et al., 2012).

From the above discussion on services marketing, it is clear that there is unify amongst academic scholars on the differences between products and services and what are the ideal characteristics of services. Thus, this research will look at what are services mean in spas industry and what elements of services that have been offered by MNCs in marketplace. This research followed the first, third and last phase of services to provide comprehend understanding on how marketing creates demand on the services and changes consumers' preferences towards the services. Next section discussed on spas as service business.

2.1.3 Marketing strategy impacts on consumer behavior

Consumption behaviour has been changing over the time, where consumers are dealing with the market and products influence, and these products or services created by marketers are freely give values in consumers' life (Al-Abdin, Dean and Nicholson, 2016; Chitakunye and Maclaran, 2014; Hopkins et al., 2014; Zhang, van Doorn and Leeflang, 2014; Ekinci, Sirakaya-Turk and Preciado, 2013; Son, Jin and George, 2013; Torelli et al., 2012; Pickett-Baker and Ozaki, 2008; Allen et al., 2008; Castro, Armario and Ruiz, 2007). This shows that marketers are capable in developing new products and services and they have power to influence consumers' preferences through suitable marketing strategy (Al-Abdin et al., 2016; Castro et al., 2007).

Marketing strategy has widely acknowledged in changing consumer behaviour in services businesses especially in fast food industry. The growing preference for fast food dining have shown that marketing strategy has power in creating demands and has significant influences on consumption experiences from eating at home to dinning at restaurants and the rise of preferences towards Western fast food compared to traditional home food (Rasanthika and Gunawardana, 2013; Thornton et al., 2011; Oyewole, 2007; Goyal and Singh, 2007; Schröder and McEachern, 2005). This evolution of fast food industry has similarity with spas businesses where consumers opted for spas services in channeling their stress and anxiety to maintaining healthy lifestyle and physical fitness due to exposure of marketing strategy (JOAQUIM, 2013; Cheung, 2012; Joukes and Gerry, 2010; O'Dell, 2010; Mak et al., 2009)

Other examples, beauty industry also has tremendously changing consumer behaviour through its powerful marketing strategy (Jones, 2011; Tungate, 2011; Todd, 2004; Morris, 2014; Yacob and Zainol, 2014). Western societies have influenced most of women worldwide to be a make-up junkie by highlighting the importance of consuming make up before leaving the house through advertisements (Tungate, 2011).

It was shown in U.S magazines that beauty is linked to body where the female models had awfully slim body types and television advertising highlights on the perfect female body shape and the images of women in advertisements also bound with culture (Benowitz- Fredericks et al., 2012; Ye and Cheong, 2012; Morris, 2014). In U.S, the acceptance of the body related to the beauty while Eastern culture linked beauty as having beautiful face (Todd, 2004; Ye and Cheong, 2012). Thus, these perceptions of beauty ideal have influenced not only women but also men (Al-Abdin et al., 2016; Malhotra et al., 2013; Bloch and Richins, 1992).

In spas businesses, spas providers have witnessed the changing of consumers' attitudes and preferences towards spas services. Marketing helps in helps to influence the environment, lifestyles, atmospheres and perception towards spas and change the spas phenomenon such as health and wellness (O'Dell, 2010). Health protection and promotion can change the consumer behaviour and ensuing in changing their lifestyle (Grbac et al., 2013).

According to Michael Tompkins (2015), a CEO and General Manager of Hilton Head Health in spa business website says that spas providers are offering wellness products and services to influence spa-goers who are concerns on their health and wellbeing and strive for differentiation from other wellness centre. Brey (2010) points out that those marketing strategies have changed the perspective of hotel with spas for being high quality accommodation and supported the customers to stay longer.

Besides, marketing strategies have significantly contributed to transforming consumer behaviour and attitude towards spas industry and many forces that have emerged by spa industry to change consumer behaviour. For example, an outcome of transition from being focusing on beauty to health and wellness, from being for leisure and self-indulgence activities to the medical, health, wellness and wellbeing (Rasid and Azman, 2013; Azman and Chan, 2010; Mak et al., 2009). In other hand, these spas businesses also witnessed major developments like the rise of modern spa and tremendous

growth worldwide especially hotel-based spas and wellness spas in recent decades (Lo and Wu, 2014; McNeil and Ragins, 2005; Yaman et al., 2012; Tabacchi, 2010).

Therefore, it is important to understand the changes in consumers' behaviours in a wider sense as a socio-cultural phenomenon influenced by marketing exposure have change the lifestyles and experiences, beliefs, norms and attitudes which will be explained in next section. Viewing consumers' perspective only as a process of satisfying needs for services does not capture how consumption choices are changed through marketing exposure (Papadopoulos et al., 2011; Cleveland et al., 2015b).

Thus, this research looks at marketing perspective in understanding what cause these changes happened (the rise of male-spa-goers), how MNCs do their marketing strategies and how they take gender and social categorisation into their effective marketing strategy.

2.1.4 Marketing strategy impacts on culture

Cultural differences are frequently stories of interest, and it is observed that many corporations make a lot of business blunders and this sometimes may impact on business relationships. Through international marketing; the world and cultures are becoming closer in various aspects such as consumers in food and beverages, fashion, technology and music are becoming more similar across the world (Assael, 1995; Appadurai, 1990; Levitt, 1983).

This is due to American marketing values and management theory which have impact on customers' perception by letting the customers to believe that they are driving the same car, listening to the same music, eat the similar food and watch the similar television programmed (De Mooij, 2010), and one size fits all which means if it acceptable in other countries, it will be effective anywhere too (Newman and Nollen, 1996). Besides, the notion of Western culture has impacted other people worldwide and created culture homogeneity (Asgary and Walle, 2002).

However, Asian cultures are different from Western cultures (Lovelock and Wright, 2014; Zawawi and Ibrahim, 2010). Western consumers are not expressive similar behaviours with Eastern consumers, so does with Asian consumers (Zhang et al., 2014; Wah, 2006). For example, in Western culture, consumers tend to focus on brands towards their personal preferences but in Eastern cultures, consumers chose brand for prestige status.

Differences exist not only across the countries but also within the countries hence the purpose of consumptions may be different even consumers live in the same society (Ruževičius and Ruževičiūtė, 2011). Therefore, marketers need to initiate different cultural settings to cater multicultural consumer (Zhang et al., 2014).

It started when Appadurai (1990) argues that with globalisation, consumers across the countries are exposed with various cultures backgrounds and marketers have to respond to produce more ideas, media, people, products or practices of different cultural origins than ever before. Globalisation may affect marketing activities across the country but the consumptions of the products and behaviour of consumers are not necessary comply with globalisation (Ruževičius and Ruževičiūtė, 2011).

Consumers may also construct different dimension of attitude and behaviour from their experience consumption through marketing influences and how every consumer responds towards marketing influences may also different with each other as they have different culture background and various lifestyle behaviour (Cleveland, Laroche and Takahashi, 2015a; Allen et al., 2008; Pickett-Baker and Ozaki, 2008; Cleveland and Laroche, 2007; Newman and Nollen, 1996).

Culture is an advantageous connection for the numerous distinctions in business sector structure which cannot be explained based on tangible aspects (Soares et al., 2007). For example, nondurable consumer

goods such as food will be classified as strongly culture-bound products and therefore it is difficult to standardize the food products, while durable consumers such as high-technology or digital products, like information and communication technology (ICT), as well as industrial goods, will be considered as essentially culture-free products and as a result is easy to standardize for those products (Baalbaki & Malhotra, 1993; Meffert & Bolz, 1994).

Then, there is a need for marketing scholars and marketers to consider several new phenomena such as cultural shift, resistance, incorporation and transmutation employed by consumers (Carpenter et al., 2013; Schnettler et al., 2013; Cleveland and Laroche, 2007; Padilla and Perez, 2003; Mendoza, 1989; Berry, 1980). In view of the foregoing, several modifications could be proposed such as marketing strategy and culture are interacting in two ways: communications in an attempt to accommodate the great multiplicity in customer tastes and preferences (Czinkota and Ronkainen, 2012; Jamal, 2003a). The practical implications are that great values from host culture practices can be passed across national boundaries in tailoring to local or regional circumstances for effectiveness in marketing strategy (Nyukorong, 2014).

For examples;

“The dominance of U.S. cultural exports is felt everywhere. On the 2005 list of top-grossing movies, U.S. films took 49 of the top 50 places in a list that included only one non-English-language film, KungFu Hustle which at number 44” (Czinkota and Ronkainen, 2012, p. 51).

The above statement shows that the US is still dominating in exporting its culture across the world market. The US transfers its home cultures in educating and influencing consumers to learn the foreign cultures. Yet, the above statements are not representative for all MNCs as MNCs still endure the culture challenges and opportunities in other host countries. It is worth to understand how these MNCs transferred home culture and at the same time endure the challenges. Czinkota and Ronkainen (2012) added;

“The challenge for the marketing manager is to handle the differences in values and attitudes, and subsequent behavioural patterns that govern human interaction, on two levels: first, as they relate to customer behaviour and, second, as they affect the implementation of marketing programs within individual markets and across markets” (P.52-53).

Above statements explained that thoroughly understand the culture is not only crucial to set appropriate strategies but also to guarantee that the local operations carry out the strategies efficiently. Culture affects how the marketing mix strategy is to be implemented but at the same time robust marketing mix will effect on consumer behaviour (Nyukorong, 2014; Jamal, Peattie and Peattie, 2012; Van Heerden and Barter, 2008; Jamal, 2003a).

Luna and Forquer Gupta (2001) argued that culture acts as lens for companies in shaping reality, a blueprint and specifying a plan of action. At the same time, a culture is unique to a specific group of people. They suggested that marketers are actors that deliver meanings and values of the services or products to change consumers' behaviours in their own local culture. Marketing communications such as advertising may influence cultures' phenomenon. For example, a case of Calvin Klein's advertising that highlighted the concept of skinniness value in American Society.

Similarly, Jamal (2003a) argued that marketers and various ethnic consumers are indeed interrelated and adjusting to each other. He supported the existing arguments that marketers are actors which transferring the values while consumers are often bound with culture exchange to illustrate various tastes, themes and sounds of culture diversification. Marketing activities expedite the culture exchange and resulting to acceptance of new lifestyles. He then examined the role of marketing in multicultural marketplace.

According to Jamal (2003a), mostly existing research concerned on individual market transaction rather on how marketing effects on society and there are limited academic studies on investigating the impacts of consumers' consumption due to marketing exposure. Marketing activities are surrounded in society and have positive influences on changing consumer behaviour especially on how consumers constructed their identities through marketing exposure.

His findings showed that consumers are learning and adapting with foreign cultures thus, these consumers altered their indigenous cultures are the results of marketing exposure. Jamal then confirmed that effective marketing strategy creates a new lifestyle and changing the buying behaviours and products consumption in local culture without breaking its values. "*Marketing promotes liberty and freedom and liberates the lifestyles of consumers*" (Jamal, 2003a, p. 1614). This understood that marketing is indeed a vital in transferring values of products or services to consumers in marketplace.

Contrasts with largely studies on cultures that focused on comparing national cultures with other foreign cultures, Holden (2004, p. 564) critiqued that "*most academic studies on cultures are using Hofstede and they are all too blindly followed*". This critic means that most of scholars' studies concerned on gender stereotyping, service quality, globalisation, the effect of country of origin, new product development, standardise marketing with national culture.

Holden urges further research focuses on a new concept of culture studies such how marketing has greater impact in cultural differences influences on consumer behaviour; focusing on how it affects consumers values, attitudes and decision making. Thus, this research tried to explore on how international hotels do marketing strategy in creating demands for spas services and in changing Malaysia cultural dimensions especially in relation to gender and ethnicities.

When study on culture, it is not necessary to associate with national culture as it can be understood through culture elements (Usunier and Lee, 2005). National culture research focuses on generality of one country by grouping individual into larger group as a nation. While culture can be learnt and understood through social class, sex, family, religion, ethnicity, profession, organisational culture, nationality, language and education (Usunier and Lee, 2005).

Analogous with previous literatures, Usunier and Lee agreed that culture is changing through time and space such through post colonials and wars influence. Cleveland and Laroche (2007) argued that culture not only change and adapt from post colonisations and wars, also through economies, technology, business, travels and tourisms, immigrants and globalisation.

This is supported by Askegaard, Kjeldgaard and Arnould (2009) that culture change is due to the exposure of globalisation. They critiqued on seminal work of Levitt (1983) on no cultural diversification in global marketplace and all people are similar. Cultural diversification is indeed existed across the world hence localisation or customisation of products or services should not be ignored.

Culture adapting and altering occurred especially with the inclination of western practices that have been transferred to various local culture. Therefore, it worth to address the issue on understanding how marketing activities employed by every organisation have significant influences in changing consumer attitudes and behaviours (Engelen and Brettel, 2011b).

In understanding how marketing changes consumers behaviour in their local cultures, Demangeot and Sankaran (2012) conducted a research on consumers perspective that focused on the issues of how consumers tolerate, adjusting and adapting with products and consumption within various cultures examine how marketers make these changes happened.

They suggested that emergent consumptions occurred due to the acceptance by people in numerous cultures. Consumers are not necessary to travel out from their countries in order to be exposed by new cultures, but they learnt through foreign products, from immigrants, and tourists. For example, one consumer may have various choices of products originated from several countries in one supermarket.

However, most of literatures showed that culture is predominantly constant-free context, but there is a growing nexus that cultures endure with changes quicker and easier than what have been understood. In line with previous scholars, Parts and Vida (2013) also explained that international marketers can influence consumers' behaviour in host culture through product quality.

Lastly, Nyukorong (2014) argued that culture has greater impacts on marketing strategy, but it also interacts the other way round through marketing exposure. "*Changes that are taking place in any of the aspects will have an effect on the others as well*" (P.85). This quote means that there are two ways of communications between culture and marketing strategy and they are related to each other.

Culture influences how marketers formulate and implement strategy and at the same time strategy changes culture environment with new trends and phenomena. Nyukorong (2014, p.87) proposed few questions that can be addressed in further research such:

- 1) Whether there is a real possibility of convergence of cultures into one big global culture;
- 2) In which sense culture and marketing interact and interplay with each other;
- 3) When is it appropriate for a marketing manager to adopt a localised marketing strategy?
- 4) What is the practicality of a localised strategy in the global marketplace?
- 5) Whether or not culture hinder the achievability of standardisation;

- 6) Which aspects of the marketing strategy should be standardised and which ones should be adapted since marketing strategies act as the essential foundation of marketing plans created to satisfy market needs and to realize marketing objectives?

He conducted a research and the results of interviews demonstrated that informants indicated powerful marketing may have positive impacts on culture. Then, it is suggested a proposition that marketing strategy has prospective in changing or altering cultures based on target market. Marketers have the capability to develop sensible customization marketing program that may be effective and efficient in various cultures globally.

From the above discussions on the concept of marketing and culture, and how marketing influences behaviours of consumers, it is a clear understanding that there is an urge to conduct a research in providing in-depth insight how MNCs operate in host countries changes the local culture, influences consumers behaviours and create new trends in spas services from management perspective. Next, this chapter discusses marketing has greater implications on gender.

2.1.5 Marketing strategy impacts on gender

There is an established interest between marketing and consumer researchers in gender and explicitly focused to comprehend the link between nature of gender behaviours and the roles of marketing activities (Kenayathulla, 2016; Arsel, Eräranta and Moisander, 2015; Fowler and Thomas, 2015; Autioa et al., 2013; Little, 2013; Kraft and Weber, 2012; Chhabra et al., 2011; Ndubisi, 2006; Attwood, 2006). Yet very little study that concerns on marketing towards men specifically in spas and tourism industry (Wang, Qu, and Hsu, 2016; Holliday et al., 2015; Chhabra et al., 2011; Bettany et al., 2010).

Gender comparison in developing marketing strategies is an interesting research topic (Michon et al., 2015). In relation to marketing strategies, few studies have been examined, including the implication of gender identity and consumers' perceptions towards males and females products (Hein and O'Donohoe, 2014; Canning, 2012; Allison et al., 1980), gender role portrayal in advertising (Klasson and Ulver, 2015; Towns, Parker and Chase, 2012; Coughlin and Oconnor, 1985), the preferences of buying and exchange gifts presents (Fischer, 2008; Fischer and Arnold, 1994), and the response between men and women towards sales promotion and advertisements (Lindsey, 2015; Robertson and Davidson, 2013; Theodoridis et al., 2013; Ndubisi, 2005). Another set of studies concerned on the implications of marketing strategy towards changing the gender roles (Fowler and Thomas, 2015; Kraft and Weber, 2012; Towns et al., 2012).

Within these studies, it was shown that marketing strategy targeted for men and women are different (Kraft and Weber, 2012; Towns et al., 2012; Chhabra et al., 2011). The reasons why there are differences in implementing marketing strategy based on gender preferences are first; men and women traditionally have dissimilar buying behaviour and second their preferences are more likely been influenced by gender roles (Kraft and Weber, 2012; Sherman et al., 2007). With appropriate marketing strategy targeted for different genders, it will have significant impacts in changing consumers' behaviour in marketplace (Kraft and Weber, 2012; Akcay, 2012; Towns et al., 2012; Canning, 2012).

According to Towns et al. (2012), powerful marketing able to change not only consumers' perception towards products introduced by marketers, also able to influence consumers to consume the products. For example; their research illustrated that with appropriate content in promotion strategy, marketers transformed negative perception on alcohol that linked to domestic violence to a product that can construct masculine identity for men. This marketing strategy portrayed men drink beer and spirits through space such drinking at pub and at motorcar race to construct masculine identity in their alcohol

campaign. This campaign successfully influenced men to consume alcohol and achieved company's profitability.

Many consumers are more favourable with products or promotions that representing their gender roles (Canning, 2012). For example; the use of colours in packaging or products based on gender preferences has greater impacts in influencing consumer behaviour. Traditionally, people distinguished gender through colours ever since babies were born. In hospital, when a baby girl was born, she will be wrapped with pink blanket to note that she is a girl (Lindsey, 1990).

These colour practices also applicable in marketing as an example in packaging or advertising, in order to distinguish between males or females' products (Klasson and Ulver, 2015; Page, Thorsteinsson and Ha, 2012; Towns et al., 2012; Canning, 2012). Men prefer products or advertising that used darker colours such black and blue while women are more attracted to brighter colours like white (Canning, 2012). Thus, it is important for marketers to highlight the benefits related to gender roles prior to implementing marketing strategy as different consumers may react differently in marketplace.

Recently, the marketing targeted for men is expanding and more products and services are introduced to cater this gender-based segment include beauty, grooming, health products such as gyms and spas (Cheong and Kaur, 2015; Loureiro et al., 2013; Seung-Hee et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2010). Earlier, male grooming products are frequently misunderstood as invading into feminine space (Cheong and Kaur, 2015).

Cosmetics products also are relatively recognized to women while most manufacturers and retailers are not really focused on men (Seung-Hee et al., 2011). Now, with the increasing of modern men due to intensification of self-esteem and public self-consciousness, the cosmetics products have been developed and produced widely and men are concern on the awareness of gender towards products'

consumption which related to being men and how the role of masculinity impacts on their health (Seung-Hee et al., 2011; Saunders and Peerson, 2009).

However, there are inconsistent results with respect to the relative importance of masculinity and femininity in explaining findings. Men are learning to construct and adapt with their masculine identity from transition traditional to modern men through marketing exposure, thus it is vital for marketers to have proper methods and strategies to cater the market that targeted to men.

For instance, Coughlin and O'Connor (1985) found masculinity to be significant predictor of consumer purchase intentions, Fischer and Arnold (1994) found femininity to be more important than masculinity in relationship to Christmas gift shopping and Hein and O'Donohoe (2014) explained that using banter in a play not only helps in improving consumption practices but also aids men to construct masculine identity.

Very few studies have attempted to argue on any view of cultural construction and characteristics in spa industry (O'Dell, 2010). Future research needs to explore the negotiation of masculinity in contemporary culture and understand how marketers deal and negotiate with the concept of masculine especially marketing in spas businesses (Bettany et al., 2010).

If the beauty industry needs to tailor its products according to specific needs, so does the spa industry (Yacob and Zainol, 2014). Spas providers need to meet the customers' preferences by customise the products or services that can justify each market segment and gender-based preferences such as providing health-and wellness services/products for male spa goers. This study not only helps spas providers and industry to growth and expanding the business but also helps men enjoy an advantage of having spas experience to build their masculine identity rather than being misunderstood as heterosexual.

Selling a general commodity product is easier than selling a social gendered product such as spas services (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971). In medical, health care and spas, services providers are struggling to promote and market the health to men, so they adopted target strategy by targeting the specific group in order to create awareness on the important of health where they work closely with theatre company to set up stand-up comedians and get the actors to play, and used media campaigns in their health programme events (O'Brien and Forrest, 2008).

In order to combat with this issue, marketers should be aware on how to develop products or offer services that can portray masculine identity. Most of marketers that selling the men products are pursued with membership strategy such offering one-year contracts at discounted price to ensure the loyalty of the products (Ndubisi, 2006). The marketers also focused on 4ps (place, product, packaging and promotion) as a control variable. It is very challenging to design products for men as each product has different meaning and colour choice that can relate to their identity also each promotion is very complex and involved with strategy and tactics to attract this male market (Funk and Oly Ndubisi, 2006).

The insights on how products and services able to build masculine identity can help marketers to influence and persuade men to accept men's grooming products. While these earlier researches have significantly progressed into existing knowledge of the studies on gender in the marketplace, there is still a room for further theoretical development in the field. Therefore, this research tries to contribute with exploration on international hotels implementing powerful marketing strategy in changing gender roles of masculinity in Malaysia through spas consumptions. Gender and its roles will be further discussed in chapter 3. Next section deliberates the important of marketing mix in changing consumer behaviour in marketplace.

2.2 Implementation of Marketing Mix

Prior to the implementation of marketing mix strategy, it has the formulation process where marketers need to identify the target segment and target market (Ayyub, 2015; Kotler, 2012b; Pesonen, Laukkanen and Komppula, 2011). The process on how MNCs formulating and implementing sound and robust marketing strategy have a long-standing debates in marketing theory, especially when MNCs doing business in foreign market as both framing and implementation can affect to companies' performance (Morgan et al., 2012; Krasnikov and Jayachandran, 2008; Olson, Slater and Hult, 2005; Akroush, 2003; Wolfgang and Chacour, 2001; Li et al., 2000; Fraser and Hite, 1990).

The debates surrounding in marketing research highlighted that formulation and implementation marketing strategy are basically two different processes since several organisations find that it is very difficult to link between formulation and implementation gap (Pryor et al., 2007; Grönroos, 2006b; Piercy, 1998; Cespedes and Piercy, 1996). Nevertheless, according to Rosier et.al (2010), this perspective of strategy as separate process is complexly imperfect and there is a growing nexus on integration process of marketing strategy formulation and implementation. This research only focuses on implementation process as the aims of this research are to understand how by implementing marketing mix, MNCs able to change not only preferences, create demands on spas services but also change the role of gender.

2.2.1 Implementation, debates, and its components

It begins with Bourgeois III and Brodwin (1984) who stated that strategy implementation is such illusory phenomena not only marketing literatures also in strategic management, yet the definition and its constructions remain feeble. Various studies have been conducted specifically on implementation strategy and they argued that implementation is a distinct process from formulation.

One set of studies focuses on marketing implementation at the functional or organizational level and implementation by managers such (Möller and Parvinen, 2015; Morgan et al., 2012; Smith, 2011; Chimhanzi and Morgan, 2005; Noble and Mokwa, 1999; Hutt et al., 1988). A second set of studies focuses on other factors that influence implementation marketing strategy (Roh et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2009; Pryor et al., 2007; Piercy, 1998).

First, Hutt et al. (1988) on their qualitative studies in technology industry suggested that marketing strategy should include autonomous strategic behaviour of marketing managers as precedent of implementing marketing strategy. Yet, the sample was small, and their findings only found single decision process over time from managers in implementing strategy and did not deliberate the interconnected of two ways process such as decision in integrative approach of formulation and implementation during the same period.

Then, Tax and Stuart (1997) evaluated that even there is extensive literatures on implementation, but the design and implementation on services is under studies. Service failure is a result from poor planning and weak implementation. Introducing new services is challenging in marketplace. For example, a case study of coffee and donut franchised outlets. Normally consumers either dine in or take out.

For that reason, consumers really concern on the freshness of the coffee, taste and the speed of the process to deliver the service to the customers that anticipated in queuing. Unlike donuts, the process to make donuts is time consuming hence they usually display the ready-made for consumers choice of selections (Tax and Stuart, 1997).

They identified that men are dominating this market which 75 percent of demographic. The sales usually happen between 6 am to 10 am. Expected time to deliver the service when consumers order donut and coffee is less than a minute. When they offer new products, which are sandwich and soup, from

operational point of view, the services will be delivered similarly with the existing service yet the response of consumers towards this service was poor.

Even they made modifications in order to meet customer expectations with wide-range menu, yet the task time to prepare the sandwich was disappointing which affect the time of queuing. To sail the tide, the franchisee modified the physical facilities by adding food-preparation and eat-in service so that consumers can have ample space to wait for their food rather than waiting in the line.

The above study can be related to spas services where the MNCs introduced or offer new services, and the services did not satisfy customers, it can be frustrated. Even the services offered may be good for consumers' health and wellbeing; MNCs still need to consider the robust strategy to combat with the challenges. For example; some marketers assumed that spa-goers shared similar preferences and treat them as a homogenous group, yet consumers are different in a reality of life and the needs and preferences also are different (Koh et al., 2010). Thus, MNCs need to create and offer services that meet consumers' expectation to overcome the shortcomings.

According to Noble and Mokwa (1999), after eleven years gap since 1988, still very little study on implementation especially at manager level in an organisation. They investigated the implementation strategy by comparing the companies in multiple industries; (1) between airline industry and emergency service industry, and (2) between finance industry and packaged goods industry.

Through findings, it suggested that every company implemented strategy by comparing the previous strategy in the past. A company needs to understand the evolution of their marketing strategy ever since they operated the business in a marketplace and thoroughly examined which strategy was well implemented and which strategy was poorly executed. It then helps to identify the gaps between successful and the failures in implementation marketing strategy.

In addressing the gaps on implementation strategy, Thorpe and Morgan (2007) developed an empirical conceptual model based on change model, collaborative model and cultural model to investigate implementation strategy from a mid-level marketing managerial perspective. Among three models, only cultural model investigated at both formulation and implementation, however it only emphasizes at lower level employee participation.

From the findings, it was illustrated that successful implementation strategy is resulted from hierarchy structure and strong top-down management influences. Yet, this study is weak in explaining in-depth on how top-down management can influence the strategy by only generalizing the results from mid-level to lower level employees. Nevertheless, they strongly suggested that there is in need for future research to consider investigating culture elements in shaping the process of implementation.

Next, Saunders et.al (2008) argued that most of the firms encountered with the implementation strategy which the issues concerning on how these firms managed to react when new initiative is commenced. Embracing and implementing an appropriate marketing strategy will result the world class performance in marketplace.

However, the subject such as how do managers implement in order to get outstanding outcomes remains understudies. Well implementation is subject to how consumers changing their behaviour. This includes with how consumers adapt response, learn and expose from marketing strategy (Saunders et al., 2008). In the meantime, over two decades, academic scholars highlighted the importance of implementation strategy yet according to Smith (2011), very little number of scholars have attempt to distinguish and explains what the meaning of the importance is and defining how every company can achieve the successful strategy.

It is important to really articulate what the previous scholars meant by marketing strategy implementation and how the organisation can attain such a sturdy strategy rather than only stressed out that this strategy is essential in management literature. Strategy is only a strategy without well implementation as organisation can only plan anything and set a target to achieve, but without robust implementation, it is quite possible to achieve.

Successful implementation will affect on powerful marketing strategy. Smith examined top executives in Europe and US suggested that implementation takes about 90 percent of the efforts to achieve strategic change. Even there are numerous self-evident on the importance of implementation yet there is poorly understanding on it. The matters of how companies can reach to that point, how to ensure the organisations get there need to be investigated. Executives are correspondingly in determining successful implementation. In Smith research, the results found out that top executives in Europe and US involve almost 90 percent in attaining successful strategic change from implementation.

Barbosa and Romero (2014) argued that implementation process exposes as important factor to determine whether the firm is successful or fail in the marketplace. Yet it still requires in providing vigorous comprehension on the appropriate variables which consists in the process. It is remarkable and significant to provide in-depth insights on why firms have accomplishment with marketplace interaction and how these firms achieved these processes. This suggestion shaped this research concept where this research tried to examine the components of marketing strategies which ensured the successful of implementation strategy in spas businesses.

In recent studies, the growing nexus establishing on quantitative perspective suggested the important of implementation marketing strategy. Möller and Parvinen (2015) explained that the important of implementation was introduced circa 1980s looking at the consumers' perspectives. This is due to the key of robust and sounds marketing strategy is echoed from successful implementation.

Implementation can fail if the execution of the strategy is weak. In line with Wolfgang and Chacour (2001) on customers have significance impacts on implementation marketing strategy. They also suggested to the future research on the urged to fill the gap between theoretical and practice of cohesive approach process in the business marketing literature.

Drawing from the existing literatures, rarely studies concern on what components of implementation should a company focus on. According to Svensson and El-Ansary (2006), in implementation process, marketing mix is a vital component for every firm to look at. Whether a firm especially for services firm should focus on traditional 4ps or 7ps, and whether they should implement standardise or localise marketing mix strategy in order to change consumers' behaviour and buying preferences towards their services or products.

In line with Cowell (1980), in earlier marketing services study, he evaluated that marketing strategy comprises of two stages which at first stage is identifying the target market that a firm decides to operate (in formulation stage) and second stage involves with developing and implementing appropriate marketing mix for each target market selected.

It is essential in emphasizing that this study of exploring the powerful marketing strategy in changing consumer behaviour and local culture, has recognized on Kotler (2012a), (Baker and Saren, 2010), Svensson and El-Ansary (2006), (Webster Jr, 1992) and (Cowell, 1980) that marketing mix strategies are key roles in implementation process. Next, this research will discuss on the long-standing debates of marketing mix in services industries and its variables whether or to what extent a firm should pursue standardise or localise strategy.

2.3 Marketing mix strategy in services industries

The growing notion on the important of marketing mix has been developed as the basis concept underneath marketing theory and strategy development for all businesses industries (Khan, 2014; Akroush, 2011; Goi, 2009; Wickham, 2009; Gibbs, Pashiardis and Ivy, 2008; Constantinides, 2006; Manchanda, Rossi and Chintagunta, 2004; Bennett, 1997; Rafiq and Ahmed, 1995). However, there are long-standing debates on which Ps should be emphasised when the business involves with services.

Largely literatures have demonstrated that the traditional 4Ps models introduced by McCarthy (1960) for goods industries are scarce as the models did not reflect to services characteristic. Academic scholars who conducted studies on marketing mix strategy for services evaluated that services businesses and industries are different from other goods industries (Khan, 2014; Yacob and Zainol, 2014; Akroush, 2011; Goi, 2009; Wickham, 2009; Gibbs et al., 2008; Bennett, 1997; Rafiq and Ahmed, 1995; Magrath, 1986; Booms and Bitner, 1981).

However, the characteristics or variables of service marketing mix still in disagreement between the academic scholars. In the beginning of 1970s, marketing for services was explained to ought its own concepts and models compared to the traditional products marketing (Grönroos, 1994). Hence the traditional 4Ps models are inadequate as it is fragile and leads to great disappointment as services businesses are selling experiences more than materials goods (Karmarkar, 2014; Rafiq and Ahmed, 1995).

Goods industries focused on product orientation while services industries focused on customer orientation (Bolton and Myers, 2003; Rafiq and Ahmed, 1995; Magrath, 1986). The questions such to what extent and which variable(s) of the marketing mix has the most significant impacts in influencing

consumers' behaviours remain understudies. Thus, it is worth it to explore the major components of the marketing mix strategy that has greater impacts in services industry in the next section.

2.3.1 What is means by marketing mix and its evolution of definitions

There is several of marketing mix definitions in marketing literatures identified by marketing scholars. Borden (1964, p. 7), claimed to be the pioneer of using the term of marketing mix. He stated that: *"I have always found it interesting to observe how an apt or colourful term may catch on, gain wide usage, and help to further understanding of a concept that has already been expressed in less appealing and communicative terms"*.

The above quote echoes to Borden's perception on marketing mix. He labelled that marketers are the mix-elements in company's practices. However, the quote does not much explain what marketing mix is. Cowell (1984, p. 71) explained that marketing mix is *"the convenient means of organising all the variables controlled by the marketer that influence transactions in the marketplace"*. This definition still lacks in explaining what variables that marketer needs to emphasis in influencing consumers in marketplace.

Next, Bartels (1988, p. 15) suggested that *"the marketing mix is the combination of means for achieving the marketing objective of a business firm. The elements of the mix include all promotional means under the authority of the manager of marketing activities: personal selling, advertising, credit service, product development, packaging, dealer relations"*.

This definition was well articulated on what is means by marketing mix compared to the previous two. It highlighted that promotions, products development, packaging and dealer relations

(distribution channel) as marketing mix components. However, this definition is lack in clarifying the relationship between marketing activities with consumers.

Then, Gibbs et al. (2008, p. 289) described marketing mix as *“a set of controllable marketing tools that an institution uses to produce the response it wants from its various target markets”*. While Goi (2009, p. 2) assesses marketing mix as *“a reflection of marketing planning that been transformed into the practices in the marketplace, created from microeconomic theory that concerns on the price and not a scientific theory, but merely a conceptual framework that identifies the principal decision making managers make in configuring their offerings to suit consumers‘ needs”*.

Latest, Khan (2014, p. 96) explains that *“marketing mix is the set of controllable variables and their levels that the firm uses to influence the target market”*. New sets of definitions above explained that marketing mix is activities implemented by marketers in reaching their target market and at the same time to satisfy consumers‘ needs and wants. Also, from the above definitions, it is concluded that there are no agreements on the ideal definition for marketing mix. Nevertheless, the various definitions have major themes such; it reveals that marketing mix discusses about a set of actions planned and implemented by the companies to influence or educate consumers in marketplace and as tools which aid companies to meet target markets‘ needs.

From the crucial themes, it is known that marketing mix has its own variables that been used to interact and fulfil consumers‘ needs and preferences. In traditional school of thought for goods marketing, McCarthy (1960) outlined that marketing mix has 4ps include product, price, promotion and place. In contrast, Booms and Bitner (1981) extended another 3Ps in service marketing include physical evidence, people and process, politics and public opinion (Kotler, 1999) and latest (Kotler, 2012a) developed another 2 new Ps theory include performance and programs.

It is understandable that the evolution of definitions and Ps occurs through times and marketplace environments. Drawing from the numerous definitions, this research defines marketing mix as *a set of actions conducted by companies in interacting with their consumers through specific variables that fit into market segment*. Next, this research will discuss on the marketing mix variables illustrated in existing literatures and will propose only four Ps integrated from traditional and Ps for services marketing that fit with the study undertaken.

2.3.2 The Marketing Mix Variables

Marketing mix is the key elements in marketing (Grönroos, 1991) and the fundamental debates on to what extent every organisation that operate services businesses in host countries can allocate their marketing mix effectively is still ongoing (A. Griffith et al., 2014; Katsikeas, Samiee and Theodosiou, 2006).

Earlier, company, consumers and marketing mix have been discussed independently but now they are within a single circle dimensions (Khan, 2014; Goi, 2009; Gibbs et al., 2008). That means these three of company, consumers and marketing mix are linked to each other as a comprehensive concept. Yet, the marketing mix variables have been deliberated in various literatures and every academic scholar focused on specific Ps that fit into their areas.

In strategic marketing theory, product is a well-known as importance for every company and it is incorporated as marketing mix (Fuat Firat and Shultz, 1997; Fuat Firat et al., 1995). Conversely, earlier in marketing theory, (Borden, 1942) introduced 12 components of marketing mix for manufacturers include: product planning which refers to the product lines to be offered, pricing refers to price level to adopt, branding; selection of trademarks, channel distribution refers to the interaction between manufacturers and consumers, personal selling is related to the policies and procedures to segment the

retail trade, advertising is associated with creating product and corporate image, promotions are tools to reach consumer, packaging is related to package and label, display is a method to help effective sale, servicing is about how service can be provided based on needs, and physical handling associated with warehousing, transportation and inventories.

The components seem feeble and unorganized. Thus, McCarthy (1960) presented and lessened the Borden's mix elements to 4Ps as manageable variables for every company in meeting target market needs and preferences. The 4Ps controllable variables are product, price, place, and promotion. Those elements introduced by Borden can be grouped into 4Ps presented by McCarthy.

Branding, personal selling, display, packaging, and advertising can be classified as promotion while channel distribution, servicing and physical handling can be categorised as place (McCarthy, 1960). In understanding 4Ps, product refers to the tangible goods and commonly linked with branding, packaging or warranties while pricing denotes the method of setting a price for the product offered in the market.

Place can be associated with distribution or location that refers to how the products reached to the consumer and promotion means the tool to promote either products, brand or the company names through advertising, sales promotion or direct marketing. It is understood that every element of marketing mix covers several activities. McCarthy's 4Ps frameworks have been widely accepted and used by many practitioners and academic scholars (Dominici, 2009; Goi, 2009).

As service marketing is different from goods marketing, Booms and Bitner (1981) extended the traditional marketing mix from 4Ps to 7Ps. They introduced people, process, and physical evidence as these three variables have greater direct impacts with consumers. The idea of three new Ps was

supported by Magrath (1986) when she argued that traditional marketing mix is insufficient in services industries.

“Marketing plans usually are structured around the traditional four Ps of Price, Product, Place and Promotion, but when it’s service that is being marketed, there more Ps of Personnel, Physical facilities and Process management must be added to the mix” (Magrath, 1986, p. 44). Services businesses have direct relationship with consumers while the traditional models are more tied within manufacturer with wholesaler or retailer before consumers.

In that sense, failure to consider and implement these three elements in services businesses will let companies encounter with market frustration. For example, a healthy airline known as Braniff was bankrupt in 1982 after twelve years been operated due to implementing low ballll pricing rather emphasizing its service processes, and cut the employees cost (Magrath, 1986).

The 7ps marketing mix is known as the powerful marketing mix for services marketing acknowledged by scholars (Lovelock, 2011; Lovelock and Wirtz, 2002; Rafiq and Ahmed, 1995; Magrath, 1986; Cowell, 1984). In contrast with Booms and Bitner, and Margarith, Grönroos (1990) added politics and public relations have significant impacts in service marketing mix.

He suggested that a firm should implement its marketing activities based on target market’s needs and wants through public relations and influences of politic of one country. Thus, new studies should be able to be linked marketing mix studies with customer relationship and actual marketing environments.

Rafiq and Ahmed (1995) argued that the traditional marketing mix has been reviewed as a weak framework while 7ps framework have shown significant improvement. They assessed that service marketing mix is dissimilar in term of service nature such intangibility, perishability and heterogeneity

and inseparability in comparison with the traditional marketing mix that focused on product orientation (Lovelock and Wright, 2014).

The reasons why the traditional framework was inadequate due to services producers involve with place, participants, process and physical evidence, and occasionally involve with product, price and promotion. However, at some point of period, no empirical research has been presented to address the issues of either 4ps or 7ps framework among academic scholars (Rafiq and Ahmed, 1995).

They conducted research in UK, focusing on delegates of UK's Marketing Education Group (MEG) conference in Salford in 1992 and European Marketing Academy (EMAC) held in Denmark in 1992. 78% respondents from EMAC and 84 percent MEG delegates demonstrated that 4ps framework is feeble and associated the framework as pedagogy tool rather than marketing tool and most respondents agreed that 7ps are useful in service marketing and this framework has been accepted as proper framework for service marketing.

Yet, there are few weaknesses of 7ps as it was viewed as complicated compared the traditional, there are extra elements can be added in marketing mix model (Rafiq and Ahmed, 1995). This was supported by Bennett (1997) who explained that consumers tend to purchase products in contradictory way that have been purposed by the marketing existing mix literature.

Consumers do not embrace knowledge of marketing mix elements in details but seek the contentment through product or services benefits offered by the organisations. Thus, Bennet introduced new marketing mix variables that are totally different from previous P which considered through consumers' lens.

There are 5Vs include value, viability, variety, volume and virtue as perceived by consumers. This is due to the differences outlook between supplier and consumers are; supplier involves with targeting and traditional marketing mix while consumers concern on sourcing and 5Vs. Bennet did not mean to discard the traditional marketing mix rather to encourage marketing practitioners to provide actual, concrete and comprehensive deliberation to understand the process of consumer buying behaviour. She believes that, by understanding buyer disposition, it helps marketers to have sound and robust marketing strategies.

A crucial analysis on marketing mix literatures discovered that there are many critiques regarding the unity to have ideal marketing mix model. Thus, Gibbs et al. (2008) provided insights on marketing mix variables through empirical study from services marketing area. For example, physical evidence refers to the space characteristics in the classroom such as the teaching materials provided to the students.

A process is also one of the new elements in services marketing mix. In their research, process refers to the administrative and bureaucratic departments that handle all the enquiries, course evaluation (Gibbs et al., 2008). The results confirmed that marketing mix for services cannot rely on the traditional marketing mix. Even for 7ps, it is not necessary been used as new elements may exist.

This is in line with (Goi, 2009) who argued that marketing mix has various variable and each variable reflects marketing planning that been transformed into the practices in the marketplace. Goi added that *“marketing mix is not a scientific theory, but merely a conceptual framework that identifies the principal decision making managers make in configuring their offerings to suit consumers ‘ needs”*(P.2).

Although various physical organisations have continuously managed with the 4P in an incorporated system, yet the recruiting specifically implementation of the strategies rests in other people and several departments in every organisation. Also, Dominici (2009) agreed that even marketing mix has been a

keynote of marketing theory and practices, the evolutions endure by social and economic environments have significant implications towards various new marketing mix elements added.

This statement is parallel with Kotler (1999) that economic settings influencing on extended marketing mix variables. There is an urge to identify new element of marketing mix rather than relying on the conventional framework as it is weak in term of relationship with consumers as it focused on products (Dominici, 2009).

Later, the concept of marketing mix is important in marketing strategy has been confirmed through empirical research. The growth of marketing strategy has been relied on the marketing mix in order to be competent and efficient (Wickham, 2009). He argues that in order to extend the traditional marketing mix, a firm must be able to answer few issues that concern with their target consumer such as whether the services offered by the firm deliver actual and durable solution to the customers' needs in the marketplace or not.

Wickham explored Thana marketing mix strategy in catering profitable maltreatment target consumers. The study was conducted in Australia. Findings showed that *"the services supplied by the company were subject to terms and conditions that were not brought to the attention of potential customers before the customer subscribed"* (Wickham, 2009, pg.197). According to Wickham (2009, p. 199), Thana marketing mix strategy comprises 8 elements which are unrelated to the previous Ps that have largely been discussed in existing literatures such:

- 1) Postponement- Any act that serves to delay or deny the supply of information/products/services to the consumer.
- 2) Procrastination- Any act that serves to delay the firm's agreed rectification of a product or service failure.

- 3) Protestation- Any act by the firm that denies responsibility for any wrongdoing and/or product or service failures.
- 4) Promise breaking- Any promise by the firm to provide a product or service (or any after-sales services) with no intention to do so.
- 5) Pressure- Any act by a firm that attempts to bully the consumer into submission.
- 6) Persecution- Any punitive act or threat by a firm that seeks to bully the consumer in to ceasing their actions or claims against it.
- 7) Pretense- Any act or omission by a firm that serves to establish a false expectation in the consumer's mind (upon which the consumer acts) concerning the delivery/operation/return of a product or service.
- 8) Presumption- Any act by a firm that assumes facts into a transaction not agreed to by the consumer.

The above elements are rather different from the existing Ps that has been debated among academic scholars. With Thana-Marketing mix strategy, it is understood that the variables of marketing mix are still expanding. Latest study, Khan (2014) reviewed that the 7Ps framework still the most appropriate for services marketing and it can be expanded depends on the environment of services businesses.

According to Khan (2014), product refers to the goods or services that have been offered in the marketplace through its features, qualities or benefits, price covers the price of goods or services, any price changes and the payment method, place is described as the distribution channels or location where the products or services are available to the consumers, promotion denotes to how market communicate with the consumers through personal selling, advertising, sponsorship, people refer to the personnel that transfer the services to the consumers, process is explained as the action of the services process, and physical evidences are associated with the environment when the services have taken place.

From the reviews, it is comprehensible that the debates about marketing mix elements are still on going and it reveals that among academic scholars, there is no mutual agreement on idealistic marketing mix framework. Rarely literatures provide evidence on which variable that a company should focus on and to what extent that every element of marketing mix influence or has greater impact towards consumer behaviour (Cleveland et al., 2009a; N Akroush and H Al-Dmour, 2006; Jamal, 2003a).

Companies need to implement separated marketing activities for different segment of their customer base to ensure that every element will be effective in changing and influencing consumer behaviour in marketplace. Such a distinction of marketing activities is expected to give greater profits to the firms as marketing efforts become more sounds and robust towards the customers implications (Homburg et al., 2008).

Thus, this research would investigate which variables have combination in marketing mix strategy to ensure that marketing mix activities interacted well with men consumers in changing their preferences and perceptions towards services offered in spas industry. Next, the discussion on whether MNCs should standardise or localise its marketing activities prior to implement powerful marketing strategy in local culture will be deliberated.

2.3.3 Used of Localised, Standardised or Adaptation in Marketing Mix Strategy

Designing marketing mix and deciding which strategy is the best to be implemented in MNCs begin with the identifying either localisation or standardisation approach is more efficient in other host countries (Nyukorong, 2014). The long-standing arguments in global marketing program is to identify how to align between a standardisation of marketing mix and at the same time localise the approach in other countries to accommodate with the country or regional diversification has not been totally established (Schmid and Kotulla, 2011; Keegan and Green, 2005).

Different dichotomy has been used to explain the same concept between standardisation versus localisation, standardisation versus customisation and standardisation versus adaptation (Nyukorong, 2014). The debate about whether to localized or standardized the marketing mix according to country uniqueness started in 1983, when Levitt (1983, p. 92) stated that “*companies must learn to operate as if the world were one large market, ignoring superficial regional and national differences*”. For Levitt, there is no cultural diversification across the countries and consumers were expected to similarly behave in global marketplace.

He generalised that companies should focused on standardisation to all countries. What Levitt was left unsaid is; there is much segmentation within countries as cultures not only in marketplace but also within country also different and Levitt’s propositions may be wronged (Askegaard et al., 2009).

There have been different set of studies on marketing strategies in multinational companies with the main problem being standardise and localise (Nyukorong, 2014; Schmid and Kotulla, 2011; Keegan and Green, 2005; Liu, Kramarczuk and Megits, 2014; Magnusson et al., 2013; Slater et al., 2013; Tan and Sousa, 2013; Chung, Lu Wang and Huang, 2012; Jiang and Wei, 2012; Hultman et al., 2009; Paliwoda et al., 2009; Lee, Knight and Kim, 2008; Katsikeas et al., 2006; Fastoso and Whitelock, 2007; Jain, 1989; Duncan and Ramaprasad, 1995).

When deliberating about the standardisation or localization approach of marketing mix in a company, the issues are not easy to assess as it is not a matter of —either/or— but which of the approach that the company supports and favours more (Duncan and Ramaprasad, 1995).

There are various techniques on how to get advantages from standardisation or adaption and there are numerous stages to which a company may use either of them such the stream of marketing activities and consumers participations (Al-Abdali, 1996; Porter, 1986). Therefore, it is critical for every company

to really understand which approach gives greater impacts towards implementing powerful marketing strategy in various host countries.

2.3.4 Standardisation

Previous literatures have been deliberated on the advantages and disadvantages of pursuing either complete standardisation or adaptation. Existing of abundant arguments on to what extent of standardisation versus adaptation should be focused are interrelated to numerous strategies and on the moderating variables will affect organisation decision with understanding how these approaches facilitated performances (Szymanski, Bharadwaj and Varadarajan, 1993).

They conducted a research by comparing US, UK, Canadian and Western Europe countries in providing comprehension whether these businesses are similar in economies, political and cultures. Findings exhibited that performance relationships are similar within the four markets as these countries sharing similar Western practices, economies and cultures.

They suggested that product standardisation moderates the risks of market loss and price standardisation allows companies to appreciate benefits such growth in profit margins as the companies shared similar consumers and marketing programs. It supported Levitt (1983) proposition that companies should ignore the regional or national differences, but it is necessary to pursue adaptation to successfully meet consumers' satisfaction. However, their research faced with limitations; which further research may consider including other countries that have dissimilarities in cultures, economies or political practices and compare with single country such Asian countries from these four countries.

Besides, their research is suffering with the understanding on the degree chosen of standardisation of single marketing mix components through the national markets employed by the companies. Then,

Katsikeas et al. (2006) extended the debates by addressing the relationship between company performance with the standardisation or adaptation approach. They concerned on the marketing standardisation antecedents at subsidiary level. According to them, there are twofold of antecedents, first at macro environmental that consists of economic, regulatory and technology environment.

Second; at microenvironment which comprises of customer characteristics, customs and traditions, marketing infrastructure, product lifecycle and competitive intensity. These two antecedents directly impact on strategy fit and performance outcomes. Results confirmed that *“superior performance for the MNC subsidiary depends on the presence of fit between a standardization strategy deployed and environmental conditions”* (P.881). This finding confirmed that Levitt (1983) is wrong when he suggested that every company should pursue standardisation approach of their marketing activities.

While Birnik and Bowman (2007) concerned on the preeminent findings of marketing mix standardisation in providing guidance to management practices. They used systematic review to reduce the bias of the existing reviews. The reviews found that *“the theoretical contribution is often limited to simple trade-off discussions regarding arguments for and against the convergence of markets and customer needs on a global or regional scale, arguments why specific contextual factors would have an impact on the degree of marketing mix standardization”* (Birnik and Bowman, 2007, p.306).

The marketing mix elements that have been examined are brand name, advertising and promotion, product, packaging, pricing, sales and distribution channels, customer service and the use of world-wide-web (www). Largely studies pointed out that price is the least approach for standardisation. Factors influencing marketing mix standardisation are such type of product or industry, degree of centralisation in decision making, HQ ownership level, subsidiary sales volume, entry mode, extent of local competitive intensity, size of local market, market similarities, country of origin of parent company,

international experience of parent company, organisation structure, competitive position, level of communication between parent and subsidiary, core competency (Birnik and Bowman, 2007).

Schilke, Reimann and Thomas (2009, p. 25) referred standardization as “*the degree to which firms apply common marketing-mix variables across national markets*”. They expanded from Katsikeas et.al, (2006) antecedents by proposed four antecedents that influence the standardisation approach include competitive strategies, aspects of international marketing strategy, product characteristics and general firm characteristics.

The empirical research was conducted to examine the relationship between standardisation with organisation performance. There are possibilities for a company to implement product differentiation strategy with standardise marketing practices through market diversification. The research suffers from the limitation on the lack understanding of moderators’ impact.

In contrast, Paliwoda et al. (2009) argued that MNCs need to integrate both standardise and localise approach to be efficacious in their businesses. It is suggested that MNCs require standardising the marketing mix components and marketing strategies and at the same time pursuing adaptation approach when it is required to meet local market. Also, MNCs need to analyse the intricate relationship between these two approaches and able to identify the significant impacts of adopting either one approach.

Through their studies, the findings demonstrated that it is irrelevant for MNCs to pursue whole standardisation approach on marketing mix even the global market seems to be more homogenised since consumers start to learn and adapt with other cultures. Then, the decision to adopt either one approach for their marketing mix is not favourable and can lead to the failure hence MNCs need to implement balance strategy and scrutinise every implication of both approaches. Thus, there is an urge to ruminate the influences of external factors on the decisions whether to standardise or localise

marketing mix as both have implications towards culture change process as culture seems penetrable (Craig and Douglas, 2011).

The controversial issues on standardisation versus localisation are still ongoing and not only been debated in marketing literatures but also in business management literatures although it has been widely investigated in last past 50 years (Schmid and Kotulla, 2011). Although a growth of international businesses is remarkable yet the notion whether internalisation spells the globalisation instead of regionalisation remains contentious.

According to Schmid and Kotulla (2011), 83% of studies are focused on giving recommendations to the company to pursue either one approach rather than exploring how the process happened and decisions have been made. Even their framework provides theoretically foundations, it does not assist as a tool to describing, explaining, or even predicting in which situations, to what degree, and why firms standardise or adapt their product strategies across nations.

Another set of studies contributed to understanding the aspects that impact on the standardisation and localisation decision rather not well grounded and inadequate. Chung et al. (2012) proposed that in implementing either standardise or localise is relies on marketing program components such as product, price, place and promotion. There are two ways of understanding the issues by segregating into two dimensions.

Firstly, by looking at standardisation or adaptation dimension and secondly by focusing on decentralised or centralised dimension. The dimensions also have four stage include global, glocal, regcal and local approaches. They explained that the global approach engaged with standardise and centralisation approach where a firm formulated and implemented a standard marketing programs with them headquarter (HQ). The elements of marketing strategy are similar with home and host market.

Meanwhile, the glocal (a combination of global and local) approach consists of integrating between standardisation with decentralised structure. In this glocalisation, a firm formulated standardise strategy at its HQ but implement strategy that has been altered to fit into local market. The regcal (regional and local) approach is used when a firm incorporated between adaptations with centralised structure. In this case, a firm formulate and adapt strategy based on their regional market at central (HQ).

Last, local approach means a mixture of adaptation and decentralisation structure. Marketing program has been customised according to the local market even the formulation and implementation have been made by local representatives (Chung et.al, 2012). Tan and Sousa (2013) argued that standardisation of marketing program across the countries involves with price, distribution, products and promotions.

They examined foreign market characteristics, firm characteristics and product characteristics with traditional 4ps. From empirical evidence illustrated that 4ps have been ignored in the standardisation studies. Besides, product, promotion and distribution have positively impact on price adaption. They demonstrated contrast findings and these form challenges for future academic scholars and managers to construct theory and organisation practice in this ground.

Meanwhile, Nyukorong (2014) outlines that culture has significant impact on the decision whether a firm should standardise or localise their marketing mix strategy. Standardisation strategy (SS) means a firm employed similar marketing approach and marketing activities globally. For example, Coca- Cola, that company has been standardised its products globally but at the same time has different segments to cater different group such as healthy consumers who concern with the sugar intake.

They promoted Zero Coke to cater this group. In this case, the products and even the promotion are not standardising across the market segment. His claims which in line with Kotler and Armstrong (2010) that altering marketing strategy and marketing mix to fit with the local culture will incur cost yet it is

predictable to raise market share and profitability. Through the results from the interviews conducted in his study showed that informants firmly articulated that localisation is critical and compulsory in global marketing.

Besides, it was been articulated that in the case of achieving objectives, if standardisation reduce the chances to attain it, the localisation will be established. Among the marketing mix variables, price and promotion often need to be localised while product can be standardised. The results not showing the holistic of marketing mix rather focused on product, price and promotion.

Therefore, it is a critical decision when MNCs decided to enter foreign business market, whether they wanted to implement standardise marketing mix with a particular marketing approach in all countries or to modify its marketing mix in order to fit into local market (Yap and Yazdanifard, 2014). Contrasts with Levitt (1983), Yap and Yazdanifard explained that there is enormous heterogeneousness between markets do exist.

Hence, there is an urge to modify marketing mix such as price, packaging, distribution in addressing the diversification. Adopting totally standardisation approach may lead to the failure in competing with other competitors in the marketplace as the markets are heterogeneous. They suggested that industrial products may experience success when implementing standardise approach but not for consumer products. Parallel with Paliwoda et al, (2009), Liu et al. (2014) agreed that more MNCs encounter with standardise and localise problems in global marketplace.

The debates on the issues of standardisation are still progressing. What have been revealed through the above discussion are, even many scholars argued that standardisation can help in cost effective, they still agreed that localisation or adaptation is necessary to ensure the successful marketing strategy implementation in host countries. However, which components and to what extent of marketing mix

should be standardise or localise in marketplace need further investigation. Next section will discuss the long-standing debates on localisation and adaptation.

2.3.5 Localisation and Adaptation

Localisation or adaptation, these are two different terminologies, but it discusses on the same topic. Localisation approach notion refers to a firm that customise its marketing activities based on local cultures so does adaptation where a firm adapt with local culture and set its activities that align with local market (Nyukorong, 2014; Franke, Keinz and Steger, 2009).

The dogma of adaptation or localisation entails with managers may adapt the firms' marketing strategy to deal with variations in the external environment of host countries or firms' practices and behaviour to meet the specification of its strategy (Hultman et al., 2009; Olson et al., 2005; Cavusgil and Zou, 1994).

Empirical studies in understanding the relationship between marketing mix adaptations or localisation with firms' performance have revealed inadequate conclusions, as some studies yielding a constructive relationship between adaptation with performance (Hultman et al., 2009; Sousa and Bradley, 2008; A. Griffith et al., 2014; Dow, 2006), and in other hand, there is a null relationship (Schilke et al., 2009).

Given the empirical vagueness related to the major outcome, academic scholars have progressively employed an emergent standpoint to recognise marketing mix elements in order to comprehend when and where adaptation, localisation or standardisation approach influence to superior performance (Katsikeas et al., 2006; Xu, Cavusgil and White, 2006; Albaum and Tse, 2001; Castillo, 2013; Franke et al., 2009).

Albaum and Tse (2001) conducted studies on Hong Kong exporters in order to understand the marketing mix adaptation approach employed by a firm. They proposed contingency-based framework to identify and understand the factors influencing adaptation strategy. 4ps; product strategy, positioning which related to promotion, distribution and pricing were examined.

There is significant relationship between the degrees of adaptation with the competitive advantage together with every element of marketing mix. Also, the finding showed that firms' decision to pursue adaptation when penetrating host market is aligned with firm's decision-making orientation and the perception of successful business in host market is relied to the decision of firm to pursue.

Next, Sousa and Bradley (2008) also investigated the factors that influence adaptation approach with firm performance but concerned on price strategy. In line with existing literatures, their results confirmed that foreign market characteristics and managers' international experience have positive impacts on price adaptation. Findings also confirmed that diverse environments lead to the pricing adaptation strategy. The multifaceted setting of international pricing and the hesitancy of leaders in management to deliberate and seek the solution on the issues are the consequence of the limited studies on this area.

While discussing the factors that influence marketing mix adaptation, other scholars look at benefits of adaptation from consumers perspectives. Even though some scholars have had arguments that customization needs large-scale of consumers participants, yet it generates more advantages for consumers rather than standard as the customisation undergo modification that meet local tastes (Franke et al., 2009). They conducted two separates studies to understand when consumers seek for product customisations.

First study was about the simulation of customisation versus standardisation of products in the newspaper market with ten headlines chosen from ninety headlines selected. Participants had to compare the benefits made from customisation products with explicit segment and mass-marketing products. Results exhibited those consumers more favour and have higher purchase intention towards customisation products rather than mass-marketing products as it tailored to their preferences. In second study, they concerned on the generalisation across the market.

Results showed that consumers perceived customisation products generate more benefits than standard products. However, their research suffers from limitation as they used simulation products from newspapers which may lead to the hypothetical bias and only focused on benefit sought rather than the impact of customisation towards consumers' demands.

In marketing areas, the key issues on to what extent firms should implement marketing mix adaptation are still understudies but progressing. Powers and Loyka (2010) conducted exploratory research based on 154 executive level managers in US to provide insights on the extent that every component of marketing mix is adapted for international market and how firm, industry and market factors effect on the level of adaptation.

According to Powers and Loyka, product adaptation allows companies to reinforce its market competitive positions besides identifying market segment together with offering unique action. Findings showed that distribution has the highest adaptation followed by price, promotion and product. However, the results showed that product has the most standardise among marketing mix components, contrary with distribution.

They also suggested that there are twelve antecedents that influence marketing mix adaptation; market factors, industry factors, company factors, cultural differences, consumer preferences, consumer

purchasing habits, product use conditions, level competition, market turbulence, technological turbulence, subunit vertical dependence, and subunit cooperation.

Another research concerns on the issues of how adaptation influences consumers' preferences. In providing comprehension on the discussion, Castillo (2013) conducted study on fast food industry in Central America region. He stated that, when international fast food retailers adopted localisation in products offering to cater local taste, it enhances more consumers' satisfactions.

Besides, it also creates positive perceptions among consumers towards international fast food retailers' image. This approach is closed to spas services where offering spas treatments based on local preferences may increase the consumptions demands. Yet, the results suffer with few limitations as he only focused on the localisation products such fast food meal have positive impacts on consumer satisfaction and perceptions rather than provides broader insights with other marketing mix elements such as the perception towards price or promotion to satisfy consumers' needs and preferences.

Last, Magnusson et al. (2013) disagreed with Schilke et al. (2009) proposition that standardisation enjoys the benefits from economic scale as the results confirmed which companies gain advantages from preeminent adaptation in foreign markets. In line with largely studies that diversification environment has positive impacts on marketing adaptation but marketing adaptation is insignificant effect on performance.

2.3.6 Evolution of Debates

The above discussion on which approach a firm should employed and implement is challenging address without understand in-depth the firms' background, what types of product or services industry structures, and the external environment characteristics of the foreign market (Cavusgil and Zou, 1994).

Indeed, market globalisation gives much implication not only on economic, but also on political situation, culture environments and emergent of businesses. In operating in global market, these MNCs must face with many challenges in staying competitive in the marketplace.

They must cope with effective and efficient marketing strategies to cater host business market. Dissimilarities culture backgrounds effect on formulating and implementing marketing strategies either to go for standardisation or to adapt and the country of origin images and values also impact on the strategies (Nyukorong, 2014).

It is worthy to investigate on how implementation of marketing mix and the approach of standardisation or localisation play an important role in intensifying the knowledge and interaction between services providers and consumers, which at the same time escalating the likelihood of introducing new services in little timeframes, letting companies to interact within different segments of consumers, expanding businesses and achieving growth in the short term.

After went through with numerous materials related with marketing mix and the need to standardise or localise in host market, this research has identified several topics such which variables have greater impacts and to what extent these variables should be localised or standardised in influencing and changing consumer behaviours and preferences towards spas services market in Malaysia context that could be of interest for the spas businesses as a research paper.

2.4 Summary of Chapter

This chapter has been reviewed the literatures on marketing, marketing strategy and implementation of marketing strategy and argued that there is no agreement definition of marketing, marketing strategy and marketing mix. In fact, definitions in every concept are various and multifaceted in terms of its construction.

Besides, it outlined on how marketing strategy has greater implications on consumer behaviour, culture and gender. This then leads to the argument that marketers should implement different marketing strategy based on gender preferences and need to take localise and standardise into considerations prior to implementing marketing strategy. Next chapter will be deliberated on the concept of culture and gender.

CHAPTER 3

Culture and Gender

3.0 Chapter Overview

The previous sections discussed on the important of literature in the marketing and marketing strategies area and offers thorough understanding into the context of this research while in this section, it discusses on the concept of culture and gender. Given the significance of culture in this research, this section describes the definition of culture and the definition of acculturation, discusses the specific details on culture and how consumers learn and adapt with other culture which lead to acculturation and the level of acculturation employed by consumers and the relation of culture and gender that fit into this research concept.

The reasons lie behind this concept are due to every country has different components of cultures in every perspective such as in business, politics, life, economy and industries thus consumers may learn foreign culture in various ways transferred by MNCs. Cultures are changing more rapidly and more easily than what have been usually thought and understood (Jafari and Süerdem, 2012; Cleveland and Laroche, 2007; Nakata and Sivakumar, 1996).

Thus, it is important to study spa's consumption among male spa goers as emergent adaptations to different cultural contexts through marketing exposure. This research sets out to focus on three of these distinctiveness's: marketing, gender and ethnicity. The influence of gender and ethnicity as elements of culture on consumption behaviour is an important component of the general sociocultural picture of consumption behaviour.

The present research extends this approach to examine how cultures, specifically in related with gender and social categorisation have been influenced by marketing strategy and affects consumption behaviour through spas consumption. The gap in detailed understanding of the influence of marketing on consumer behaviour on a micro and macro level, particularly due to the increasing number of multi-ethnicities especially for Muslims spa goers, has yet to be reflected in marketing and consumer behaviour research or in practical applications for strategy and segmentation.

3.1 Culture and its Definitions

A considerable amount of literature has been published on culture and numerous scholars have attempted to define culture and it can be understood in different point of view. The key underpinning of culture has been conceptualised by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952, p. 77) explained that:

“culture as patterns that include explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, the uniqueness of human groups, ideas and values”. This conclusion of culture is very closed with what has been defined on culture from (Sojka and Tansuhaj, 1995) as:

“Dynamic set of socially acquired behaviour patterns and meanings common to the members of a particular society or human group, including the key elements of language, artefacts, beliefs, and values” (Sojka and Tansuhaj, 1995, p. 9).

These authors have been strongly described culture in appropriate definition. They demonstrated that culture is complex; it can be seen or unseen by just feel the culture. Borrowed by Sojka and Tansuhaj (1995), this research focuses on behaviours, symbols, meanings and values as it helps in constructing

gender and social categorisation roles to relate with other people in similar society or groups throughout this research concept (Lindsey, 2015).

Sojka and Tansuhaj (1995) definition is an improvement from Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) where they add language and artefacts as part of culture that shared by people. This explanation about sharing through human groups was supported by (zapf, 1991) who explained culture as a community of people who tend to create a common map of the world derived from their experiences and it is reflecting on a manner of behaviours and customs.

The previous researchers have agreed with this culture definition where culture consist sharing symbols, ideas and values through human groups such birth, death, marriage (Segall, Lonner and Berry, 1998). Then, in much cited definition of culture that explaining the importance of studying culture, Schein (1984) illustrated culture as:

“A pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group has learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 1985, p. 4). Later, Schein adds that:

“Culture is an abstraction, yet the forces that are created in social and organizational situations that derive from culture are powerful. If we don’t understands the operation of these forces, we become victim to them” (Schein, 2006, p. 3).

From these two definitions of culture, Schein has strongly explained the significant to understand culture. First, by understanding culture, it helps to solve any issues which either an organisation needs to adapt with culture when doing business or just adopt the culture into the organisation. Second, if the organisation

fails to understand culture specifically entering foreign market, it can lead to a failure in doing business or even failure in engaging with consumers.

However, this research argued that culture is not necessary been shared as individual perceptions may be different from the society that they belong (Allen et al., 2008). For example, in this research of marketing changes local cultures in Malaysia assumed that Malay consumers may perceived masculinity different from Chinese consumers. The most debatable definition has been stated by Hofstede (1993) where he defined culture as:

“Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede, 1993, p. 89). Hofstede (1993) posited that in general, Asian people are more collectivists compared to Western people. This statement can lead to misconception as Asian people for example people in Malaysia sometimes tend to be individualist and self-centered (Son et al., 2013; Gomes, 1999; Kahn, 1997). Latest, culture has been defined in two ways as first;

“Culture is learned, shared, and transmitted from one generation to the next. Culture is primarily passed on by parents to their children but also by social organizations, special-interest groups, the government, the schools, and the church. Common ways of thinking and behaving that are developed are then reinforced through social pressure” (Czinkota and Ronkainen, 2012, p. 54) and second;

“Culture is defined as an integrated system of learned behavior patterns that are distinguishing characteristics of the members of any given society. It includes everything that a group thinks, says, does, and makes—its customs, language, material artifacts, and shared systems of attitudes and feelings” (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 2012, p. 54).

Within these definitions, it is understandable that cultures on macro level are changing over the times and cannot be measured as there are many factors that influenced the changes such world-wars, colonisation, marketing, economies, globalisation, technology, regional politics and policy, and immigration (Cleveland, Laroche and Hallab, 2013; Minkov and Hofstede, 2011; Allen et al., 2008; Cleveland and Laroche, 2007; Briley, Morris and Simonson, 2005; Jamal, 2003a; Gomes, 1999; Kahn, 1997) and at micro level in relation of gender, it has transformed the roles of gender such men and women movements (Klasson and Ulver, 2015; Lindsey, 2015; Lee et al., 2014; Eriksen, Degavre and de Villota, 2013; Brown, 2012; Mellström, 2009; Bresnahan et al., 2001; Leigh and Gabel, 1992) (the gender and its roles will be discussed in next section).

Quite few numbers or scholars have disagreed with Hofstede where they claimed that people's minds cannot be programmed based on what they have seen or shared from other groups and cannot be distinguished into component systems (Baskerville, 2003; Geertz, 1994; Fang, 2003). (Bhabha, 1996) also argued that it is critical to demonstrate culture as collective programming of the mind because culture is subjective.

Hofstede's definition is literally weak as he described that culture is a collective programming. It looks like human minds can be programmed by other people, similar with how people can control robots or analogy of computers. People are collective by sharing their norms or behaviours and they learn from each other within society, they can influence each other but they cannot control others' minds or behaviour.

Drawing from the combination of Sojka and Schein's definitions, this research understands that culture exists within social and organisations, and in order to successfully operates in host countries, every firm needs to understand the components and level of every culture hence it helps the organisations to formulate and implement their marketing strategies effective and efficiently.

3.1.1 Culture in Marketing Strategy

Culture is really a challenging issue for numerous marketers to deal as culture is very complex to describe, vague and delicate (Shenkar, 2001) and since it is imprecise and often misunderstood on the characteristics of culture (Dauber et al., 2012). It is very challenging to deal. Often most of integration between culture and marketing studies dealt with quantitative approach such as aggregated units and segmented a group of thousands of individuals which each group has to be remarked explicitly as a homogeneous target group (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, Soares et al., 2007, Hofstede 1994).

The generalizations about culture are also common practice in international marketing (Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009). Likewise, many criticisms also exist on why it is important to study culture in management with respect of marketing function but the literature in journal of marketing is already immense and emergent with increasing rapidity (Soares et al., 2007). Contributions to this literature come from several of areas and fields thus the notions and perspectives are also diverse.

Over past few decades, academic scholars have made extensive use the important of cultural concept in management especially in marketing department to explain the marketing strategies such as culture helps to accentuate how culture works in marketing function and clarify how culture can be learned, been accepted, been transformed and altered within the management in organisation (Schein, 1984) and it helps to understand not only workplace behaviours but also on attitudes and various companies aftermaths (Kirkman, Lowe and Gibson, 2006; Shenkar, 2001).

It also helps to understand the values which related to management. For instance, Adler (1980, p. 165) stated that there are three theoretical gaps in management that caught attention and need more considerations include:

- The assumption of —We are the best (ethnocentrism)‖
- The assumption of —We are all the same (assimilation)‖
- The assumption of —The action is in domestic markets (primacy of domestic operations)‖

From the above issues on three assumptions in management, a company needs to understand whether these three assumptions are truth to ensure success or failure when they enter host market. First, a company assumed that all cultures are ethnocentric. However, this research must argue that if a company thinks that their products or services are better than others, it can cause failure in marketplace and engaging with local consumers. Thus, according to Adler (1980), some US companies have integrated foreign styles into their management practices.

On second assumptions, Adler (1980) stated that most US companies presumed that all immigrants in US embodied and associated with US culture. This assumption eliminates other immigrants' identity. Managers in domestic departments cannot predict that home culture is worked for foreign workers or even for foreign consumers. Thus, every company needs to re-evaluate the concept that all people are same.

And last for the third assumption doing global business in domestic market without considering the influences of culture.

The question that needs to ponder is how much these foreign consumers are willing to pay for their products or services. Is standardised pricing strategy is successful and it is assumed that all foreign consumers in domestic market are willing to pay for certain or premium price. Hence it is worth it to investigate to what extent culture influences consumers on pricing willingness. Adler (1980) suggested that every multinational company to find similarities and differences in culture as it helps in ensuring successful or marketing efforts and product innovation. From there, these companies can identify which strategy they should implement.

To delve culture is very important as it provides insights in minimising business failures and cost (O'Reilly, 1989). For example, in his studies, O'Reilly (1989) illustrated that Japan Company which operated in US changed their practices based on American culture. This Japan Company adopted American culture to be more cost-effective. There is another study that supported the notion of culture influences on whether business is success or fail. Palich and Gomez-Mejia (1999) explained that it is important to learn on culture in marketing as it has significant impacts on management practices and companies' performance.

According to them, expanding business or entering business in other host country requires every MNC understands cultural differences and whether to adapt with cultural diversity into the managerial practices. The reasons lie behind the important of the study is due to that every MNC cannot simply enter host country as they have to compete with other MNCs where others implement its strategy based on country basis with little or may not even have similar connection with subsidiaries, foreign or domestic. Some are implementing on global strategy and incorporated their strategy across the countries to compete (standardisation) and some are adjusting and adapting based on local culture to successfully compete in host country (localisation) (Palich and Gomez-Mejia, 1999).

Palich and Mejia (1999) discussed that motivation underneath foreign entry is to search for new market, to develop economies and seek competitive advantage by offering various services and products into local market since 1990s. They added that culture helps MNCs to improve its firm functions especially on deciding strategy in host country and marketplace, such advertising department function in using the global advertising for promotion between American and Canadian countries as these two are sharing similar cultural characteristics but not in Colombia. The example is the case of Marlboro man for cigarettes. It fails in Colombia if the company used the same global advertising as the individualist component of culture is low in Colombia. Thus, the company used localised advertising to promote products services based on cultural related markets.

However, very limited empirical evidence shows how these dissimilarities affect its practices and performance. And there is lack of understanding between different group and negative political activity (Glick, Miller and Huber, 1993). Little has focused on the impact of cultural diversification towards MNCs that provide services or offer products aimed for men as many have focused on the impact of cultural on demographic differences such as gender, age and academic background (Palich and Gomez-Mejia, 1999).

Culture is needed in comprehending the connotation and the sensitivity of certain business practices in other host countries before the organisations can develop marketing strategies. Soares et.al, (2007) identified that prior to framing and implementing marketing strategies, every organisation should have insights underlying customers and marketplace cultures' surface.

Hence the studies that allied cultures with marketing have captivated more attention even there are difficulties in defining its meaning to cross-cultural research as it helps to understand consumer purchase decisions' trends in marketplace. They analysed the benefits of using dimension of culture in comparison between marketing and consumer especially using Hofstede's model.

Thus, the results of analysing comparison between international marketing and consumer behaviour in every country are more general despite providing in-depth information on the comparison that have been undertaken. They concluded that marketing scholars are aware with the British and Portuguese cultures where the key differences between two cultures in customer orientation include general norm, family, school and workplace and politics.

However, this research argues that Hofstede's model is practical to use in understanding culture as the results tend to assume that every culture is similar, and the consumers are also similar in buying behaviour.

Presently, Buil, de Chernatony and Hem (2009) evaluated how country 's culture impacted on consumers attitudes towards brands. Their studies highlighted that culture influences consumer's behaviour thus it will influence on consumers attitude as well. Culture also influence how they perceived parent brand and effects on the perception towards advertising strategy.

They investigated university students in three different countries include Spain, UK and Norway using ANOVA analysis. Results found out that consumer's attitude towards brand extensions strategy are different for these 3 countries. Culture has positively impact on the evaluation of new products which Norway shows the most positive attitude towards brand extension strategy for new products. Results also confirmed on the assumption that the consumers perceptions towards parent's brands also vary from one country with others.

However, their research only focused on European countries that shared similar cultures components such as language, history and religion. Other research should consider other countries to make comparison to conform to previous findings and to have better insights with the implication of cultures towards consumer's attitude. Buil et.al, (2009) suggested that managers should consider cultural differences between countries prior formulate and implement brand extension strategy. Beforehand, according to them, in order to decide, companies need to understand on country's culture that they consider entering. Whether to implement brand extension will be successfully accepted by consumers.

From the above discussion on existing literatures, this research identifies few gaps that can be addressed. First, many scholars highlighted the important to study culture in management and marketing field but very few prove that culture has implications on how MNCs formulate and implement marketing strategy. Second, very little evidence that shows culture affected on how MNCs market their products or services that aimed based on gender preferences specifically for men. Van Heerden and Barter (2008, p. 41) proposed that marketing strategy indeed can change the culture of a target market. Thus, this research will

contribute to understanding how international marketing strategy in Malaysia able to change local culture without breaking its values in relation of gender- based segment in spas businesses.

Torelli et al. (2012) supported that marketing acts as agent of culture change through creating products or services that give values to consumers. Values of the products can signify the desires that guide consumers' beliefs, norms and principals and it is recommended for MNCs to localise promotions activities (Torelli et al., 2012). Taking culture as localisation consideration allows promotions or advertising echoing local customers' culture values especially in Malaysia.

For example; a study on alcohol campaign changed consumer behaviour as advertising have been portrayed that consuming alcohol is consider as social experiences, even it may contradict with culture norms and beliefs as long as society has accepted (Allen et al., 2008). From these discussions, it is supported this research arguments that marketing strategy and culture are interacting in two ways communications. MNCS act as an actor to transfer its home practices through powerful marketing strategies in changing local culture without breaking its values and this research tries to address the gaps.

Marketing strategy may adapt with local culture in order to success in marketplace but it is not necessary happens as powerful marketing strategy also may change local culture without breaking its values (Jamal, 2003b; Nyukorong, 2014; Czinkota and Ronkainen, 2012) and further discussed that consumers are learning and adapting with other foreign culture (acculturation) which changes their behaviour and preferences especially purchasing behaviour through the exposure of marketing strategy (Cleveland et al., 2009b; Cleveland and Laroche, 2007; Jamal, 2003a; Engelen and Brettel, 2011a; Dobson, 2014).

3.1.2 Acculturation Is the Effects of Marketing Exposure

The behaviour, attitudes and norms are part of cultures as have been defined in previous definition of culture section, and these three themes are not static rather than reflexive. The changes endure by individual are due to learning, adapting and adjusting with foreign cultures and this is known as acculturation (Mendoza, 1989; Berry, 1980; Schnettler et al., 2013; Cleveland et al., 2009b; Carpenter et al., 2013; Poulis, Poulis and Yamin, 2013).

Acculturation similarly refers to *“the movement and adaptation to the consumer cultural environment in one country by persons from another”* (Peñaloza, 1994, p. 33). Acculturation regulates sub-cultural impacts on behaviour, such as spouse or family roles in consumer decision making and general consumption patterns (Luna and Forquer Gupta, 2001). Likewise, Acculturation *“refers to the process in which individuals learn and adopt the norms and values of a culture different than the one in which they grew up”* (Cleveland and Laroche, 2007,2).

In this research, acculturation is defined as the process of local consumers changes their behaviours through learning, understanding, adapting, and adjusting with the influences of foreign culture. However, to what extent these consumers have changed been investigated from MNCs perspective through fieldworks that have been conducted for this research.

The concept of acculturation was first introduced in psychology literatures when Berry (1980) introduced different types of acculturation in seminal and prominent conceptual work looking at individual level.

Berry illustrated four types of acculturation include:

- a) Culture assimilation: refers to individual who eliminate his/her own indigenous cultures and adopt with foreign culture.

- b) Culture Separation: refers to those individuals who are maintaining their own indigenous cultures and do not wish to interact with other foreign culture.
- c) Culture Integration: refers to individual who maintains the indigenous culture but at the same time adapt with foreign cultures.
- d) Culture Marginalisation: refers to individual who create new subculture within the groups and society.

Then, the concept of acculturation had been investigated on immigrants' perspectives. Mendoza (1989) conducted studies using different terminology of acculturation types yet discussing the same issues. This is in line with Berry (1997) that even acculturation concept is a fair terminology in standard practice; acculturation inclines to encourage more adjustment and transformation in one of the groups (Berry, 1997).

Mendoza used four types of acculturation; cultural shift which similar with culture assimilation, cultural incorporation is equals to culture integration, cultural resistance refers to culture separation and cultural transmutation is culture marginalisation introduced by Berry (1980). Mendoza argued that acculturation contains at least two different cultures. However, Douglas and Craig (2006) argued that rather than the convergence or homogenisation of two cultures, growing numbers of acculturation are instead living in marketplaces with the increasing of multicultural diversity.

Then, the Cultural Lifestyle Inventory (CLSI) was introduced to understand the acculturation concept (Mendoza, 1989). Respondents were 5 Mexican American and 4 Anglo- American professional who acquainted with both cultures. Results showed that generations of people influence the acculturations where it is assumed that continuous generations scored lower cultural resistance and has higher in cultural shift but for first generation people, they scored the lowest of cultural incorporations. However, it suffers from not discussing and demonstrates the cultural transmutation result.

In other hand, Cleveland and Laroche (2007) demonstrated that globalisation is a basis of acculturation occurs when it shapes the individual cultural characteristics across the world. The interfaces between marketing with cultures and consumers are expediting acculturation process. They critiqued that in previously literatures, academic scholars focused on comprehending differences among consumers from various culture, and economic background with other marketing components and seeking for similarities of consumers across the countries for market segmentation. Thus, according to them, it is worth to investigate and understand how consumers tolerate and adapt with other cultures and how marketers change the behaviours and preferences among consumers across the world. It is not compulsory to find the complexity interaction between home and host culture but to understand how the process occurs.

Culture reflects individual's characteristic, belief, and norms and it is true to provide or offer products or services based on local culture. But at the same time, culture can be changed as culture is not static (Cleveland and Laroche, 2007). The matters of how it can be changed need further explanations. As previous definitions described that culture is learnt, transmitted and shared, it deduced that culture changes. *“Transmission of culture is not happened through genetics but through learning, adjusting, and adapting. Cultures are neither pure nor timeless; rather cultures constantly evolve due to either internal dynamics or external forces”* (Cleveland and Laroche, 2007, p. 2)

It is comprehensible that some cultures accelerating change, more flexible and some are resistance. Next, Lerman, Maldonado and Luna (2009) discussed that the issues of acculturation begin from the rise of immigrant studies. Existing literatures investigated the behaviour of immigrants and segmenting market based on minority ethnicity with acculturation. The profusion of existing literatures recommended that the significant relationship between acculturation and consumer behaviour have been recognized in academic literatures. Yet, the challenges, issues and limitations of these relationships still understudies. How the process of acculturation happens and how marketers make it happens still need to be investigated.

Findings showed these questions may be established in cross-culture psychology literatures instead on marketing literatures. There are several outcomes and consequences from acculturation such as various lifestyle patterns or creating a new lifestyle or trends within society and marketplace. Results also illustrated that numerous immigrants have mixing well with the dominant culture and at the same time remain their own indigenous culture, and some of them are resistance towards dominant culture.

For instance, Hispanic immigrants in US, 90% of children speak English but at the same time, 97% Mexican American of other Hispanic speak Spanish. Findings also revealed that both Assimilated and Integrated preferred American brands rather than Mexican brands. Hence, in line with Cleveland and Laroche (2007), culture is not static; it is reflective and can be changed across the time. Thus, marketers can formulate and implement different strategies based on understanding preferences from every category.

Demangeot and Sankaran (2012) conducted 20 depth interviews with United Arab Emirates (UAE) residents who lived in Abu Dhabi and Dubai in order to understand the concept of acculturation. The questions that have been asked were related to food consumptions which linked to healthy eating, grocery shopping which depends on sales prior to clothes purchased. The informants related their purchasing behaviour with western practices.

Then, a set of questions that particular on culture and attitude where participants were asked about which culture are, they come from and how they perceived foreign products. What lead them to continuously using foreign products been asked. Findings exhibited that acculturation happened due to marketing exposure.

There are four cultures emerged from the findings include cultural experimentalism where culture is swapped, culture extensions is incorporated between local and foreign culture, cultural purism means limited or restricted influence which prefers own culture products and cultural passivity is associated with

new culture created. The four types of culture acculturation are still parallel with Berry, and Mendoza even the terminologies used are different.

Again, the similar study on food consumption and acculturation has been investigated. Schnettler et al. (2013) explored the relationship between acculturation and food consumption habits with the majority indigenous ethnic in Chile. They suggested that cultural changes include alterations in a group's customs as well as in their economic and political environments.

There are two issues in acculturation which to what extent people insist to preserve their indigenous cultures and to what extent they are willing to adjust and adapt with foreign culture. Followed Berry (1980), there is four acculturations outcomes include assimilation, separation, marginalisation and integration. They chose preferences towards food consumptions as it is the most measurements elements used in existing literatures.

Findings showed that assimilated Mapuche unlikely to consume fish and seafood compared to bicultural (integrated) Mapuche. Also, results showed that there are 69 percent of bicultural Mapuche, 25 percent are assimilated, and 6 percent are separated. However, the research overlooked on the which countries those products have been produced rather than asked how consumers frequently to eat habits compared with western habits related to acculturation.

Carpenter et al. (2013) conducted a research through retail's perspective. They suggested that international retailers influence on fashion consumption. For example, Zara, a preeminent brand for clothing from Spain has various store across the countries include Malaysia which known as Islam country. It changes how Malaysian consumers; men and women to consume fashionable clothing despite of different religions, beliefs and roles.

Finally, *“More than thirty years of research about consumer ethnicity offers an abundance of perspectives on how, why, and with what effects people elaborate, negotiate, transform, and commodify their ethnicity in the marketplace”* (Visconti et al., 2014, p. 1883).

Thus, there is an urge for further research to critically investigate how the acculturation of consumers occurs in marketplace. Largely of existing literatures focused on immigrants and consumers context, how these immigrants adapt, adjusting or preserve the cultures from home to host. However, very limited studies provide understanding on different perspectives such how marketers make or create the acculturation, or in different context from food and beverages or retailer’s consumption.

Previous research hardly scrutinised the multidirectional cultural adaptation‘ which also known as process of reverse acculturation‘ through the local indigenous ethnic emulate the migrants‘ culture, hence lessen the cultural distance and growing opportunities of mutual exchange (Visconti et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, there is an issue such; if powerful marketing shapes and alters consumers behaviours from their indigenous cultures, do they change the behavioural repertoire to be more appropriate in the new setting? What happens to these consumers who have been exposed from marketing activities? Do they swift? Or resistance or incorporated or transmutation? Adopted from Berry, (1997, p. 6). Therefore, there is the desire to address the gaps specifically from management perspectives in marketing areas.

3.1.3 Culture and Gender

The long lasting debates in the literature on gender are whether gender is a separate entity, or it is part of culture components. The volume of researches in consumer behaviour has mostly been from Western perspectives and focus on the white, the blacks as well as the Hispanics (Klasson and Ulver, 2015; Hein and O’Donohoe, 2014; Jafari and Süerdem, 2012; Brown, 2012; Tsai and Shumow, 2011; Gentry and

Harrison, 2010; Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard, 2010; Thébaud, 2010; Kahn, 1997). This research attempts to explore culture in relation of men roles' movements from different perspective such multi-ethnicities men in predominated Muslim country in Malaysia. Before that, next section will discuss the concept on gender in broader view.

3.1.3.1 Gender

The concept of gender was brought into academic usage to standpoint for the cultural manifestations of biological sexual differences. Every human being was born with the set of sexual organs, to differentiate between male and female (Ho et al., 2011; Lamb, 2008; Attwood, 2006; Scott, 1999; Fischer and Arnold, 1994; Lindsey, 1990).

However, what it means to be by a woman or a man, and boy or a girl is a cultural accomplishment that has its roots both in the way gender is structurally present in or society and in the way gender is done on an everyday level through the way they talk, walk and interact with other (Lindsey, 2015; Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard, 2010; Van der Lippe et al., 2010; West and Zimmerman, 1987; Maltz and Borker, 1982).

Today, it is promising to see some similarities and some differences in the ways gender is sold in customer culture. West and Zimmerman (1987) explained that gender is concluded as completed status where it was accomplished from psychological, social and also culture (Klasson and Ulver, 2015; Lindsey, 2015; Lee et al., 2014; Eriksen, Degavre and de Villota, 2013; Brown, 2012; Mellström, 2009; Bresnahan et al., 2001; Leigh and Gabel, 1992). In contrast, Scott (1986) stated that gender is only a term to distinguish sexual between female and male that relates to masculine and feminine designation and he suggests that gender is synonym for women.

This research argued that this statement as first; gender it is not the term to extricate sexual as sexual is more to sex organs while gender is associated with social categories. Second; feminine is not focusing on women only. This statement supported by Lindsey (2015), as gender involves with social, cultural and physiological factors and sexual is incorporated with biological aspects and less altered compared to gender. Hence, a man that has a set of sexual organs can be feminine depends how this man wants to be perceived in the society or groups. Masculinity is not identical to man and femininity is not necessarily equal to woman.

Even Gatens (1983) introduced that gender is a social category carry out on sexed body. In social theories of gender, there has repeatedly been explained that gender is functionalism, which the previous researchers agree that gender dealings with self-contained and self-reproducing system (Connell, 2005). Gender can be perceived as two sides of coins as it is a complex term (Bettany et al., 2010). Gender is complex and multifaceted as it involves with sex that compromises of men and women, masculine and feminine (Lindsey, 2015; Bettany et al., 2010; Baron, 2002).

Many historians attempted to define gender within these studies, yet well-definition and the concept are still in great debates. Hence this research desires to explore on gender, gender differences and its concept in spas industry. It is encouraging for marketers in spas businesses to see some similarities and some differences in the ways gender is sold in customer culture.

Studies point out that gender shows a significant role in determining consumption patterns because it influences consumer on products or services perceptions through creating brand meanings for consumers (Hein and O'Donohoe, 2014; Eriksen et al., 2013). The interpretation of gender influence in consumption patterns due to is partly true because women involved more in buying process compared to men, mainly involvement in terms of emotional whereas men are high on quality and efficiency (Canning, 2012; Baron, 2002).

However, there are issues that preserved men from spas such as women embrace the highest clientele's segment for spas services and treatments (Tsai et al., 2012). Besides, women tend to experience lower levels of wellness than men do and in addition women are to be expected easier to seek for treatments is spas consumptions rather than men (Croese et al., 1992). This adjournment of changes may lead to cause severe complications in spas services even men really need the treatments from spas providers.

Consequently, physical appearance between men and women such as body image, muscular and the absence of body fat show different levels of fitness and a healthy lifestyle (Eisenberg, Wall and Neumark-Sztainer, 2012). Previous research found out that slim muscular body is becoming a crucial issue for men as deprived body image leads to health threatening behaviours such as extreme dieting hence these men seek for spas treatments (Esnaola, Rodríguez and Goñi, 2010). It has been demonstrated that men's physical appearance affects young men compared to adult men as young men are more concerns about their beauty image and physical fitness (Halliwell and Dittmar, 2003).

In another study, McFarland and Petrie (2012) explained that eating, exercise and negative mood will influence young male's psychological wellbeing. Therefore, it is a crucial thing for spa providers to understand their clientele's gender as each of male and female has different needs and wants. It is more than feminism and masculine to be understood. Men seem to be dominant compared to women as women always are predicted as subordination and it involves with the ancient progression (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

3.2 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter provides comprehensive on culture and how it relates to gender. Moreover, it highlights the crucial point of discussion regarding appropriate marketing strategy is in need to cater male spa goers' experience and influence intentional spas visiting. Additionally, this chapter illustrates the gap for each concepts and definition that the researcher would like to explore and study. The debates for some definitions still exist to fit properly such as culture where different areas view culture differently. Finally, this chapter presents on the areas that the researcher would like to focus thoroughly even the number of researches in the area is deliberated uncommon such as the concept of emotional labour in spa industry.

CHAPTER 4

Research Context

4.0 Understanding Spas Businesses

This section reviews the basic definition of spa, types of spas and compares the spas across the countries. Spas are not new in this era as it is established before the world war two. The debates about spas among the academicians and practitioners are to categorise spas under which industry. Some scholars suggested spas as spa industry itself. In other hand, some scholars demonstrated that spas fit in between tourism and healthy industry (Leandro, Nogueira and De Carvalho, 2015; Bodeker and Burford, 2010; Gustavo, 2010; Erfurt-Cooper and Cooper, 2009; Cohen, 2008; Sinaga and Mielniczak, 2006).

4.1 Definition of spa

In the field of academic, little definitions of spa are found. Spa is commonly used in academic learning, and yet its concept is hard to define accurately. Spa is defining as a centre for healing and nourishing not only for mind but also for body and spirit (Sinaga and Mielniczak, 2006). It is supported by Garrow (2008) who defines spa as a place dedicated to wellbeing that encourage for renewal body, spirit and mind and at the same time it is considering the best place for relaxation through different professional services.

For Cohen, (2008), spa refers to a place for healing through water and a place for relaxation. This research argues with definition explained by Cohen (2008) in regards of healing through water which this research believes that it is not necessary treatments and healing through water as there are numerous products in the market for spas businesses specifically for healing treatments. Although differences of opinion still exist, there is appears to be some agreements that spas refer to a place not only for relaxation but also for health purposes.

While the term of spas has been suggested, this paper will use the definition first suggested by Sinaga et al. (2006) who describe spa as a centre for healing and nourishing in a holistic wellness context. In this research, spa is defining as a place to seek for holistic wellness where individual balances between physical appearance, beauty image and spiritual.

4.2 Types of Spas

Even though spa has been concluded as a place, while in marketing strategy stated that place is a location, spa also has many types of place (further discussion on place in marketing mix section). Each spa is distinctive and exclusive. The industry segments itself into categories. It is very much like hotels range.

There are five (5) stars, four (4) stars, three (3) stars and un-rated hotels and also hotels have broken into seaside resort category, city hotel, inns and few more (Kucukusta, Pang and Chui, 2013; Tsai et al., 2012; Tawil, 2011; Bahauddin, 2008). There are stand-alone spas, and spas in hotels. Ostensibly, a little amount of literature has been published on types of spas. Monteson and Singer (2004) illustrated that spas have two types include resort spa and destination spa.

According to Monteson and Singer, resort spa is a place that participates with recreational and social activities. Mak et al. (2009) argued that spas have eight types include club spa, cruise ship spa, day spa, destination spa, hotel spa, medical spa, spring spa and resort spa. It is supported by Cooper (2009) identified that resort spas are places which offered treatments and services at vacation together with other activities such as golf, horseback riding, skiing, water sports and many more.

Meanwhile, destination spa is a property that provides a program based on exercise activities, healthy eating, massage, facials and numerous body and bath services (Monteson and Singer, 2004). In another major study, ISPA (2014) published in their website identified that there are six types of spas. First is club

spa which well-defined as a facility that provides fitness with professional administrated and it is operates on daily basis. This research would like to suggest based on past experience; club spas are a place that provides services and treatments to their clients through loyalty programs.

This can be well explained as a subscription of service that has mutual agreement with the spas. Clients can subscribe any services or treatment to be a club member. Second is day spa which defined as a spa that provides professional administrated services to clients on day-use basis. Day spa is best defined by Cooper (2009) as a place that provides beauty services and was created to fill the demand from the clients. Besides, Cooper added that day spa is a place where clients do not require staying for a long time or to overnight.

Third spa that well-defined by ISPA (2014) is destination spa as a facility that guiding their clients towards healthy habits through health programs such as dietary, wellness education, fitness activities, and special interest programming. This definition has similarity with past researches from Cooper (2009), Brown (2006) and Monteson and Singer (2004), where in their researchers agreed that destination spa is more than a normal spa treatment as spas provide many health programs.

In addition, destination spas also provide daily healthy diet plan for daily basis depends on the need of clients. Besides, the destination spa is developed into a resort and is frequently the major attraction of the resort they stayed in. Some destination spas, in fact are entire resorts. The destination spas have their own policy where spa goers cannot simply book a room because for them to do that, they must take the packages offered by each spa. This is the main reason where the new term hotel or resort spa has emerged, to describe spas that are based in hotel or resort, but it is not the raison deter of their hosts (McNeil and Ragins, 2005).

The fourth spa is medical spa. According to ISPA (2014), medical spa is operating with full time licensed from health-care professional who have earned a degree of Doctor of Medicine (M.D). Definition of medical spa has been suggested by Cooper (2009) and Brown (2006) as a facility that provides a treatment under medical supervision and for botox, laser resurfacing and plastic surgery will be performed by professional trained surgeons.

Brown (2006) suggests that medical spa s can be a day spa or destination spa depends on the treatments that clients need. If the clients need to do facial surgery and can be completed in a day, it is known as day spa and if the clients need to have few procedures before surgery, and have to stay for few days, it is known as destination spa. This research suggests that every medical spa should be observed by the government to avoid misused of medical products. Hence, medical spas also can be described as a place that provides services under medical supervision and been acknowledged by the government and medical expert practices all over the world.

However, Cooper (2009) differentiates that medical spas have two categories include medical spa as explained previously and another one is medi-spas. Medi-spas are a combination between traditional treatments and modern medical treatments. Medi-spas becoming a favourable among executive physicals, wellness programs cosmetic treatments, dermatologist and dentistry (Cooper, 2009).

From the previous researches, this research expands the definition by adding medi-spas as *a place that use mix-method of treatments and products which integrates traditional medicines and medical medicines*. Likewise, medical spas or medi-spas are in general integrated within a private clinic, laser centre or even hospital setting (D'Angelo, 2009).

The fifth spa that defines by ISPA (2014) is mineral spring spas which refer to a place that offers an on-site mineral, natural muds, water-thermal or seawater used in hydrotherapy handlings for the clients.

Mineral spas can be cold or warm water, depends on curative power and can be taken internally (Cooper, 2009). The sixth spa is resort or hotel spa. ISPA (2014) classifies resort or hotel spa as a place that located within hotel or resort and provides fitness, wellness and beauty services. Now, a resort/hotel spa has moved beyond being luxury amenity and having a spa is crucial to remain competitive in the market (Cheung, 2012; Madanoglu and Brezina, 2008).

Leavy and Bergel (2003) claimed that the hospitality industry has seen the resort and hotel spas' trends; with every hotels and resorts anticipating surpassing the other. Brown (2006) addresses a resort spa come in varied of sizes and styles from small private owned resort or the top stars hotel with huge rooms, classes, greens or even pools.

4.3 Spas in Malaysia

According to Association of Malaysia Spa (AMSPA), the consensus in the industry is that a spa should comprise several treatment rooms. Besides, offer a diverse of treatments and cures. In addition, a spa should have professionally well-trained therapists and has an outstanding ambience that creates calms and relaxes. In most spas, customers should be able to get a massage therapy, and have the option for facials, exfoliation (body and face scrubs), body wraps, scented bath with mixture herbs and many more services. There will be a number series of consultations before spa goers can choose a treatment that they think suits them well. Furthermore, they can opt the services that fit within their budgets and time allocations.

In Malaysia, some of the spas offer spa cuisine or lists of healthy meals in their treatment's packages. The spa goers can follow the meal routines in order to keep them healthy and maintain fit. The lists of healthy meals include low in calorie, fat free and high in vitamins sources. The spas will observe their client's daily menu to ensure what their customers have consumed is in line with the list provides by the spas' expertise. An outstanding spa will focus on relaxation, health and rejuvenation of the spa goers. A real spa

does not have skimpily dressed ladies at the entrance, nor allow spa goers to choose their masseur. But in some cases, if the spa goers are the regular customers and they have their own preference masseur, they can have the masseuse by booking in advance. Apparently, spas no longer use the term of masseur, in favour of the term of therapist.

CHAPTER 5

Research Methodology

5.0 Introduction

This research explores marketing strategies as a significant factor in influencing men's behaviours and preferences towards spas services and the extent to which men's experiences towards marketing exposure contribute to this process.

The literature on marketing strategies, gender and cultures discovered a lack of research exploring International Marketing Strategies (IMS) focusing on men's experiences that considered the effect of men behaviours and preferences towards adapting and changing masculinity. Previous researches inclined on the services such as sports sector as a whole (Moore, Griffiths and Richardson 2005a; 2005b), at men's experiences of sub cultures within the industry (Richards and Milestone 2000), hair dressing (Gill 2002; Banks and Milestone 2011) or when evaluating men masculinity that focus was on the courses and service providers rather than the women themselves (Henwood 1998; Dyson 1999; Rees 1994).

When IMS and men's experiences of new subcultures have been integrated, it has been in a slightly different area. This study aims to understand how these IMS (price, promotion, people, process, place) influenced men's behaviour and preferences towards spas services. My research involved two distinct groups: one group from male spa goers and another group from International Hotels' managers. I agreed that this research would not be an extensive questionnaire survey and only using semi-structured interviews, which provided a better comprehension into acceptance of new subculture in existing Islamic Culture. Most importantly all the participants had been working in their field for at least ten years and men who have had spas services been consumed it for more than three times had an enormous amount of experience to share.

5.1 The Research Question

The research question targets to explore IMS and its impact on men's behaviours and preferences in spas services. The aims and objectives were built from evaluation past and present researches on International Business, gender, and cultures which clearly indicates that there are gaps in understanding men's preferences towards consumptions services and products in relation of altering their masculinities especially in Islamic Cultures.

This research draws on the differentiation perceptions of creating new subculture when writing on 'men' suggested by Haraway (1991), Bradiotti (1994) and McRobbie (1997a, 1997b) and intents to gather on its partial and situated knowledge approach in its exploration of men's experiences in relation to the following themes: first theme is is specific on men's experience towards marketing exposure where men articulated on why they became interested with spas services, which marketing strategies that give impact on men's behaviours and preferences and what services construct their masculinity.

The second theme is specific focusing on managers' point of view on how marketing strategies position themselves in influencing men's behaviours and preferences towards spas services; which resulting three different types of men in Islamic cultures.

These questions shaped the structure of the research and informed selection methods. In the introduction chapter, I have discussed how sharing the same space with men in spas motivated me to explore on men's behaviours and preferences in relation of gender roles. Because of this, I have continuously observed on the traits of men who go to spas and constantly trying to understand the trend. As a Muslim, I too been exposed with cultural processes informing my belief status which, in turn occasionally produced a new modern me. At the same time, I have unease feeling with the accepted understandings of what being a modern Muslim. But that is the perception from my point of view as a woman. It can be different from

men's point of view. Thus, the differences of perceptions reflected part of the background and the way I approach the fieldwork.

5.2 Research Methods and Design

Previous literatures that focused on research methods described research approaches in various ways. Creswell (2013) characterises three categories of conventional research approaches including surveys, case studies and experiments. In the case study Bryman (2012) describes research as exploratory, explanatory, or descriptive. This research pursued the explorative research method. This research also followed Bryman (2004) in agreeing that one of the challenges with explaining research methods is that one is always attempts to describe an ideal approach which may not be completely presented in the process when it is created.

This gap occurred as we are not in the position to cover every outcome that may arise during the actual research and also what is typically laid out is usually a guideline of good practice which in fact; time constraint, cost and feasibility can influence the research process (Bryman 2012).

5.2.1 The Qualitative Research

Qualitative research focuses on how people understood with their experiences in cultural world and the meanings that they reflected to them (Creswell, 2013, Bryman, 2012). Qualitative research is driven by the perspective which social interacts everyday by the narratives that they tell each other. Exploring such narratives provides in-depth understanding into the context of the storyteller's experience, their personality, and the society that they reside (Bryman, 2012).

This research did not try to find out the fundamental of either qualitative or quantitative or mixed methods but to justify why the chosen approach is appropriate for this research. It has been argued that in existing marketing research literatures, there is remarkable researches which estimation of seventy percent that used quantitative approach, little adopting qualitative or mixing both methods (Kaufmann et.al, 2012; Hanson & Grimmer, 2007).

In other study, it shows that marketing research used eighty five percent of quantitative methods (Davis et al., 2013). This percentage raised the concerns on filling the gap between the findings and the real problems occurred as marketing research is manifold. It also has been debated that engaging mixed methods gives more inclusive data and findings than does either qualitative or quantitative independently (Creswell, 2013). Yet, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method researches have a role in academic marketing.

Therefore, this research carried a qualitative study which emphasized on the characteristics of marketing strategies and on processes and meanings. Social researcher was facing with rapid social change and the subsequent diversification of the world (Braun and Clarke, 2013). For this research, the researcher decided to adopt qualitative approach as I wanted to explore and investigated the implications of marketing mix strategies in altering local cultures without breaking its own values in Malaysia.

Qualitative research is the best strategy for a researcher who has inquisitiveness through the real-life observations with multiple realities situation and trying to understand that particular events, then elaborate the interpretations which is captured from the perception of individuals being studied and concerned on its meaning (Willig, 2013; Bryman, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Qualitative research helps the researcher to apprehend in depth the situation and phenomenon through the people perspectives that being premeditated (Gravill, 2014; Ritchi et.al, 2013). It also gives better, and diverse information needed from different experience and perception from everyone as Malaysia has various ethnicities.

Besides, it allows the researcher to collect, analyses and integrates all the data effectively and efficiently in order to give insight on the concept of masculinity by learning the true meanings and perceptions from each man's experience. This is due to each participant may give different information and interpretation regarding marketing strategy and how gender and ethnicities changed through marketing exposure. Rather than generalising the norm study about marketing strategy, culture and gender, this research attempts to argue that studying about men is subjective (Willig, 2013). Therefore, to investigate the research question, semi structured interviews are designated for this research to get into participants' interpretation.

Due to limited resources and time constraints where the process of the interview was held in Malaysia, only thirty participants were interviewed and undoubtedly it would have been better to have interviewed more. Creswell (2013) indicates that the methods and techniques used in quantitative research are only meant to obstruct relations between research and everyday life. Since this study is concerned with the effects of marketing exposure towards men's masculinity, semi-structured interviews have been chosen.

It merely produces answers that might be odds with how it relates to the person's everyday life (Bryman, 2012). One of the main benefits of interviewing in a semi-structured way is that it allows for people to clarify what you mean, and this helps with how it relates to them. Besides, the methods which associated with quantitative research have been critically argued and we may ignore the ability of the respondents to answers the questions (Creswell, 2013). For example, in this research, whether men were aware of the current trends in spas industry or how we can assure what is the similar concern on how spas consumptions reflected male spa goers' everyday lives.

Again, qualitative research adopted in examining men's experiences was undoubtedly a better option in as it allowed for differences to be interpreted and explained for clarity with regards to both the researcher and respondents. As Creswell (2013) points that the qualitative is flexible and adjustable way of discovery things out and being able to ask humans directly about what is happening and permits us to gather on non-

verbal clues which may amend the meaning of messages and sometimes contrast with the meaning. While qualitative research interview is the method of how data been collected in accessing people's subjective interpretations including how they construct and created various version of reality (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Face to face interviews allowed us to alter our line of enquiry, catch up with interesting responses and examine underlying motives in a way that questionnaires cannot.

This research followed Butler (2004) that gender should not be interpreted merely as the social declaration of the importance of pregiven sex which a principle of judicial, but gender must also specify the development of the process which defines the gender themselves.

Marketing based on gender evaluation allowed us to comprehend the epistemological influence that incorporate gender with heterosexuality construct of man. Given that only five men were interviewed during pilot study, insights on the definition of masculinity and how they construct it was limited. At the beginning of the research, the aim was that the research would be exploratory using qualitative methods, generating results, which later could be a guideline for further research.

A series of semi-structured interviews were designed to explore in-depth the experiences of two research group. This style of empirical work is ideal in exploring how gender roles been altered through marketing exposure which allowed to fully examine the situated knowledge (Butler,2004).

5.2.2 Ontology and Epistemology

There has been extensive arguments between positivism and interpretivism (Smith et.al, 2015; Kumar, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010; Kim, 2001) and often these arguments have been debated within the surrounding of advantages and disadvantages of either by pursuing qualitative or quantitative research methods (Creswell, 2013). Positivism is an epistemology stand that encourage

qualitative research to adopt natural science methods by confirming or fabricated through various objective scientific examination (Smith et, al 2015, Creswell, 2013).

Naturalism in other hand, argues that it is likely to acquire subjective accounts from within the culture under exploration and that it can make claims about the nature of social practice. At the same time remain being an independent researcher (Creswell, 2013). Criticism of these views are focused on their attempts to document fact and failure to identify the role of the researcher in the process. This research adopted interpretivism and constructivism as it focuses on the objective reality and meaning which resulting to self-determining thinking.

The paradigm fits this research as it is supported by Smith et al. (2015) which described the combination of interpretivism, and constructivism concerned on how people make sense towards the world particularly through sharing their own experiences using language as a medium. It has been debated that Interpretivism and constructivism methods are only a way of writing on society or social worlds and that these methods are as good as other methods which they just narrated in a different way (Creswell, 2013).

However, Interpretivism helps in understanding multiple meanings through sharing experiences. This research adopted interpretivism as the aims of this research to increase better understanding of the situation and gather rich data from which ideas are generated.

5.2.3 Male Study Group (Consumer's Side)

The first group of men was selected using purposive sampling (Miles and Huberman 1994; Patton 1990) during a visit to spas in international hotels in Kuala Lumpur. Five men were randomly selected during the visit. I personally approached them and asked the permission if possible, to interview them for my

research purpose. Once they agreed, I thoroughly explained to these men about my research and the need to interview them.

5.2.4 Research User Group

This thesis applied a purposive sampling. Specifically, a purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling of which the researcher must use their judgment in identifying representative samples (Creswell, 2013). Basically, purposive is applied in special cases where the I can select more symbolic sample which I believed it could bring more accurate results based on the researcher's knowledge and judgment.

Purposive sampling in qualitative research applies when the research conducted involves with people on purpose within the event to accomplish research goals (Creswell, 2013; Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2012; Symon & Cassell, 2012). This approach will ensure in giving extensive knowledge on experiences, views and perspectives and cultural diversity (De Visser & McDonnell, 2013; Khalaf et al., 2013; Chapple & Ziebland, 2002).

Accomplishing this wide range of knowledge helped the researcher to possibly recognise themes and identify hidden story from different viewpoints while undertaking the research. This research focused on different culture changes in relation of gender and ethnicities through marketing strategies implemented by the spas providers in order to give insights and extending previous literatures on marketing, culture, and gender concept.

These participants are needed to explain on how marketing strategies able to change not only existing local cultures but also the behaviours of consumers towards the spa's services. They also shared other aspects such as sharing the existing cultural conditions that lead these men to

experience masculinity in understanding similar meaning and finding the differences of masculine concept.

5.3 Data Collection Techniques

According to Creswell (2013), it is crucial to discover how theory is compelled up with the method of selecting and collecting data, analyzing it, and writing it.

5.3.1 Design

A research design is a fundamental of the general framework to conduct a research. It explicates the processes required to be conducted in order to achieve information and knowledge concomitantly answering the research questions. It is vital to scrutinise sort of questions in choosing research design. First, it needs to determine what type of research that will be conducted (Creswell, 2013).

Second, it seeks to identify the type of data that research plans to gather for the chosen research. Last, it must consider the suitable methods for data collection for every category of data. In selecting research design, it should consider the thought of the whole structure and position of the research. Research design has three types of designs including quantitative research, qualitative research and a mixed method which incorporated both qualitative and quantitative (Creswell, 2013; Bryman, 2012).

5.3.2 Interview Process

This research conducted semi-structured interview with face-to-face technique and between the researcher and the interviewees in order to access into participants' meanings of events or phenomena which can be very subjective together with understanding how they adapt with various realities. Interviews are perceived

as the genuine conversation between the interviewer and interviewee(s) nurtured with decent rapport and less structured (Cassell, 2015; Bryman, 2012; Symon & Cassell, 2012).

The interview process consisted of a series of comprehensive semi-structured face-to-face interviews in which a total of ten open-ended questions were posed. The first set of questions was asked to the first male group on how they became interested in spas services with the goal to achieve understanding of what men think abouts spas services and how this affected their gender roles. The second set of questions were developed to examine on how marketing strategies have impact on men consumers and altering gender roles in local Islamic cultures.

Semi structured interviews are designated as the interviewer had topics to be covered but at the same time might discover new information during the session when the interviewees replied to the questions (Creswell, 2013; Bryman, 2012). It led the researcher to ask questions that not included in the interview guide to catch up with interesting points raised up by the interviewees.

The justification of designing face-to-face semi-structured interviews is because the researcher is fascinated in learning and understanding other men's stories and viewpoints in their own worlds. Seidman (2012) agrees that interviews are important in interpreting meaning process. It also helps to identify and capture any differences between traditional men with urban men and how they adapt with the changes of being and becoming masculine.

The aim of conducting interviews is to encourage interviewees in sharing their personal meaningful of implementing particular marketing mix strategies in order to change consumer behaviours towards the services offered by the International Hotels and to get access on how they describe the existing cultural conditions that lead them to experience masculinity in services consumptions. It also helps in accessing how these men considered masculine as being masculine in different ways include through identity,

symbols, and health consciousness. All the questions were open-ended questions to allow the integration between different ways of using and experience product consumptions with a sense of masculinity.

The questions were well-versed by the extensive literature on marketing strategies and consumption choices and will also adopt during interviews. The set of questions have a sequence, from broad to narrower and cleared (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There is no right and wrong of answers for these sets of questions as the researcher is relatively trying to understand what they really mean from their answers.

According to the previous studies, the ranges of interviews are various depends on the study which it can be five interviews, or it can be up to sixty interviews (Creswell, 2013; Guest et.al, 2006). For this research, thirty-five interviews were conducted from two different groups including International Hotel Spas managers in Malaysia, and male spa goers. The interviewees were notified on the purposes of this research and were asked for the permission to voluntary participates with the session before the interview can be conducted. Then, they were informed on what will be happened to their stories after interviews have been completed. The ethic form will be handed over to the interviewees before the interviews start.

5.3.3 The Research Instrument

The interview schedule consisted of ten comprehensive open-ended questions, which lasted between one to two hours on average. A full copy attached in the Appendices. The questions were open-ended to let respondents to share their experiences and deliver their information, ideas, and opinions in details.

The analysis in this section guaranteed that the researcher distinguished, divided, discussed, and made comparisons to the whole responses, and reflected on points of agreement and disagreement which then gathered them to be categorised into specific themes and relationship (Creswell, 2013).

5.4 Research Methods: Data analysis

Here is the outline that the approach taken to data analysis. It clarifies the framework for analysis, information on how previous literature was utilized and explained the analytic process.

5.4.1 Qualitative Analysis

The data analysis framework was established and tested during the first male group and was then developed and transferred to the main study.

Firstly, to test the research instrument, data from male group was evaluated. At this phase, a transaction template was established to speed up data processing and enhance reliability through an equivalent analysis of each interview. In the second phase all interview questions were gathered in numerical order allowing the researcher to familiarize with data and to easily compare the answers to the same questions in developing patterns or links.

From analysing the responses to the interview questions, question- by-question key words and patterns emerged. The third phase was to illustrate the key words of each actual conversation, which be used as quotations and simplified to key words and phrases at the final stage. Fourthly, a summary table, amended from a format introduced by Miles and Huberman (1994), embracing of key words and phrases was proposed. The matrix recorded key responses from the third phase and permitted the interviewer to observe any growing patterns. Full transcriptions of each interview were recorded using a portable digital recorder.

5.5 Consumers' Side Study

The consumers' side phase of the study was carried out to test the data collection techniques. A total of five men were interviewed. The research design and data collection methods were tested through the analysis of the data collected. Although it seemed like some of the questions were encouraging participants to repeat themselves, they have revealed useful information. At this stage it felt that the aims and objectives of the study were met hence no changes were made.

5.6 Semi-Structured Interviews

The participants were contacted by email and phone call. My phone number also was given to the prospect participants in case they wanted to contact me in term of organising method. Interviews were set up at a time and place that was most convenient for the participants interviewed. The survey sample was made up of five men who had previously consumed spas services located in different International Hotels in Kuala Lumpur. All thirty participants were interviewed face to face at a place that they had agreed to meet. Interviews were carried out in participants' office, cafes and spas located in the hotels.

No	States	5 Star	4 Star	3 Star	2 Star	1 Star	Total	Percentage (%)
1	Johor	0	3	5	3	4	15	6.94
2	Kedah	4	3	2	0	0	9	4.17
3	Kelantan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	Kuala Lumpur	9	17	20	11	0	57	26.39
5	Melaka	1	3	8	2	1	15	6.94
6	Negeri Sembilan	2	2	3	5	5	17	7.87
7	Pahang	2	2	1	5	1	11	5.09
8	Perak	2	1	2	2	2	9	4.17
9	Perlis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	Pulau Pinang	2	5	3	1	3	14	6.48
11	Putrajaya	3	0	0	0	0	3	1.39
12	Sabah	2	4	0	2	0	8	3.70
13	Sarawak	0	3	3	3	1	10	4.63

14	Selangor	3	7	20	5	1	36	16.67
15	Terengganu	0	1	4	0	0	5	2.31
16	Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan	0	0	3	4	0	7	3.24
17	Total	30	51	74	43	18	216	
18	Percentage %	13.89	23.61	34.26	19.91	8.33	100	

Table 5.1: Number of spas by region based on rated star

(Source: <http://www.motac.gov.my/en/check/spa>)

Table 4.3 shows the list of spas in Malaysia based on rating stars. The selected states for this research are highlighted with three different colours in the table. Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan are chosen due to having the highest total number of spas based stars rated compared to the rest of spas. The researcher attempted to include different states because it will give access in understanding diverse range of men and discourse aspects of age, ethnicity, and class. The researcher focused on wellness spas which the spas provide variation of spas products such as for health and beauty hence five different spas will be selected for data collection. The spas names and exact locations have been discussed in the following data analysis section.

5.6.1 The Interview - Data Processing

All information and interviews were translated in full due to the exploratory nature of this research. This showed to be very worthy as some interviews, which seemed quite wordy at times, contained valuable knowledge in parts of the interview where they might not notice. Partial transcription may have left this information concealed. In addition, the exploratory nature of the study meant that themes would emerge from the data and it was not possible to predict where these themes would emerge. There was a total of thirty-five interviews transcribed including the pilot interviews with each interview lasting approximately

one to two hours. Transcription took approximately four times the length of the interview or more. it meant that each interview required an average of 6 hours to transcribe.

First, the whole interviews were examined in stages question by question. The framework for coding was generated from the literature search, which discovered some key themes (aesthetic, new market etc.) Other themes were added based on the focus of the research. This offered the loose framework at the first stage of the key information to be included. The first stage involved finding the key information and identifying it by highlighting it as key data. The second stage reduced this information to key words or phrases. A matrix was then designed to present these second level expressive words and phrases enabling the researcher to reflect the responses.

The table 5.2 shows the first and second stages to coding the data.

First Level Coding	Second Level Coding
Int3: It should be that way. Hotels should promote their services from the hotels itself. Hotels should speak through their workers. I just learnt as I go along.”	New promotion

Table 5.2 shows the correlation of data to show the percentage of each group as well as the percentage of both groups together.

Table 5.3 Correlation between male spa goers and managers towards marketing activities.

Topic focus category	% Male spa goers	% Managers
Communication/Promotion	100	100
Therapists	100	93

Price	80	73
Package	80	66
Aesthetic of Spa/Place	40	38

Table 5.3 shows the differences from comparing the number of same responses from male spa goers and marketing managers. Six marketing activities were discussed from both groups. These men explained on how they have been exposed by six marketing strategies and how these strategies influenced them to consume spas services. Meanwhile, on International Hotels side, most marketing managers explained that they were focusing on these six marketing strategies in altering gender roles in Islamic Cultures.

Response	Male spa goers %	Marketing Manager %	Difference%
Communication/Promotion	100	100	0
Therapists	100	93	7
Price	80	73	7
Package	80	66	14
Aesthetic of Spas/Place	40	38	2

5.6.2 Data Recording

All respondents agreed to be recorded but their identity remained anonymous. The research analysis needed the whole recorded interviews available for transcription and detailed analysis hence recording the interview was important. This also allowed the interviews to be conducted rather impeccably, as the interviewer did not have to take notes.

5.7 Ethical Issues

Bell and Bryman (2007) suggested that all the management researchers need to ground with the ethics affiliations in order to guarantee the prospective interests of the researchers are reachable. As an outsider, I considered myself as having dissimilar social experiences with men 's worlds hence I need to comply with the ethics codes while conducting research. Participants were informed that the information given would be confidential and that their anonymity would be protected, even some of them said that there was no need for this. Still, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Participants' names were altered, and the interview data was stored on a protected drive with only the interviewer having access to the information. Demographic data was taken from the participants at the beginning of their interview and was transcribed and stored in the same file as their interview. Participants were informed that this will be done, and it did not affect their anonymity.

Before commencing the fieldwork, the interviewer needed to obtain ethical approval from the university. The ethics form needs to be submitted to the University of York ethics' community at least two weeks before the community held the meeting. The form and ethics approval letter appeared in appendices. Then, the consent form would be distributed to the participants to let them know that the research about.

5.8 Research Limitations

This study provided a glimpse in time of the experiences of the Malay men in Islamic Cultures, the strategies from International Hotels and an insight from industry's policy maker. The interviews process took place over four months to allow all respondents to choose times to suit their schedules. The survey sample was small as it only to get understanding on how men being exposed with marketing strategies.

5.9 Problems Encountered

One of the main challenges was in confirming that all the participants could be interviewed in one of two-time blocks since I lived in York during the research process and while my respondents based in Malaysia. One manager from five stars International Hotel refused to meet due to my status as a Ph.D. student. Fortunately, a chairman of the Malaysia Spa Association managed to arrange another appointment with another five stars hotels in Kuala Lumpur to replace the ones that have been refused to be interviewed. Due to the taboo perception on spas industry it was also seeming that some managers were trying to be as careful as possible as they assumed that I was from ministry people and the information will be leaked.

They also assumed that I would use the information given to their competitors. I had to be very cooperative in my assurances that the interviews would be strictly confidential. Finance was also an issue as travelling back and forward to Malaysia from United Kingdom and I need to travel not only in Selangor but other places which was expensive. Interviews are based on voluntary and their data will be confidential.

5.10 Reliability and Validity

Only having one researcher working on the coding facilitated coding, reliability, and validity across the survey. Validity of the research methods was tested at the pilot stage and was found to be satisfactory. Whilst transferability was not one of the main outcomes of this study other researchers could utilize the research methods outlined in the chapter.

5.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter explains the research methods used for the data analysis of this study including problems confronted and measures taken to certify reliability and validity. Sections 4.1 recap on research questions

while section 4.2 stated on research methodology and design. Section 4.3 explained on how data has been collected. Section 4.4 describes on research methodology data analysis. Next, section 4.5 stated on pilot study. Section 4.6 explained in detail the stages taken to certify that the information was processed and analysed in a methodical way using a summary table, adopted from a format suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). Using summary tables allowed the recording of key responses from the third phase of analysis to establish emergent patterns. Section 4.7 discussed on ethics issue and section 4.8 highlighted on research limitation. Section 4.9 emphasised on problems encountered during conducted this research. Finally, section 4.10 elobarates on reliability and validity of the research. outcomes of this study other researchers could utilize the research methods outlined in this chapter.

To summarise, the methodology chapter for this research aims to ensure the audience that research philosophy, research design, methods and approach to data collection and analysis will be suitable and applicable to the indicated research aim. The research methods suggested for this research is to create two implications which are research-ability and fieldwork. The proposed methods to carry out this research also allow the researcher to have visions and insights from various angle of perspectives include from customers and the players in the spas industry.

CHAPTER 6

Consumer Study Findings

6.0 Men's Experience and Exposure of Marketing Strategy

6.1 Introduction

As mentioned earlier in methodology chapter, pilot study was conducted to get insights on what is happened in the industry and the acceptance of spas targeting men consumers from men's consumers perspectives. This chapter presents the results relating to the first theme of this research, men's motivation of experiencing spas services and marketing strategies exposure. A group of five men went to spas were interviewed with most of them working with government and private sector.

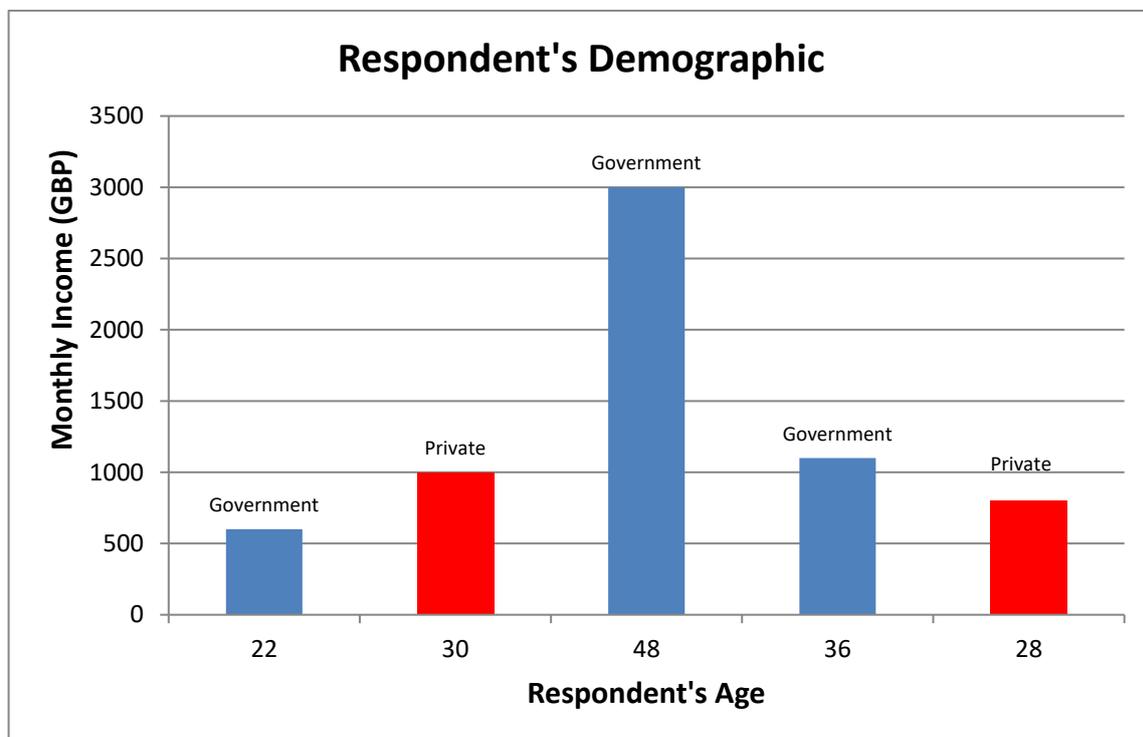
All of them had consumed spas services and learnt new subculture. They were still very much involved in the interactive side of the spa industry. Three of them were in early career stage while another two were in senior position in government agency. The highest paid man was a director earning RM 15000 (GBP 3000). Five of my interviewees were straight men (according to them) and very concerned on healthy image and lifestyles.

This research investigated on how men became interested in consuming spas services, which is very uncommon in Malaysia especially in Islamic cultures. The theme was addressed using three questions: how did men become interested in spas services? Did the marketing play important roles in influencing them to consume spas services? Was their consumption for one time based or frequent consumptions?

Table 6.1: Respondents' Demographic

Age	Monthly Income (GBP)	Sector
22	600	Private
30	1000	Government
48	3000	Government
36	1100	Private
28	800	Government

Table 6.2: Respondents' Demographic in Chart



The main differences that were highlighted from the first question were that men were more likely to consume spas services because of marketing influences. Having a need to understand why they become interested to use space that once known as feminine space is vital (Cheung ,2012; Panchal, 2012; Pesonen and Komppula,2012). As mentioned in chapter one, the number of male's spa goers increased up to 31 percent and 58 percent of spa goers are men (Cheung,2012).

These men mentioned that health and fitness are related to masculinity and these spas provide those services in attracting them to try the spas services. At first, these men had difficulty in finding the right services/products for them and the access to the information about spas services were limited due lack of knowledge, and the ambiguity on the perceptions that they will receive if they consume spas services. (Garrow ,2008).

Hence, according to these five men, effective promotions able to communicate with them successfully in order to have insights about the services offered by the spas. For a good number of male spa goers, the services that fulfill these men's preferences such focusing on fitness, pleasure and wellness influenced them to consume spas services. These findings are like Mak Et. Al (2009).

Therefore, their initial experience of it was more about the services that altering the gender roles yet remain the values of masculinity (Cohen, 2008). All five men highlighted on masculine traits (Yaman et. Al, 2012). It seemed that for some their masculinity was part of the decision-making process that brought them to use spas services and set new gender roles and values in Islamic cultures (Cheung, 2012; Panchal, 2012).

The second question to address the first theme presented in every 'constructive' mentioned that more men are consumed spas services. Men felt that aside from the health and fitness aspects, the services built them in portraying positive image (Myers et. Al, 2000) and that for some spa's services had them to be more hygiene and healthy lifestyle rather than the usual beard-hairy traditional masculine (Hartwell, 2014).

This new gender roles do also have its problems as marketing usually did not highlight on masculinity and spas services in their promotions which lead to misunderstanding on feminine services. All five men stated that they had been exposed by promotions that used famous athletes such as Ronaldo the football

player in order to encourage them to try spas services. Their confidences level about spas boost up when they saw those athletes consumed spas services on the television and social media.

The third question relating to this theme revealed that for all men, they were consuming spas services frequently and some of them subscribed to the packages offered by the spas. El-rafae (2012) found that the 59 percent of spa goers in Malaysia is men and the consumed spas services regularly. Majority of these men consumed spas services in maintaining their masculinity and healthy lifestyles.

The first set of questions of the survey relating to experience of spas services was purposely to discover men's initial motivation in experiencing spas services and to explore how this happened and to what extent they were influenced by marketing.

Men were asked how they became interested in spas services with the aim of obtaining healthy lifestyles that they considered as part of masculinity and how these consumptions affected their behaviour and preferences. The question of whether they had been aware on the perceptions of using female space in any other way aside from the taboo that associates spas with inappropriate place affect the decision to consume spas.

Finally, frequent spas consumptions were examined to find out whether men are adapting in new subculture and alter gender roles in Islamic cultures and had the same opportunities of consuming services as female consumers.

An open approach to data gathering was taken because a central principle of the research design was to examine men's lived experiences of the spa's services in relation of gender roles. To accomplish this, it was important that all their individual experiences were expressed rather than limiting their responses. Limiting men's responses would have given an inaccurate view of what

they reflect their experiences from their point of view. Whilst this approach meant that a small amount of data was captured it also meant that it was done in neutral way.

6.2 Motivation Experiences of spas services

6.2.1 Men were asked ‘how did you become interested with spas services?’

This can include your initial interests, through college, working place, and hotel’s visit.

[Then] Were you supported to use spas services or along the way or prevented?’

(Then) How you rated your opinions as important from one to five scale?

These questions generated sixteen responses. The first column of table 6.1 shows the topic category and the second column shows rated stating the responses listed in column two during the survey interview.

Table 6.3: How did you become interested to consume spas services?

Topic focus category	Rate 1 to five
Wellness	5
New market	4
Inspired by athlete	5
Comms/Internet	4
Masculine	5
Relaxing	2
Were Supported	3
Keep abreast of changes	3
Healthy lifestyles	5
Hygienic	4
Pampering	2
Packages	3
Therapists	3
Aesthetic of spas	2
Body image	5
Intimate time with partner	1

The differences from comparing results from various raised during the interview session with five men. The explanations of table 6.3 is discussed below;

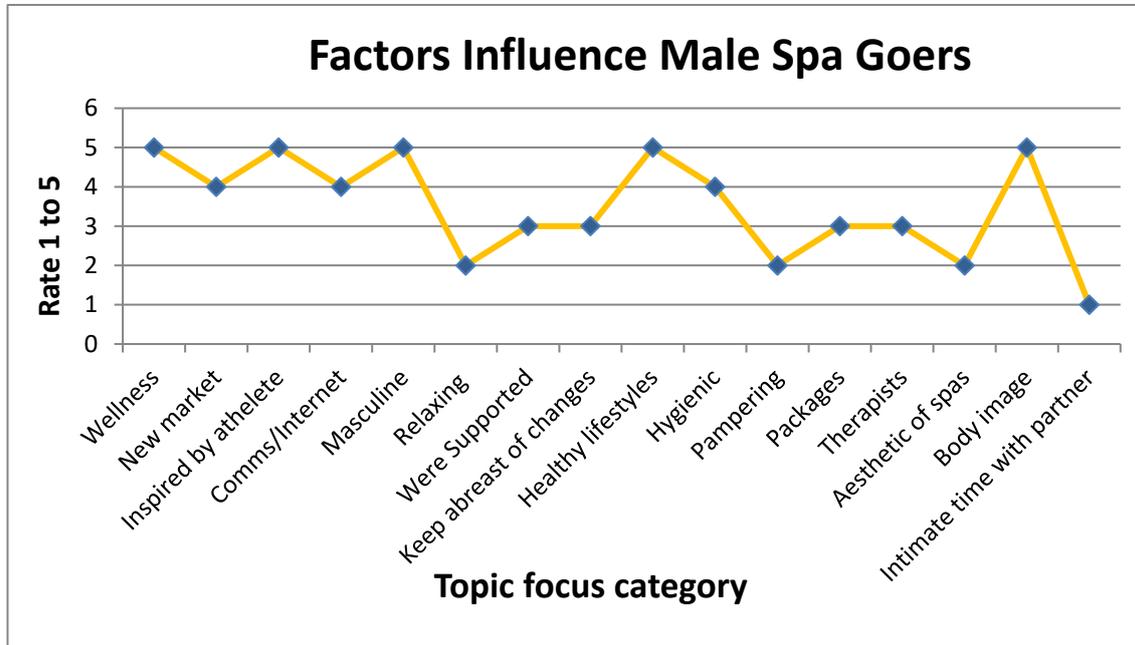


Table 6.4: Factors influencing Male Spa Goers

In overall that men have been exposed towards marketing in accessing spa industry by several non-traditional marketing strategies implemented by the International hotels (Guillet et, al. 2011, Sian et, al 2010) and their passion and enthusiasm to consume spas services (Cheung, 2012, Dahlan et, al 2011). Wellness, inspired by athletes, masculine, healthy lifestyles and body image were the major motivation to consume those spas services. The major motivations reflect the gender values upon being male spa goers (Jafari et, al 2014). None of them experienced difficulties on mixed gender issue, which an issue that has been raised by a few of people on the perceptions of using female space.

The most important factors that motivate men to consume spas services were as mentioned above including body image, healthy lifestyles, masculine, inspired by athlete and wellness. Spending intimate time with partner during the spas process is less important for men, which rated as one out of five.

For Int1 the social media became a way for him to have insights on what services are appropriate to consume and what are the differences between one spas service to other services from origin country of international hotels and the ones that have been offered in Malaysia:

“I became a junior executive which needs me to always look presentable at office. My working hours is quite tight and I have limited time to go out hence in those days spas are merely new, everyone was talking about it with many perceptions and debates on male spa goers but for me it was a really interesting and I would like to understand what it was and the benefits of it. I started to have interest then started looking for more information everywhere especially on social media. Usually those five stars hotels have their own social media account such as Facebook” (22-year-old man who works with government agency)

All five men stated that masculine and healthy lifestyles were main reasons to consumes regular spas services. Three of these men mentioned that consuming spas services are the ways for them to stay abreast with lifestyles changes and they did not want to be left behind with the trends.

For Int2 his body image to be portrayed as healthy masculine man led him to the services, which in turn led him to adapt with new subculture:

“That was actually a positive image portrayal by the spas influencing me to consume their services. They guarantee me with regular consumptions will lead me to have desired body image. I always wanted to have tough and masculine body. They offered me few ranges of products that helped in getting ideal body image. I t learnt how to enjoy the services and becoming their regular customers” (30-year-old man who works with private sector)

Int3's needs to learn on new market and the impression of the space led him to by chance becoming a male spa goer:

“It was perhaps on my first visit to the international hotel. It was five stars hotel in Kuala Lumpur. I was ecstatically with the hotels' environment and upon check-in, the receptionist told me that they have in-house promotion for male spa goers. The receptionist thoroughly explained that the services provided for men are a new market segment that they would like to introduce to all hotels' guests. All details about the services can be found on television menu in room. Without hesitation, I gave a try and found out that I felt fresher and more energetic after the services. The ambience and environment in the spas space were very attractive with aromatic smells, which made me calmer. This positive experience led me to consume more spas services and I would like to try at different hotels. The price also reasonable for five stars hotels especially when in-house guests get discounts” (28-year-old man from government sector)

All five men mentioned about masculine during the interviews. In order to influence men consumers, it is important for the marketers to highlight on masculinity in their promotion. Int4 mentioned that this marketing strategy directly targeting men consumers would communicate effectively with men when all masculinity aspects have been highlighted in every promotion:

Int4:“Spas aesthetic should have masculine touched rather than focusing on female's environment as it can be a conflict for some men due to the way some men can interpret female domains as a sign of mixing gender roles. They may assume that men who go to spas may be gay or bi-sexual resulting in some men being reluctant to share the space during the services consumed with opposite gender” (48-year-old man from government sector)

6.3 Did the marketing plays important roles in influencing them to consume spas services?

6.3.1 All of men were asked ‘is marketing implemented by international hotels influenced you to consume spas services?’

[Then] How is this affected your decision especially on your preferences?

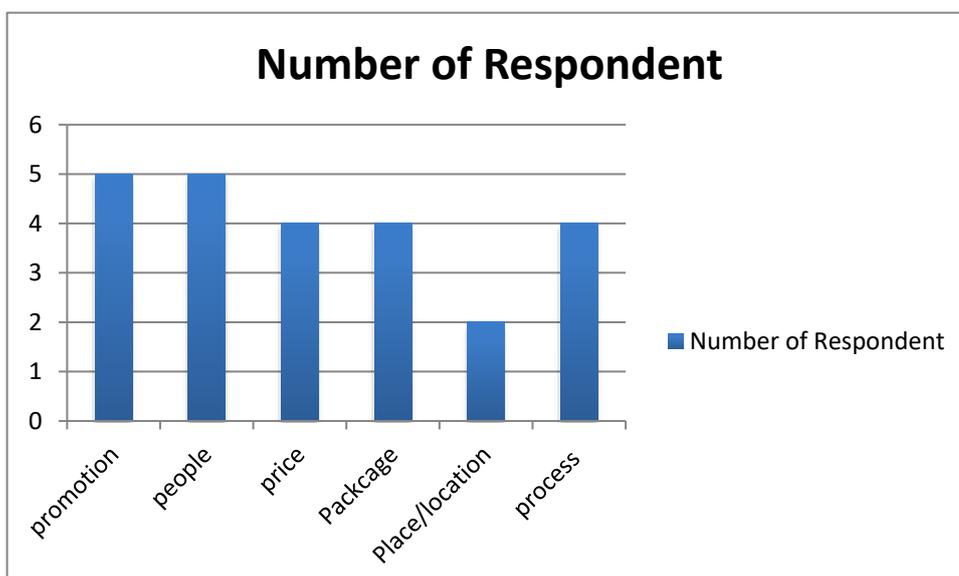
[Then] Do you have the same services or products with females’ consumers?’

These questions generated six different responses listed in table 5.5 below.

Table 6.5 Marketing Strategy

Topic focus category	Number of Respondent
Promotion	5
People	5
Price	4
Package	4
Place/location	2
Process	4

Table 6.6 Did the marketing plays important roles in influencing them to consume spas services?



The responses from the above questions generated six focus category and every man rated the important of marketing strategy based on 1 as the least important to 5 as the most important. All of them agreed that promotion and people play such important roles in influencing them to consume spas services. Promotions helped in education these men on the benefits and advantages of spas services while people such famous and talented therapists are the reason why they opted to use spas at specific hotels. The least important marketing strategy was placing which where the spa has been in the hotel's building. If it is within the building that connected with other facilities such as swimming pool and gym.

For Int 4 promotion is clearly being important roles as it helps to educate the uncommon services in Islamic cultures (De Mooij,2010).

Int4 :

“Indeed, I learnt about spas services from the promotions that I saw on the website and Facebook. The Facebook promotion really helped a lot as I can directly engaged with frequent ask question (FAQ) with the staff. All my curiosities were answered in prompt. I pick up the services that suit me from there” (48-year-old man)

Interviewer :

“How is spas provider managed to advice you in suitable services from their promotion”?

Int4 :

“I would love to try massage that can relieve my stiffness and facial services to look more fresh and good. So, they gave me few options which stated on the website and they can alter the package based on my needs.” (48-year-old man)

As stated previously Int4 really concerned on the people perceptions regarding men who go to spas and he also showed anxiety the misjudgment on mixed gender that lead to gay or bisexual. Hence, he mentioned that effective promotions that highlighted the benefits and advantages of spas consumptions would help in clear the negative perceptions towards male spa goers.

Below, the comments from Int3 also show that promotion was important. He learnt about spas for the first time during his visit to 5 stars hotel in Kuala Lumpur. If the receptionist did not promote the spas services, he could not care about the facilities and services provided by the hotels (Jamal, 2003)

Int3:

“It should be that way. Hotels should promote their services from the hotels itself. Hotels should speak through their workers. I just learnt as I go along.” (28-year-old man)

Interviewer:

“And how do you feel about this strategy?”

Int3:

“I just learnt as I go along, hence I feel that this strategy is brilliant. You cannot expect that every guest in this hotel knows about facilities and services provided. The signage of the facilities is there, but we may not know what the purpose is. As for me, I never know about male spa goers, I assumed spas only for women who need to chill and relax. So, this strategy really worked for me. I end up liking the services and determine to try spas services at different hotels. This approach is successful I must say. (28-year-old man)

6.4 Was their consumption for one time based or frequent consumptions?

6.4.1 All of men were asked if their consumptions only one time based or frequent consumptions?

(Then) why do you decided that way?

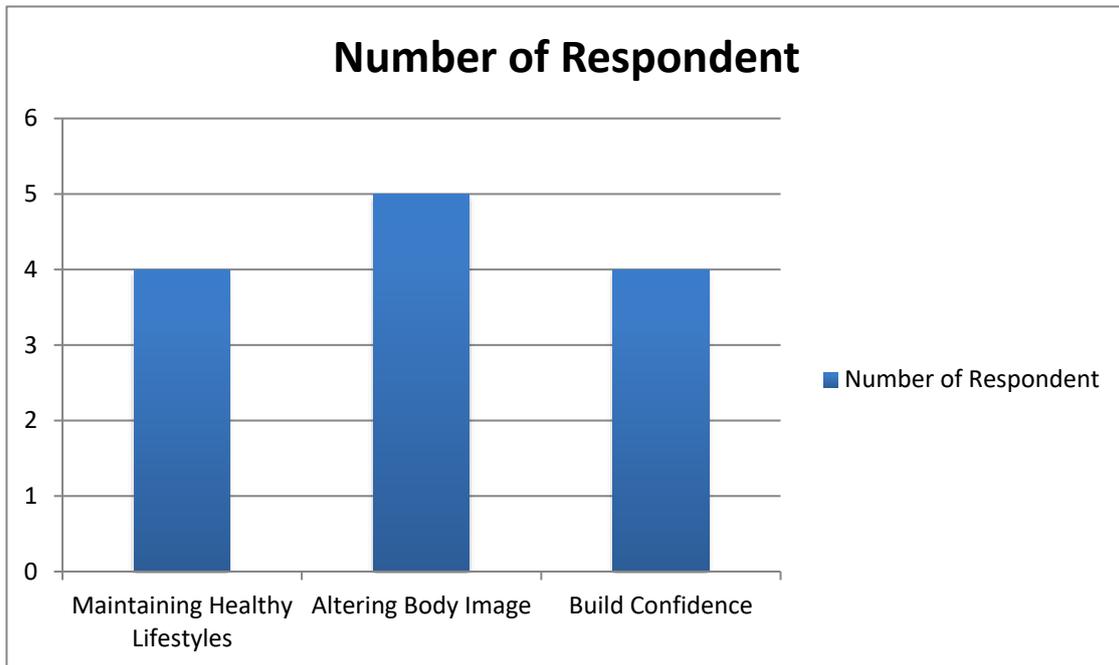
These questions generated three different responses as below:

Table 6.7 The Motivation of Spas Consumptions

Topic focus category	Number of Respondent
Maintaining Healthy Lifestyles	4
Altering Body Image	5
Build Confidence	4

These responses in line with the research conducted by Jamal, (2003a) where he found that repetitive consumptions by the consumers led them to adapting with uncommon norms and practices.

Table 6.8 The Motivation of Male Spa Goers



Int5:

“Yes, I will repeat the spas consumptions as spas provider always come out with new services that can cater my needs”. (36-year-old man from private sector)

Interviewer:

“And how is this supported your needs and time-wise?”

Int5:

“I wanted to; it helps me to rebuild back my confidence after spas services. It also helps me in altering my body part especially my skin’s problem. The acne scars reduced, and my skin feels

smoother than before hence I feel confidence again. I am no longer shy with my appearance. Through frequent visit to spas, it also helps me in maintaining healthy lifestyles and I feel good about that. I feel this is the new masculine nowadays. It totally worth it to spend like two hours once a month.” (36-year-old man)

6.5 Chapter Summary

The results relating to the first theme of the thesis looking at men’s experiences of spas services and the impact of marketing strategies exposure are presented in this chapter. This first theme investigated at how men became interested in spas services and whether marketing strategies have implications on them as male spa goers.

All five men agreed that even spas services are not common in Malaysia especially in Islamic cultures, it now can be accepted, as it remains the local culture and masculinity values. The main difference here was the strategy that international hotels should focus on and which strategy that can be very effective in influencing men consumers. Promotions that highlighted the spas with masculinity will attract men to try the services and then consume is regularly.

CHAPTER 7

Research Findings

7.0 Introduction

7.1 Marketing Strategies implication towards men's behaviour and preferences in Islamic Cultures

The main purpose of this chapter is to present the results relating to the second theme of this research; marketing strategies implications towards men's' behaviour and preferences in Islamic cultures. It examined data obtained from the depth interviewed from fieldwork which carried in Malaysia between Julys to September is to see the differences marketing strategies implemented from different international hotels from marketing managers' perspective.

Also, to give a clear picture on how marketing strategies that have been implemented by the international hotels can indirectly change men's preferences and perceptions towards masculinity. The theme was group in two sections. First section addressed on the important of spas and trends of male spa goers using three questions as below:

- 1) How important the spas in hotels? Why it is important, and do you think these spa services have changed the values of traditional culture?
- 2) What is the current trend of spa goers? How about male-spa goers? Why do you think men use spa services?
- 3) How about these men' perceptions towards the services offered?

The second sections addressed on how international hotels position their marketing strategies in influencing men consumers and shaping new subcultures using three questions as below:

- 1) What is your marketing strategy to introduce these services (spa) and facilities especially to men? Is there any different in term of strategy in Malaysia and your home country? Why? (the differences happened)
- 2) Did you do any market research before offer or introduce spas services and facilities?) How do you implement any of your strategy? Is that localized and adapted?
- 3) Can you tell any changes occurred when you implement different strategy in host country?

In linking these international marketing strategy, local Islamic cultures and gender preferences, this research has been carried out to understand better their relations. Malaysia former Tourism Ministry Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz (2017) once said that every International Companies that operated in Malaysia must follow and respect with Malaysia local culture.

For example, on the issue of wearing hijab amongst hoteliers, the management of the International Hotels must allow them to wear hijab freely in the premises. Those International Hotels that break the rules will be fine accordingly as the culture in Malaysia is to allow those who want to wear hijab with their will.

Unlike Spas in hotels which previously separated for men and women, these International Hotels successfully changed it to make it as unisex place and remain the local culture values. Despite the business systems that must consider the multi-racial Malaysia, their marketing strategies have been implemented to educate consumers that spas are the place for men to construct their masculine identity.

The understanding of how these International Hotels managed to implement their marketing strategies but remaining the local values has yet to be explored.

The transition of space where it has been dominated by women to a place where men also used in relation of constructing gender identity yet to be examined. In fact, this gap has not been catered before. The concept of spas has been understood as a beauty place for women has changed to health and wellness concept for both genders (Little, 2013, Voigt and Pforr, 2013, Keri et, al. 2007).

The main races for men consumers in Malaysia including Malay, Chinese and Indian have their own values and beliefs. In Malaysia, we can see that even the cultures have changed due to been influenced through marketing exposure, yet they still maintain the existing values (Bahauddin, 2008). It enhanced the urbanisation of the culture yet remained the old values.

The Malays basically known as having rural background as compared to the Chinese but Urban background in comparison with Indian (Bahauddin, 2008). The exposure of international marketing strategies implemented by the companies however enhanced every racial background (Jamal, 2003). Historically, every race has been separated hence they have different culture background and values. Now, we can see that Malaysia is mixing and adapting with other cultures.

To recap, data qualitative can be very useful and valuable in classifying the trends of marketing strategies implemented by different International Hotels which run the business in Malaysia. As the factors before considering the implementations will be different from one another in relation to several of perceptions, missions, beliefs, and views towards local cultures. Since the local cultures understanding were formed by each international hotel's beliefs and values, hence in-depth interviews were conducted to explore various individual's perspective. Paton (1990) clarifies that we need to interview people which we cannot observe to get the real perspective on what these people have perceived about certain things.

An open approach of data collection was adopted as a key principle of research was to examine on how marketing strategies position themselves in order to influence men consumers. In achieving this, it is

important to discuss from all the managers' perspectives and their experiences in implementing marketing strategies.

Limiting the responses of managers would have been inaccurate insights of what they consider from their point of view as important information. Although the method meant that a large amount of data was collected it was also impartial. The interviews were held to gain insights and to seek answer from the research questions as reinstated below:

Through creating and changing demand for male-spa-goers, do multinational companies alter local cultures in Malaysia, especially in relation to gender and ethnicity for Muslim men?

One of the most important points to note here is that traditional marketing strategy progressed to the new marketing strategy between the industries depends on the countries that MNCs would like to penetrate (A. Griffith et, al. 2014, Bradley, 2005, Mc Donald and Wilson, 1999) different marketing strategies will be implemented after engaging with local market research ((Kotler, 2012).

Prior to the implementation, manager needs to decide whether to pursue with traditional marketing strategy or adopted new mix marketing strategy which will echo every company's marketing objective (Mc Donald and Wilson, 1995). The lack of marketing strategy decision will be resulting in poor implications towards the consumers.

7.2 Demographic of Interviewees Characteristics

In order to seek the answers for research questions, the interviews took place in different Internationals Hotels in Malaysia. Each interview was recorded with the participants' consents, which lasted between thirty minutes to an hour.

Most of the interviews were conducted in their office however few were conducted outside as the participants had difficulties to be in the office during the date. There were some interruptions during the interviews for both in the office and outside.

They were phone calls; some staffs were coming in along the interviews and some colleagues passed by outside the office. Beforehand, to get confirmation to participate with the interviews, the researcher needed to email to all potential participants. Yet, not all replied, so I need to make follow up through phone calls.

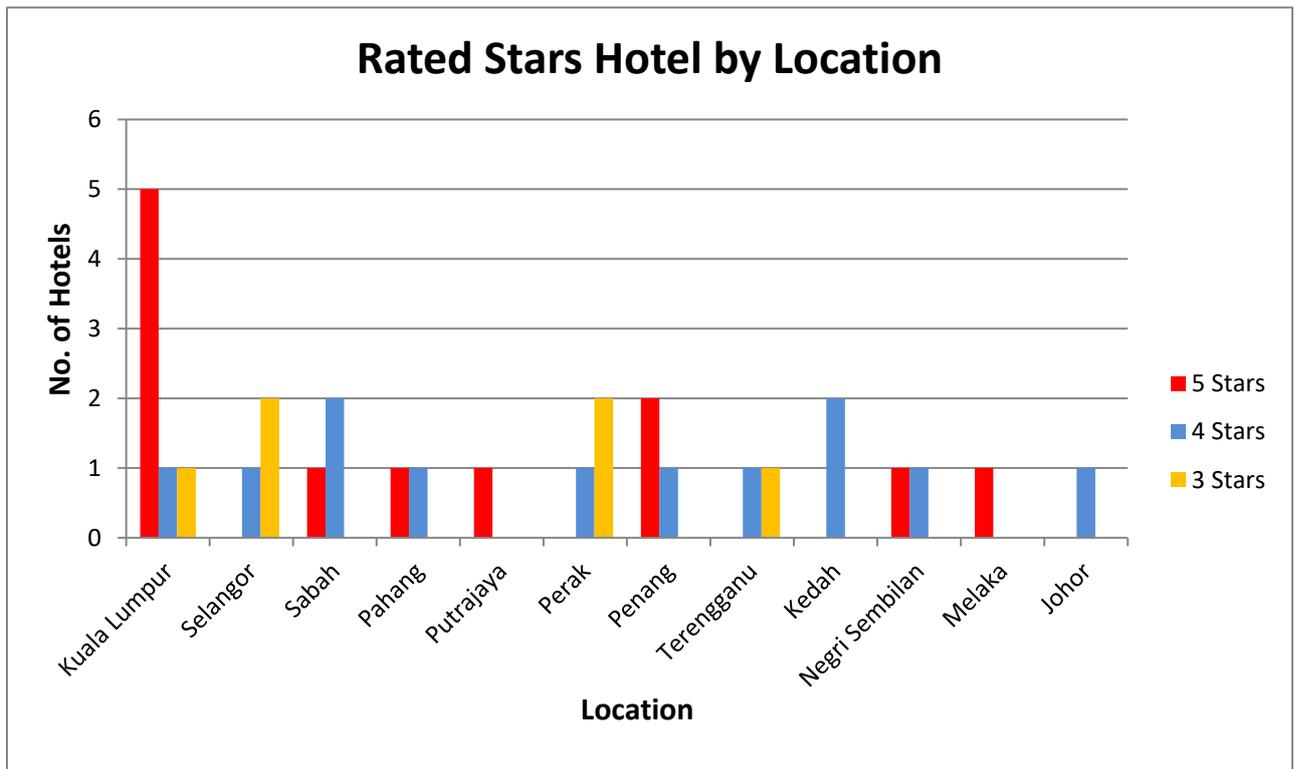
Thirty managers in fifteen international hotels were scouted but not all have been agreed to participate. Even they have been agreed, some had cancelled it last minute and it has been affected the time frame of period allocated for fieldwork in Malaysia.

It caused the delayed as times need to be rescheduled. From the interviews, only half of participants were answered all questions related to this research and another half answered the questions in general. The answers obtained however are valuable to this research and meet the expectation of the researcher in order to understand how the cultures have changed in Malaysia, yet the values are not broken. Table 6.1 shows the profiles of thirty participants from which they presented.

Table 7.1: The Demographic of Participants Characteristics

No.	Ethnicity of Participant	Gender	Position in Company	Stars Hotel	Location	Code
1.	Indian	Male	Marketing Manager	5	Kuala Lumpur	Ma4
2.	Indian	Male	Operation Manager	5	Kuala Lumpur	Ma17
3.	Indian	Male	Marketing Manager	5	Kuala Lumpur	Ma3
4.	Malay	Male	Operation Manager	5	Kuala Lumpur	Ma30
5.	Malay	Male	Chief Executive	3	Kuala Lumpur	Ma6
6.	Malay	Female	Manager	3	Selangor	Ma13
7.	Malay	Male	Manager	3	Selangor	Ma14
8.	Chinese	Female	Operating Manager	5	Sabah	Ma5
9.	Chinese	Female	Marketing Manager	4	Sabah	Ma21
10.	Chinese	Male	Director	4	Sabah	Ma22
11.	Indian	Male	Manager	5	Pahang	Ma29
12.	Malay	Female	Assistant Director	4	Kuala Lumpur	Ma15
13.	Malay	Male	Director	5	Putrajaya	Ma23
14.	Malay	Female	Marketing Manager	4	Selangor	Ma16
15.	Malay	Male	Manager	5	Kuala Lumpur	Ma1
16.	Chinese	Male	Marketing Manager	4	Perak	Ma11
17.	Chinese	Male	Marketing Manager	5	Penang	Ma7
18.	Chinese	Male	Operation Manager	5	Penang	Ma18
19.	Chinese	Female	Manager	4	Penang	Ma8
20.	Malay	Male	Manager	4	Terengganu	Ma2
21.	Malay	Male	Manager	3	Terengganu	Ma19
22.	Chinese	Female	Marketing Manager	3	Perak	Ma12
23.	Chinese	Male	Manager	3	Perak	Ma9
24.	Malay	Female	Manager	4	Kedah	Ma20
25.	Malay	Female	Marketing Assistant Director	4	Kedah	Ma28
26.	Malay	Male	Manager	4	Kedah	Ma27
27.	Indian	Male	Manager	4	Negeri Sembilan	Ma26
28.	Chinese	Female	Manager	5	Negeri Sembilan	Ma10
29.	Chinese	Male	Manager	5	Melaka	Ma25
30.	Malay	Male	Manager	4	Johor	Ma24

Table 7.2 Rated stars Hotels by Location



7.3 The Importance of Spas in Hotels and The Trend of Male Spa Goers

7.3.1 Interviewees were asked how important the spas in hotels?

All the interviewees agreed that spa is one of the most important facilities in every hotel. The responses are as quoted below:

Ma1 :“definitely important. Our hotel would not be rated as five stars if we do not have spas facilities in our building. Most of our in-house guests are looking forward to experience spas services from us. Not only that, they also bought vouchers from us so that they can give to their family as a gift”

Ma4 :“spas attracted consumers to stay with us and contributed high revenue for us. Spas gave a good image for our hotel. When our staff asked one of the in-house guests the best experience

staying with us, the answer was our spa is the best facility that he enjoyed and did not mind pay extra”.

Ma5: “It is important until we changed our used to be a floating restaurant to become spas. Is like you are having services on the sea. Our customers are happy with the new facilities and it makes profit compared to the floating restaurant” (Marketing Manager from 5 stars hotel in Sabah).

Ma5 mentioned that the hotel totally transformed the place from a restaurant to spas. The space gone under full renovation and it became like a small island of spas above the sea level. During renovation, the hotel created a flyer which informed the new opening spas in their hotels and did an aggressive promotion through their website and social media.

Again, it is so interesting to know that these hotels really take spas as part of their profit margin and this shows that spas are important.

Ma10: “We cannot be a good competitor if we did not provide spas as one of our excellent facilities. It also part of our revenue. The price that we charged usually quite expensive in comparison of boutique spas outside the hotels yet the demand for our spa’s services are high. Consumers are willing to pay because of our good image and the experienced therapists whom we hired are the talented and famous”.

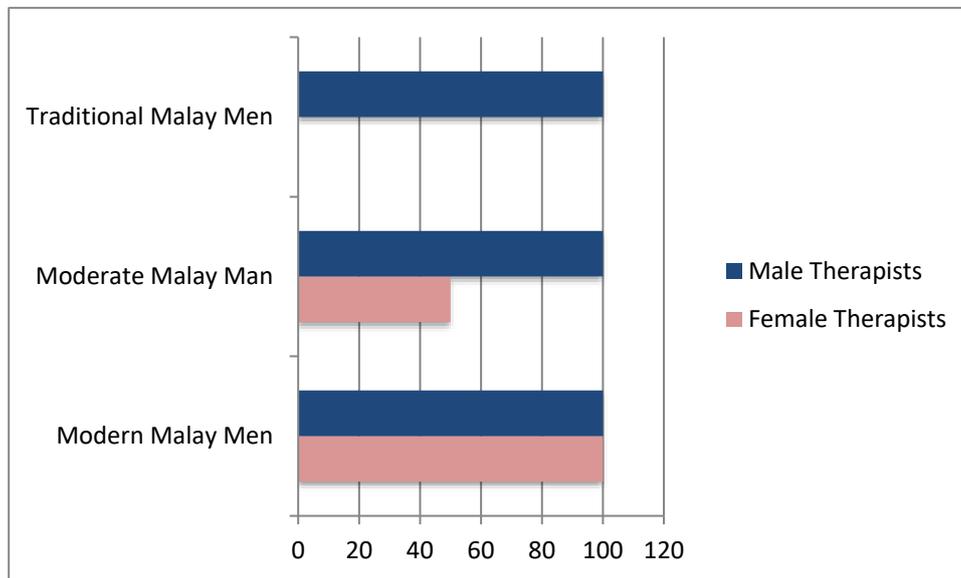
7.3.2 Do you think these spa services have changed the values of traditional culture especially for Muslim?

[Then] What is the current trend of spa goers? How about male-spa goers? Why do you think men use spa services?

[Then] How about these men’s perceptions towards the services offered?

These questions generated three types of Muslim men from the interviewees. The differences from comparing female and male spa goers are results are summarised below in table 7.3 and show that the largest difference was with men choosing spas over women. This is not so surprising as these men were a new market targeted in spas industry especially in Malaysia (El Rafae, 2912). It is encouraging to know that the consumption if men is growing in spas industry (Tsai et, al. 2012). This tells us that managers who involved with marketing implementation are engaging with the current trend and caught up with new marketing mix strategy in order to cater men consumers.

Table 6.3: Three types of men and the therapists’ provided by the Spas



There are three types of men when it comes to spas consumptions. The types of men will influence the decision to consume spas services. The traditional Malay men are always wanted a man worker to attend them during the spas process;

In this quote Ma15 mentioned about how traditional Malay wanted to workers from the same gender to attend them otherwise they will not proceed to consume the services:

“We always hire men therapists as well as women therapists. Those traditional Muslim men who really concerned about their aurah always asked for men therapists. They will not jeopardize their belief just for having spas services. If we told them that our men workers are fully booked, these men would not proceed to consume our services and willing to reschedule the time and date if men therapist attending them during the spa’s process”

Ma16: “So I found that there are three types of Malay men in spas consumptions Modern Malays be it men or women do not care the gender of the therapists as long as they concerned on the products or services that suit them. But for some of them who are traditional, they reluctant to use opposite gender therapist, also not even willing to share the space with their opposite gender.”

Ma5: “When we transformed our restaurant to spas island, we take these types of consumers into consideration. Not only men, women also having the same demands. Those moderate and traditional consumers wanted personal space and therapists. For example, moderate men, they will consume spas services with female therapist or female worker if their partners are with them during the process and must be in the same room or space without other customers. Hence, we built different kind of rooms to cater different type of consumers”.

Ma20: “It is crucial to understand these types of men when we wanted to create new services targeting men consumers. Previously, most of our therapists were women. Several times when we encountered with our potential men consumers, they were asking about male therapists. Some of them still consumed the services even we did have male therapists but mostly they were reluctant to proceed. Therefore, we opted to hire more male therapists to combat with this issue”

Ma1: “Traditional men are generally considered themselves as manly man who were not care about skin products except soap and deodorant, but they can be loyal with the products that they consumed”.

M22: “Traditional men are often interested with healthy products such creams that can improve their body shapes rather than beauty products. They were looking for products that can show the tough body. It portrays masculine”.

Ma2: “Urban men is known as upwardly mobile men who showed interest towards their physical appearance and looking for grooming products. This type of men is always the first one who willing to try new services or products that promoted to them”.

Ma29: “Moderate Malay men is a new classification. Previously we only had two types of men in our spa, whether urban or traditional but now we do have moderate men. They only consumed spas with their female partner. These moderate men are interested with body image, but they also tend to be traditional men at the same time. They wanted to be manly men and rugged men”.

Moderate Malay men were 100% will consumed spas services if the therapists were women while only 50% of them consumed it. It depends on the types of services that they wanted to subscribe. Ma18 talks about the changing trend in local culture:

“And, because it was promoted online, we started getting men consumers from all over the world. have international customers as well as local customers. Previously, only international men hired spas therapists and now we start having local men consumers especially Malay men. The trend is changing, and these Malay men started to accept spas services and it quite common now to have more men in our spas.”

Ma17 is engaged with promotional activities and has discovered that the culture has changed a bit. No more stereotype and judgement towards male spa goers when he tried to reach men consumers:

“Well, I’ve always engaged with marketing especially promotional activities. Once we did promotion inside the mall and when I did surveys there, people stated that it would be good if marketers can create services or products for men. Men perceived spas as a place to rebuild themselves and construct their masculine identity. No more a place that only focused on women. The trend has changed so does the culture. Spas are no longer being perceived as 10 years ago where it has been associated as an inappropriate place, which associated with sex services. Hence the judgment towards men who went to spa”.

Ma5: “All of our male clients here talk about their individual experiences on spas consumptions and how the services that we delivered to them help in constructing new term of masculine. All male clients mentioned that now masculine men are looking for clean and fresh face rather than bearded face. It shows that the culture has changed, and men are more conscious on their body image and physical appearance.”

Ma2 talked about remaining values in culture even the appearance of men has changed:

“We may offer hair stylish, hair colours, yet this Indian Punjabi still wear turban even they changed their hair colours. It is for their own satisfaction. From the other eyes, they are still the same Indian Punjabi and the turban shows their values. In Mandara spas, we will never be crossing their lines. We will respect their privacy and so on.”

Kenayathulla (2016) found that marketing activities have impact towards gender behaviours, and it changed the norms in the culture. This referred to the flexibility of the cultures to adapt with the current trends, the fun and pleasant essence of the spa's services (Hein and O'Donohoe, 2014, Mak et, al, 2009).

These marketing activities made everyone from different cultures adapting to other new cultures as mentioned by Ma3:

“Back to the culture, this culture mix, see, I came from India, my team is from Indonesia, I want to create something that Indonesia, Malaysia and India being together, so I created culture spa nights. During the daytime, we set up the big space in the spas, in the garden. We put the Balinese statues with the mattress. One aroma statue, and the daytime, we start selling it by telling them that tonight we are going to do a culture spa night. We used to charge full price for the treatments, do discounts, a part of it the rest is free. So, when in the evening, at nine o'clock, when it was completely dark outside, the guests will come to the spas only for the culture nights, at the spas entrance, the lights were off. Only the candles were on. The guests walked in, the mantra was on, the mantra has very strong vibrations. At the entrance of the spa, there were two girls stood with the Malaysian dress: the baju kurung. The guests came in and sat, already expected for the treatments. We did the arty which is the Indian arty and put the holy water of gangga on their head. So, they felt the Malaysian touched and Indian touched. And when they walked to the candles for foot bath, while they had the foot bath, the Indonesian dancers performed. So, you had foot bath in open spas, under the dark skies, with lots of candles, nice music that kept going on, with the Indonesian dances. But trust me, who ever experienced this, they all said: —we never feel like this experience in other spas, this one full of the cultures, different styles, different music, different steps have different experiencell. That kind of things make people remember for the whole life. they were really said that they not only had massages but also experienced the culture differences”.

From the above quote, it described that culture could change. People can mix and adapt with other different culture through experience. This is similar with what Czinkota and Ronkainen (2012) found in their research that culture indeed is shared, transform, and learnt.

Ma11 mentioned the shift trends in global spas industry led to culture changed:

“I have always interested in learning what global trends would be accepted in foreign culture especially here, in Malaysia. We know that Islam is dominant culture here, some trends were not allowed in Islamic culture, but some were adapted and accepted. It did not wrong to go spas especially Muslim men as long they know which services that still intact with their belief. The culture changes so quickly.”

Ma11's comment is remarkable because he stated that culture evolves tremendously. This is a complex issue that has been addressed in depth by Cleveland et, al. (2015) and debated by where they argued that one has to understand relations between men and women consumers prior implementing marketing strategies in relation of culture and gender changes (Carpenter et, al. 2013, Cleveland and Laroche , 2007). Cleveland and Laroche (2007) stated that marketing activities shaped local cultures, therefore potentially re-shapeable. This understanding of marketing-culture-gender relations.

7.4 How International Hotels Position Their Marketing Strategies in Influencing Men Consumers and Shaping New Subcultures

Managers were asked these questions: What is your marketing strategy to introduce these services (spa) and facilities especially to men?

[Then] Did you do any market research before offer or introduce spas services and facilities?) How do you implement any of your strategy? Is that localized and adapted?

The first question generated six marketing activities from managers. The table 6.4 shows how every manager rated the most strategies implemented by the hotels in influencing men consumers.

Table 7.4 The Importance of Marketing Strategy

Topic focus category	% Of Importance
Price	73
Package	66
Aesthetic of Spas	83
Therapists	93
Product/Service	87
Promotion	100

Table 7.5 Marketing Strategies Implemented by International Hotels



Table 6.5 above shows that the percentage of marketing activities according to their importance by every manager. The differences from comparing results from the above table clearly showed that promotion is the significant activity for marketing strategy. All of thirty managers are 100% agreed that promotion is the most crucial marketing strategy to be implemented. Promotions communicate about products or services with the potential and existing customers (Khan, 2014). It also allowed the services speak for themselves in reaching potential and existing consumers, and enabled consumers to access an alternative exciting information about the new services/products in the market (Jamal, 2003).

As mentioned earlier, Ma17 involved with promotional activities. He added:

Ma17: “We did promotions everywhere. We did face to face promotion by opening spas booth in mall or any carnivals in order to communicate directly with our potential and existing customers. Face to face promotion did greater impact in influencing them to try our services”.

Ma3 added: “The languages in promoting is important. To promote services for men, you cannot say about manicure and pedicure as extra services as they do not care about it”.

Interviewer: “ So for what I understood now, if you want to market your products to male spa goers and if you want to educate them, to attract them to your spa, it means you have to promote the services in direct language?”

Ma3: “Yes if you have access on the direct language. Let say I am working with the travel agents from Korea or China, I do not know what kind of market that I want to promote over there, is better for me to be neutral. I gave the travel agents on our menu, and they will promote us. If I can see my market clearly, I will do the direct language. But if I am not involved with it, is good to be neutral.

Ma3 later added: “Trust me, nobody knows the benefit of massages, or relaxations if they do not expose with promotion. They may know little bit, but the questions are, spas have varieties. Without marketing exposure, they only know that spas have massages while spas can be more than that. People nowadays are easy to access to different kind of social medias”.

Ma18; “Well I’ve always used it for the strategy. The way we are promoting our services and talented people is brilliant particularly with events in mall because the traditional marketing such television and radio were getting really flooded, so it was looking at new ways to reach audiences in such a competitive market. So, looking at ways to let people know and how to get your information out first and in an innovative way.”

From the above comment, it is interesting to know that in promoting services that targeting men consumers’, language is important to consider before implementing the strategy. Men are interested with straightforward language (Al-Abdin et, al. 2016).

Most of the consumers are delighted to have promotions that represent their gender especially for male consumers (Canning, 2012). Previously, colours play an important role in distinguishing gender’s products. Marketers learnt that colours tend to influence consumers in buying products especially for men (Klasson and Ulver, 2015). In many ways for men consumers tend to attract with darker colours while women preferred brighter colour (Canning, 2012). The colours in promotion showed the masculinity or feminism of the products (Cheong and Kaur, 2015).

Ma8 talked about how colours being so popular in marketing activity:

“It has, in a way! In a way it prepares consumers to reflect the products or services with them. They feel better to associate their gender image with the colours. You know, some men refused

to associate with pink colours. They think that pink is feminine, does not show the symbol of strong men. You know? Some hotels put nude colours in their promotion and these men feel low about it. We used to take this for granted. We used bright colours such as light brown and light yellow in our brochures and what we got was: your brochures looked girly, one of the feedbacks from our potential male spa goers. Well, we learnt from there’.

Interviewer: So, did you have some expectations after that?

Ma8: “From the feedback? Of course, you do not have to be defensive when you received that kind of feedbacks. Take it, learn it, and improve it. We expected to learn on the colours that may be interested in reaching male consumers”.

Ma8 added that the discounted price also should be in bold colours in attracting consumers:

“we did put the word of discount price in our promotions and the colours for the words should be bold because that is the first thing which customers will look at. Then they will go to the services or products list”.

Ma2 alludes: “Male spa goers preferred discounted services compared to female. The highlights of discount word in promotions would effectively attract them especially the promotion over the counter. For example, when they came to consume the services, we would highlight that we had special rate for guests on that day. Seriously they would subscribe more services that they initially planned before coming to the spas”.

From the above responses, it is agreeable that promotion does have a significant impact towards influencing consumers as that is the best way to communicate the services with potential consumers

especially for a new market (Lovelock et, al 1998). Promotion able to persuade customers even they do not have the intention to but at the first place (Lovelock and Wright, 2002). Choosing the right language as a promotion's content is important so consumers are easily to understand about the services (Parasuraman et, al. 1985). As mentioned by Ma2, face-to-face promotion is effective and resulting in successful purchasing of the products (George and Berry 1981).

Another most important strategy is therapist. Therapists are part of people in marketing strategy. Therapists play important roles in marketing strategy as they will do personal interactions with the customers and strongly influence customers' perceptions over service quality (Rust et, al. 1996). Customers tend to associate therapists with the spas' image (Magrath, 1986).

Ma3: "Who makes different in the business? It is employees. They are the bottom-line of therapists. They are the ones who delivering the services. They are the ones who give the impact to the guests. They communicate with the guest. They are representing us. So, if they are not good, then it does not make any sense. Customers will come ten times for massages, and they bought different types of therapies, just imagine in three weeks' time they came, they had same type of massages with different therapists, they will complain about the therapists. They said, one was good, one was not. Everybody is different. But when it comes to this spa, no matter how many therapists you have tried same sequence of massages, same techniques, same products, same of doing it. You cannot justify what is the different."

Ma30 suggested that therapists give significant effects towards consumers' experiences:

"therapists can have it all. I mean, they will reflect to your hotel's image. They delivered the services directly to customers; they speak with the customers and get immediate feedbacks during the services process. Customer would not only talk about your products, the list of services that the spas offered, but also the satisfaction towards the therapist. They are the gems of the spas"

Ma25 eludes on how therapist being involved with new marketing strategy from the beginning of strategy formulation:

“The trend was pretty fast to catch up, one spa will introduce one services quite fast in competing effectively, and hence the therapists are the one that make your customers return to your spas. You know, eve you introduce new products or services, your repeated customers will ask for the same therapists to deliver the services. They have their own favourite therapist in our spas. Especially male consumers, they will request the same gender therapist that will deliver the services to them”.

In keeping with the above comments, it in line with the previous research that stated achievement of customer-orientation will success with the employees of the company as they serve customers directly (Judd, 2001).

Next, 87 percent of the respondents mentioned that product and service are part of effective marketing strategies. Business cannot be run without products. (Walker 1996). Each of product and service has its own uniqueness that will create demand from the customers (Lovelock 1996). In terms of spas industry, they are selling the products and at the same time delivered services to the customers (Cheung, 2012, Panchal, 2012). Moeller (2010) determined that service industry also using the tangible products to serve their customers.

Ma3 explained that from as early as stepping the feet at the spas entrance, they sold products and services in creating good experience:

“When you walk to the spa, you are tired, and your journey is start with the welcome drinks. So, every customer who comes to the spa gets cold towel and cold ginger tea, so this is basically your experience starts with the welcome drink. And before different kind of massages they will choose

oils for them. They have different scrubs and oils and usually they will come 15 minutes earlier before the spa treatments. We will explain about the products, and what we offer, by the time your treatment is about to start, and your therapist will bring drinks for your treatments”

Ma11: “Spas are not about services only. Many misunderstand about this. They thought that spas are services. What they did not know is spas also a product. We have various products in our spas. For facial, body, hair, and many more. In fact, our therapists are also known as spas’ products”
(Marketing Manager from 4 stars hotel in Perak)

Ma13: “From the very basic to clean your face pores until Botox which that is very extreme invasive services. , Botox is a product where customers went to that extreme trying to change her face shape which for me you me there is psychological problems to a man”.

The comment above highlighted about a product that changed face shape, which I realised that some men tend to change their physical appearance in order to create new masculinity. Whichever that suits with their masculinity terms.

Ma4: “Products and services basically about the same if you look at most of the spas. But the ingredients of the products and the techniques to apply the products will be different. Oh, also the technique of therapists delivered the services to the customers also distinct. We keep on producing different kind of products and services in order to stay in competitive market. You know, if you promote the same products or services to customers, what will they thought of you? Nothing special. At least, with unique technique and creative products, it will last as good experience to the customers. When you asked customers like: what do you think about this spa? They will immediately say ohhhh that spa has very good products that suit to your skin and the massage technique is awesome. Something like this will be remarkable”.

Other three important marketing activities that be implemented as effective strategy were aesthetic of spas, price, and package. Kotler (2012) suggested that marketing mix including price is very significant in influencing customers.

Ma3: "Pricing is very compelling to the others".

Interviewer: Is it affordable for customers?

Ma3: Yes of course. RM195 (GBP 97.5) for 50 minutes treatments are affordable. It is not a big price. We have not really increased our price for many years.

Interviewer: Does the customer willing to pay for the price stated?

Ma3: "Since our cultural night, they have experienced something that never had before at other spas, that kind of things make people remember for the whole life. They were really said that they not only had massages but also experienced the culture differences. Since then, we always have customers who are waiting for that events and willing to pay full.

Ma26: "Price is important, really. It will reflect to the services. Customers aware that good services will be a bit pricey especially when you consumed the services in hotels. You not only pay the price for the services but also the experience that you get once you enter the hotels. The environment, the greetings from the staff, that kind of experiences created better mood before you finally arrived at spas entrance. Hence the expensive price".

Ma24: “Of course price is important. You cannot expect cheap price here. Even it is quite expensive, it still affordable. The price stated on the menu usually has discount for in house guests”.

Ma5: “We always concern about price. We must take many considerations prior to finalizing the price. Is not easy but is important. With the unique concept of spas island, the price not cheap. Minimum price for minimal service such as manicure and pedicure will be RM180 (GBP36) for half an hour”.

Ma19: “Across all, price will be significant factor that influence your customers to try the services for the first time. Price should be reasonable, not too expensive, and importantly must be affordable for customers. Sometimes, not only in-house guests who come for our spa’s services, but outsiders just because they heard that we offer very competitive price compared to other hotels here”.

Ironically enough, price is really playing such an important role in marketing strategy because of the intangible nature of service industry (Zeithaml, 1981). It is essential for spas to engage with competitive pricing. What has been given to customers will impact on the perceived value. They are expected to get services that equal with what they have paid (Woodruff, 1997).

Then, aesthetic of the spas has been discussed about 83% of the respondents. They mentioned that aesthetic is very important as it represent hotel’s image and themes. In spas, aesthetic is defined as the combination of the space, environments, smells, products, colours, people and ambience. I picked the definition throughout the interviews. The respondents kept on repeating about aesthetic with the definition as per described.

Ma23: “Aesthetic is important. Customers will give impressions once they stepped at the entrance of the spas. They were looking at the interior, the position of the furniture and products were placed and how our workers greeted them. That is aesthetic as a whole”

Ma5: “The smells created good feelings when the customers entered the spas. Then, the friendly staff who were welcoming them influence them to sit and inquiry about our services. The music soothing their feelings and during the services delivered to customers, the touch gave great mood. These all incorporated in one as aesthetic”.

Ma22: “What do you think if I said that aesthetic is the whole things that you feel, see and experience in these spas? Yup, that is aesthetic all about.

From the above quotes, it explained that aesthetic is the physical evidence referred to the surrounding settings where the services have been located (Mittal and Baker, 1998). The intangible nature of services that can be seen, heard, smelled, and been touched. Bitner (1990) mentioned that physical surroundings and other visible cues led customers to have greater impressions towards the quality service that they received. It is in line with Rust et, al. (1996) where they described physical evidence as ambience, music background, coziness seating, the space’s layout and workers’ appearance are significantly influence customers’ expectations and preferences.

Finally, previous researchers mentioned packaging of the products as part of marketing strategy (Kotler 2012), very little talk about package in services industry. Packaging is related to materials such the colours, size and shape of the products (Bo Rundh, 2013) but this is not the point in the spa industry. Package in spas means products and services combine in one pack (Leandro et, al. 2015).

Interviewer: so is that for packaging----(pull stop due to having introduction for wet towel).

Ma3: “This is for your face and for your hands, the refreshing cold towel”.

Interviewer: So basically, packaging and materials are from Bali?

Ma3: “Yes, they are from Bali”

Ma30: “Well, in some ways they do not really look like a package at the first. We need to explain to them over the counter. For example, the service of milk bath on the menu. Customers assumed that it is only about shower in milk or in bathtub that full of milk. We need to explain that this service is package where they will get the body scrub as well as head massage. Package is where we combine few services in one menu”

Ma1 explained that package is a combination services besides ala-carte service in the spa’s menu:

“Ala- carte is a basic service that usually customers bought but with package, the usually will subscribe spas services for some specific times. It is similar with membership. You can repeat the services until you finished your subscription”.

Interviewer: Does this mean that package is also known as membership?

Ma1: “No, not really. Are just similar but totally different things. For example, one customer would like to have massage, facial, and bath all together in one time; usually we recommend them to subscribe with our package. Is cheaper than ala-carte. We offered one package with reasonable price that they could have the treatments at least for twice with one payment compared if they paid ala-carte treatment which will cost about the same price”.

Package usually is tailored to accommodate customers' preferences in order to create better option and high customer values (L Jin et, al. 2012). Package especially in-service industry also been described as incorporation between products and services (Saiyed et, al. 2000).

7.5 Did You Do Any Market Research Before Offer or Introduce Spas Services and Facilities?

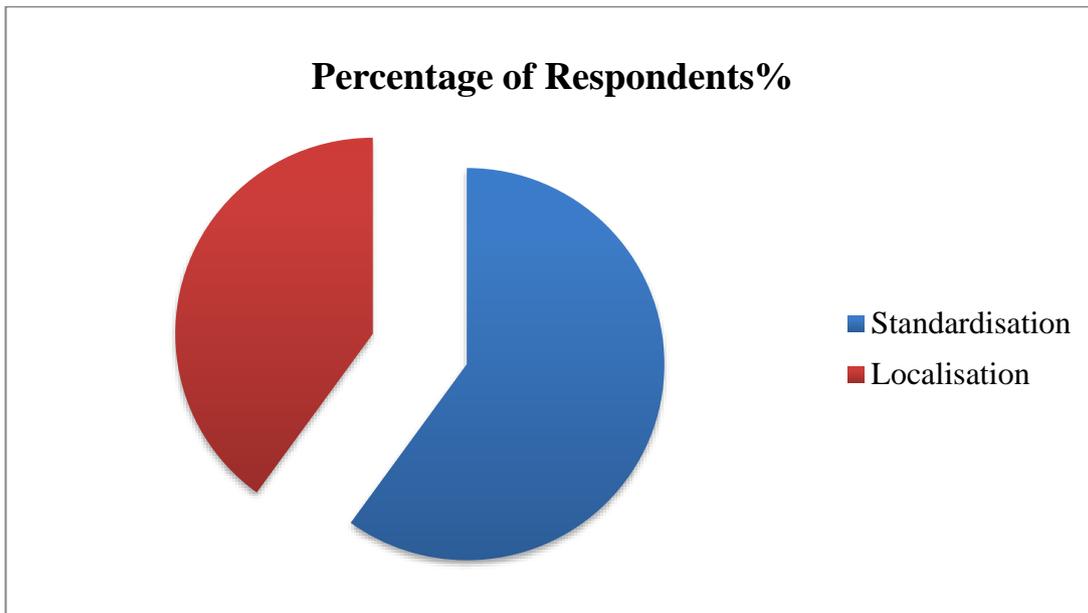
How Do You Implement Any of Your Strategy? Is That Localized and Adapted?

These questions generated two responses as table below:

Table 7.6 Standardisation and Localisation of Marketing Strategy

Focus Category	Percentage of the Respondents %
Standardisation	60
Localisation	40

Table 7.7 Percentage of Standardisation and Localisation



From the table, it explained that 60% of the respondents mentioned on the standardisation of their marketing strategies while another 40% did customisation of marketing strategy based on local market. Previous studies found that standardisation is cost effective strategy and they let the consumers experienced the products or services that have been created or developed from origin country (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010).

Ma3 explained that their spas used standardisation marketing strategy:

“we have everything in standardise. All the treatments sequences and all products and all the things, all the p&p for products and the things, all in standardise. And is easier sometimes to run the business when you have standard in everything. Otherwise tomorrow your therapist will change, you don't know what to do”.

Ma3 assured that they have done market research prior to marketing implementation.

Ma5: “We standardised everything at our franchise in Malaysia except the one in Sabah. This services on the menu, products used, the same techniques and layout of spas at every hotel. Only Sabah is different because the spas located above the sea”.

Ma2: “We customised our services and products because we must follow with this state's rules. Here, men and women cannot mix in the same room without any legal relationship. So, the strategy also different with other states.

From the above quotes, it is exciting to discover that state's law also affects in creating and implement marketing strategy.

Ma20: “Even this state is being ruled by Islamic party, there is a freedom for us to make our spas as gender-free space. It means, men and women can mix in one place. So, we still implement standardise strategy for our spas”.

For spas industry, most of the International Hotels are implementing standardise strategies. It is more favourable strategy in Malaysia as the tasks of the implementation was done at headquarters rather than at local country. In local country, managers can focus on improvements of the services in making more revenues.

7.6 Chapter Summary

The results relating to these two is presented in this chapter. When looking at marketing strategies, all managers agreed that there six strategies which they need to focus in order to cater male spa goers. These include promotion, price, people/therapists, package, products/services, and aesthetic of spas/physical evidence. When asked whether these spas implement standardised or customised marketing strategy, 60% of them stated that to be cost effective, standardise marketing strategy was implemented.

CHAPTER 8

Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations

8.0 Concluding Summary of Key Research Findings

This chapter integrates the results from the preliminary study, relating them to the study's aims. Firstly, Section focuses on the first theme of the study, the experience of the male spa goers towards marketing exposure. experience of new subculture. Section 8.1 articulates on the findings that related to the second theme; how marketing strategy position themselves in creating new subculture of gender roles.

This study explored the experiences of two groups including from men's perspective and managers point of view. One group shared the experiences of consuming spas and how they started to consume spas services. Another group was discussing on how managers from international hotels wanted to cater new market segment in spas industry and at the same time introducing the services to potential customers.

The focus of this study was to explore on how marketing strategy position themselves in Islamic Culture in order to change men's behaviours and preferences towards spas services. Spas services were known uncommon in Malays norm especially for men. This study also emphasised on gender as integral of the approach in order to allow men to comprehend on the gender roles in spas. This study hoped to gain an insight and better comprehension on the effect this had, if any, on how marketing influenced men to construct their masculinity and perceptions towards spas services which led to frequent spas consumptions.

This chapter aims to discuss, conclude all the findings acquired from the qualitative data, to suggest effective marketing strategies components to be implemented in order to influence gender preferences and behaviours and to recommend the limitations and gap that can be covered in the future research.

The objectives of this research as mentioned earlier, were to to establish and thoroughly articulate the components of marketing mix strategy implemented by MNCs in creating new social trends and demands for spas services in Malaysia market, to examine the effects of marketing in changing consumers behaviours preferences towards spas services and to investigate how marketing mix strategies reflected these services and shape Malaysian culture in related to gender and ethnicities.

8.1 Discussion of the Research

Currently, the demands for the male-spa-goers are rising since 2007. The spas space in Malaysia which has been popular associated with women is no longer conquered by female- spa-goers. The trends seem like men are more going to spas for health and wellness purposes and at the same time it helps them to construct their masculine identity. The enormous growth of spas industry and the increasing number of men going to spas in Malaysia established the bright opportunities for International Hotels to cater more men consumers and expanding their business into male market segment.

These trends have changed due to exposure of ingenious international marketing strategy. The main theme of this study is to support the context on the issues of international marketing strategies components which aid in changing local cultures, conceptually. Attention was focused on International Hotels that have been entering and operating in Malaysia. The research started with the literature reviews in expanding and understanding the issues obtained which the research questions were developed.

A set of specific research objectives were created in achieving research questions. The goals are to obtain valuable knowledge on how cultures can be changed without breaking its local values. The identity of the culture remains the same as existing even there is value-added on beliefs and views. The stages of this study incorporated between the experience of observations from the researcher with the qualitative interviews from the participants.

8.1.1 Physical Evidence

The consumers enjoyed the process of the treatments but find that physical evidence such space of spas is more important. The aesthetic of the space attracts consumers to try the spas services. From the entrance of the spas to the treatment's rooms with the smells, lights and music affect the moods of consumers to buy the services.

Nice interiors will give extra points to each international hotel. The concepts of the space play an important role to influence the potential male-spa-goers to enter the spas. Most of the international hotels have their own concepts which do not represent the female domain. Men usually will avoid the space that look more feminine. Hence the colours, designs, and smells are created based on concepts such Balinese concepts, Javanese or Japanese in order to pull this male market segments.

Since spas services get more demands from male consumers, most International hotels have relocated the spas at the same level with swimming pools and gyms. The plan layout stated the spas as part of health and wellness together with the gyms and pools so that consumers are easy to access to these three health and wellness spaces. In other hand, some men as described by the managers have three categories. First category is those Malay men who are religious yet would like to consume the spas treatment. These men only willing to consume hotels provide room that cannot be shared with opposite gender.

8.1.2 Price

The other important variable is price. Price should be charged within the average of the spas industry. According to the data, consumers are willing to pay premium price if they satisfied with the products or services consumed.

Premium price is associated with good quality of products, good packaged offer or related to the professional and famous therapist. Yet consumers still enjoying the discounted or cheap price. Discounted price usually will be given for regular customers or when the new products or services have been introduced into the market.

Some managers occasionally give special price for their loyal customers during the spa's yearly anniversaries or any exclusive events. Other managers give discounted or special price to those customers who signed up their spa's memberships. Again, pricing strategy is different among the hotels depending on their star rated hotels, products or services offered and the popularity of the spas.

8.1.3 Package

The other best method of marketing mix strategy in these spas businesses is to offer various packages for the services offered. For example, in one of the most popular hotels in Kuala Lumpur offered head to toe treatments in one package deal with reasonable price. Individual treatment may be slightly expensive if compared with the package.

Hence the package offered can be a good bargain and attractive deal for potential consumers. Men are more interested with facial together with massage which it can be sports or traditional massage to boost back the energy or to pamper themselves. Some hotels include spas package as part of the price that the

consumers paid for the stays in the hotels. In house hotels consumers also enjoy the products that offered at spas in their rooms.

8.1.4 People

The last component of marketing strategy which considered as important in spas industry is people. People is a key for every business. People consist of staff who have directly communicate with the potential consumers from the entrance of the spas to the therapists who delivered the services to the consumers.

Friendly staff who are going to approach potentials consumers are more favourable. Then, the famous and expert therapists are usually they main attractions for consumers. Consumers tend to try the services through word of mouth on expert therapists. These kinds of customers are willing to travel far just to get the services from these experts.

The touches and techniques are different amongst the therapists. From the interviews, this research found that most international hotels will spend more money in hiring expert and famous therapists as it can attract more consumers to their spas. Skilled therapists usually will lead to satisfaction services and customers will repeat again to consume the treatments.

Other strategy implemented by managers is hiring therapists according to gender preferences. To reiterate, men have been classified into three categories including religious/pious men, moderate men and urban men. Those men who fell under religious only chose male therapists.

Meanwhile, moderate men will consider female therapists if their partners are with them during the treatments and the last category are urban men, who will consume treatments regardless the gender of the therapists.

In summary, to ensure that the implemented marketing strategies will be successful, those managers will thoroughly do market research before making any decisions. The decisions to implement marketing strategy should be suitable with the target market and company objectives in order to succeed in competitive market besides making profits and maintain sustainability. Next section will be discussed about the standardisation or localisation of marketing mix strategy.

8.2 The Level of Standardisation or Localisation of Marketing Mix Strategy

The level of whether to standardise or localise marketing mix strategy in order to educate and influence consumers preferences and behaviour is depends on the geographic such locations and environmental of the hotels in Malaysia.

Different locations have different cultures background. Every state in Malaysia has different culture values. The degree of perceptions also different amongst races in different state. Those consumers who lived in the capital state of the country tend to be more flexible, more open minded and more urban compared to those who lived in rural area.

Hence these International Hotels cannot adopt standard strategy for each variable. Understanding the customs of local consumers who lived within the territorials is very vital. They have different preferences based on their beliefs and perceptions.

The products or services also have been catered based on local demands hence the price strategy cannot be standardised. The price strategy needs to consider on value-added of the products or services offered.

The promotions such a membership deal or the physical evidence of the spas can be standardised, yet the people of the service providers need to be localised based on the categories of target market segment. Once the managers have better insights on the local target market, they are prone to have effective mixed marketing mix strategies which designed to suit their potential and existing customers.

To deduce, it is important to understand the market segmentation and target market before every manager makes decision to implement their efficient marketing mix strategies.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusion

9.0 Summary of Findings

Initially, literatures on all areas including marketing, culture and gender were reviewed. The literatures showed that 59% of the spa goers in Malaysia are men (El Rafae, 2012). The demands for male spa goers are rising since 2008 and growing for more than 200% since then (Jamin et, al. 2015). This new market is expanding as men started to understand the benefits of spas services and how consumptions affected their lifestyles (Kucukusta and Denizci Guillet, 2015, Mak et, al. 2009).

These men have deliberated on why and how they became interested with the spa's services. Sixteen factors that influenced them to consume spas services have been discussed in detail in previous chapters including wellness, new market, inspired by athlete, communications through internet, masculine, relaxing, they were supported to try new services. To keep abreast with current trends, to maintain healthy lifestyles, for hygienic purpose, self-pampering, package, therapists, aesthetic of spas, body image and intimate time with the partner.

The responses gathered from these men are in line with the marketing strategies that have been implemented by International Hotels. There are relations between marketing strategies such package, aesthetic of the spas, communications in promotion and therapists with men. The literature also showed that marketing strategy is the catalyst for this growing male spa goers (Cheung, 2012, Bodeker and Burford, 2010, Mak et, al 2009).

There are six marketing strategies that have significant impacts on influencing men's behaviours and preferences which resulting to three types of Malay men in Malaysia. The three types of men are traditional men, moderate men, and urban men (TMU). Current initiatives are still focusing on the standardisation of strategies that have been cost effective in Malaysia.

The findings of this study have shown that the common mistake such taking colours and language in promotions for granted, it causes failure in reaching potential men's consumers. In promoting spas services into new target consumers, marketers need to learn the colours that associated with men. Colours portrayed men's masculinity. Ignoring the cues that related to men and masculinity will somehow ended with the rejection to try the spas services even the benefits and advantages have been highlighted.

Some spas provider believed that enlightening health and fitness would combat this problem and assumed that these potential men were informed in order to influence them consuming spas services. There is an expectation to improve on this issue by learning the cues that related to men and highlight their masculinity. In fact, spas providers are working hard to educate their potential male consumers who are not only interested in knowing what the industry has to offer them, but also willing to alter their gender roles especially in Islamic cultures.

In chapter 2, the literature discussed on the new marketing is explored with emphasis on the changes from traditional promotion to new communication activities (AMA, 2013), allowing an ideal environment for the new male market to expand in the existing spa industry by introducing new services that can cater male spa goers (Mak et, al. 2009).

This research has shown that through effective marketing strategies, local cultures able to transform and create new subculture yet the values still intact. Successful promotion activities helped spas provider to prevent stereotypes towards male spa goers. The stereotype and judgement towards men who go to spas also. Previously, those men often felt doubtful to visit spas as spas always been associated with female space but now, we can see more men started to visit spas. (Chen et, al. 2013)

9.1 Suggestions for Further Study

This research attempted to fill the gap in literature knowledge and theory by exploring why men are interested in consuming spas consumptions and investigating how International Hotels implemented marketing strategies in influencing men in relation of gender behaviours and preferences towards spas consumptions.

Chapter 9 shows how the research contributed to extending this knowledge in that it proposes an original contribution by enhancing the knowledge of marketing strategies in influencing male consumers to alter gender roles and creating new subculture through spas provided by International Hotels in Malaysia, where knowledge is very limited.

The research findings contributed to theory by highlighting the new men types and gendered patterns of males' behaviour and preferences present within the spas industry. In terms of marketing strategies, this study presented that creative promotional activities could influence men's behaviour and preferences, allowing them to shape and construct their gender roles by conducting outstanding communications especially on new social media that emphasised on masculinity. Given that this research is still relatively new area, it would be interesting to see on how this research can be extended and to explore more in depth on how men construct their masculine identity through one of marketing exposure.

9.2 Limitations of the Research

Every research has its own limitations which this research is included. Efforts made were to ensure the minimum of limitations yet some as below:

- 1) To obtain the objective of this research, this research only focused on top managerial perspective. It can be included on consumers' perspectives to widen the views.
- 2) Due to budget and time constraints, this research only covers international hotels which operated in Malaysia. The interviews could cover from the origin of the International hotels to get clear pictures on the differences between local and international marketing strategy implementation.

In every hotel, only two to three managers have been interviewed. It could be best to integrate the views from the low managerial perspective as they are the one who have direct contact with the consumers. Despite of the limitations, this research has contributed to the existing literatures which been expressed in the next section.

9.3 Contributions to the Existing Literatures

This research adds contributions to the existing literatures on marketing, cultures and gender in several ways.

- 1) Most of the existing marketing literatures focusing on quantitative data with general findings based on the hypotheses which not much pay attentions on qualitative data.

- 2) Previous studies focused marketing strategies on industrial goods and the differences in implementing strategies for different industries yet very little focused on how the implications of marketing strategies able to change consumer preferences in relation of gender and ethnicities.
- 3) Besides, previous scholars highlighted that culture cannot be changed as it needs to be adapted yet this research shows that culture can change without breaking its values.
- 4) Then, the spas industries are not really been exposed and covered even the market is growing and making profits as spas tend to be associated with negative and unhealthy activities.
- 5) Large amount of research has focused on women consumers and feminism yet very little studies concern on men consumers. The men consumers of beauty products are increasing, and they are making contributions of the market profitability as well.
- 6) This research has found that in spas services, men have categories and different based on their beliefs and views.

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APPENDICES

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

LMPS Ethics Committee SUBMISSION FORM

This form is intended to enable you and the Committee to ensure that your proposed research is compliant with the relevant codes of practice and ethical guidelines. The University recognises its obligation to the wider research community and to society to uphold the integrity of academic research. The University also has a responsibility to ensure that the funds it receives are spent in accordance with the legitimate expectations of the funding providers and the law and in the public interest. The University formally endorses the [UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity \(2012\)](#).

Please ensure that you are familiar with the University's Code of Practice on Research Integrity and the University Data Management Policy as well as any relevant professional guidelines for your discipline (e.g. the Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association) or funding organisation (e.g. ESRC Framework for Research Ethics). Useful links include:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/policies/ethics-code/>

<https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/policies/research-code/>

<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/about-esrc/information/framework-for-research-ethics/>

<http://www.britisoc.co.uk/about/equality/statement-of-ethical-practice.aspx>

<http://www.york.ac.uk/recordsmanagement/dpa/>

<http://www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/information-directorate/information-policy/index/research-data-management-policy/>

Internet research may involve new and unfamiliar ethics questions and dilemmas. A good place to start is with the Association of Internet Researchers 2002 Guidelines and the BPS ‘Conducting Research on the Internet: Guidelines for ethics practice in psychological research online (2007)’.

Note: If you are collecting data from NHS patients or staff, or Social Service users or staff, you will need to apply for approval through the Integrated Research Application System (IRAS) at <https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/Signin.aspx> If you are a staff member please fill in the IRAS form NOT this one and send your completed IRAS form to ELMPS. Student applications for approval through IRAS should normally be pre-reviewed by department ethics committees or ELMPS.

Completed forms should be submitted by the advertised deadline as follows:

1. **one signed hard copy** (to Debbie Haverstock, Research Centre for the Social Sciences, University of York, 6 Innovation Close, York YO10 5ZF), and
2. **one electronic copy** (including attachments) combined into **ONE pdf file** (email to: elmeps-ethics-group@york.ac.uk).

Initial decisions will normally be made and communicated within two weeks of the Committee meeting.

SECTION 1 ABOUT YOU

1a. Please provide the following details about the principal investigator at YORK

Name of Applicant:	<u>Nurul Hayati Abdullah</u>
e-mail address:	<u>Na729@york.ac.uk</u>
Telephone:	07460383900
Staff/Student Status:	Full Time Student
Dept/Centre or Unit:	<u>The York Management School</u>
Head of Department:	<u>Professor Bob Doherty</u>
HoD e-mail address:	<u>bob.doherty@york.ac.uk</u>
Head of Research: (if applicable)	<u>Professor Bill Cooke</u>
HoR e-mail address: (if applicable)	<u>bill.cooke@york.ac.uk</u>
If you are a student, please provide details about your supervisor(s)	<p><u>Supervisor(s) Name:</u> 1) Prof. Teresa da Silva Lopes</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2) Dr. Carolyn Hunter</p> <p>e-mail address(es): <u>teresa.lopes@york.ac.uk</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">/ <u>carolyn.hunter@york.ac.uk</u></p>

1b. Any other applicants (for collaborative research projects) Expand as necessary

Name of Applicant:	<u>N/A</u>
e-mail address:	<u>N/A</u>
Telephone:	<u>N/A</u>
Staff/Student Status:	<u>N/A</u>
Dept/Centre or Unit:	<u>N/A</u>
Head of Department:	<u>N/A</u>
HoD e-mail address:	<u>N/A</u>
Head of Research: (if applicable)	<u>N/A</u>
HoR e-mail address: (if applicable)	

SECTION 2 ABOUT THE PROJECT

2.1 Details of Project

Title of Project:	A Study on The Implications of Powerful Marketing Strategy in Changing Local Culture in Malaysia
Date of Submission to ELMPS:	25/04/2016
Project Start Date:	01/01/ 2014
Duration:	4 years
Funded Yes/No:	Yes
Funding Source:	MARA Malaysia
External Ethics Board Jurisdictions (if any):	None

2.2 Aims and objectives of the research

Please outline the aims of your project and key research questions. Show briefly how existing research has informed the research proposal and explain what your research adds and how it addresses an area of importance.

This research will look at specific research questions about marketing strategy implemented by Multinational Companies not only changes consumer preferences but also local cultures. The aim of this research is to explore how marketing strategy able to change culture values in Malaysia without breaking its values and investigating the acculturation of roles of gender on Malays, Indian and Chinese consumer behaviour based on the implications of marketing mix strategies.

This research targets to address the gap in existing literature about the impacts of marketing strategy in spas businesses and tourism industry towards consumers preferences in related to gender's attitudes, beliefs and norms and add new knowledge about how international marketing strategies successfully transformed the roles of gender in Malaysia from Asian perspectives. This research also tries to scrutinize how Western cultures and practices embedded and been accepted in Islam country such in Malaysia.

Previously, spas services and space were related to feminine domain and beauty industry, but spas have endured evolution where spas services and space becoming important for health and wellness (Tsai et al., 2012; Mak et al., 2009).

The services of spas have been enjoyed and consumed not only by women spa goers but also there is a growth of men spa- goers in US, Europe and Asia (Chen et.al, 2013; Cheung, 2012; Tsai et al., 2012; Tawil, 2011).

Marketing has created a sphere of demands for men and this is reinforced by a change in the social roles of men in modern Malaysian society where increasing numbers of male spa goers which were once dominated by women (Yaman et al., 2012; Dahlan, Zakaria and Shamsudin, 2011).

As a result, the following research questions have emerged for this research:

Through creating and changing demand for male-spa-goers, do multinational companies alter local cultures in Malaysia, especially in relation to gender and ethnicity?

- 1) Is marketing strategy able to change local cultures without breaking traditional values in Malaysia?
- 2) What causes this change to happen and when and what instigated it??
- 3) How do multinational companies implement marketing strategies by taking account on standardisation and localisation of the particulars of culture, such as gender and ethnicity?

2.3 Methods of Data Collection

Provide a brief summary of the method(s) of the research making clear what it will involve for participants (e.g. interviews, observation, questionnaires). If you (or your research assistants) are meeting face-to-face with research participants, specify *where* you will be meeting them (and you will need to address how any risks associated with this will be managed in Section 2.10)

The aim of this research is to investigate on how international marketing strategies have been implemented within this industry through interviewing top level managements in International Hotels, various stakeholders involved in providing different types of wellness spas in International Hotels, members of Malaysia Spas Society, and officers of Ministry of Tourism.

This research will undertake a qualitative approach to achieve those research questions. Semi-structured interviews are designated for primary data and it will be done face-to-face with the interviewee(s). The interview will take place in the organisation's office or in the spa spaces or in any public space that convenient to the participant. During the interview process which is estimated to last for one to two hours long, the researcher will conduct an audio recording, and pen and paper (for drawing purpose) to get more information from the interviewee(s). Prior to each interview, the researcher will ask permission from the respondent to record the interview. If the respondent refuses to be recorded, the researcher will take detailed notes during the interview process.

Blog platforms (hotels website, tourism ministry website and spas association website) will be used for secondary data and no specific consent forms needed as they are widely open to the public. Marketing, culture, and gender themes can be emerged regarding the respondent's information, drawn out from the interviews.

2.4 Sampling and Recruitment of participants

How many participants will take part in the research? How will they be identified – describe your *sampling* method. How will they be invited to take part in the study – describe your *recruitment* method. If research participants are to receive any payments, reimbursement of expenses or any other incentives or benefits for taking part in the research please give details, indicating what and how much they will receive and the basis on which this was decided.

The number of participants expected to participate in this research is around 30 to 40 people. It consists of top level managers, stakeholders, tourism ministry employees and Malaysian spas association members. Although the number of participant is relatively small, in qualitative research, the important is not on the number of cases that social researchers can collect but how much and deep the information of social researchers can study, how the information will be studied and how significant the information collected to particular research question (Ragin and Amoroso, 2011). According to Saunders et al. (2012), the appropriate number of participants for heterogeneous population is around 20 to 30 people.

The participants that are expected to be able to provide in-depth explanations on how marketing strategy not only able to change consumer preferences, but also local cultures values are those who are directly experienced with the strategy, businesses, consumers and industry. Thus, the targeted participants in the international hotels that based on star ratings given by Ministry of Tourism Malaysia in Peninsular Malaysia will be selected together with the members of spas association and tourism ministry employees. Snowballing technique will be used to access further participants.

The potential participants will be sent invitation letters by email to take part in the research. Attached to each invitation letter are the information sheet and informed consent form (both are in English as English is a second language in Malaysia and potential participants are people who work in professional areas and are expected to speak fluent English, however for any precaution, both information sheet and informed consent will also be provided in Malay version). Both information sheet and informed consent form will allow every participant to read and understand the research objectives and the process of the data collection beforehand. The consent form indicates the participant's willingness to participate in the study, the nature of their participation such voluntary and withdrawn at any time, how the information will be treated (confidentially and anonymously), and the safeguard of the data. The participants will be asked to complete, sign, date and return the informed consent prior taking part in the research. In case any participant who does not want to sign the consent forms, I will discard the interview data and will not be included in data analysis.

2.5 'Vulnerable' Participants

Please indicate whether any research participants will be from the following groups; if so, please explain the justification for their inclusion. In most cases, researchers working with vulnerable people will need to be registered with ISA (www.isa.homeoffice.gov.uk) which has links with the CRB. The CRB offers organisations a means to check the background of researchers to ensure that they do not have a history that would make them unsuitable for work involving children and vulnerable adults.

NB: If you are collecting data from NHS patients or staff, or Social Service users or staff, you will need to apply for approval through the Integrated Research Application System (IRAS).

Children under 18	No
Those with learning disability	No
Those who are severely ill or have a terminal illness	No
Those in emergency situations	No
Those with mental illness (particularly if detained under Mental Health Legislation)	No
People with dementia	No
Prisoners	No
Young offenders	No
Adults who are unable to consent for themselves	No
Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or gatekeeper, e.g. those in care homes	No
Other vulnerable groups (please specify) – discuss the issues this raises	No

If yes to any of the above, do you have Criminal Records Bureau Clearance? Yes/No

Describe the procedures you are using to gain (a) consent and/or (b) proxy consent if applicable

2.6. 'Sensitive' topics

During your study, will anyone discuss sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity)? If so, please give details of the procedures in place to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered

to participants. Consider, too, the risks this may pose to the researcher. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities.

2.7 Covert research

If the research involves covert data gathering or deception of any kind, please explain and justify the deception. Specify what procedures (if any) will be used to debrief

participants after the data have been collected.

2.8 Informed Consent

Please attach (1) the project information sheet to be given to all participants and (2) the informed consent form. (It is recognised that in some cases these may be combined into a single document). (It is recognised that in some cases these may be combined into a single document). In line with the University's Code of Practice on Research Integrity, participants and/or their representatives should be provided with details of a first point of contact through which any concerns can be raised: this should be your Head of Department (or if you are a Head then the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research).

i. If you are not seeking informed consent...

It is usually the case that informed consent is required for research with human participants. If you do NOT intend to seek informed consent, please explain carefully why you believe this is not necessary for your project. You should explain this with reference to the research ethics guidelines for your discipline and cite other recent published research using your methodological approach or ethics discussions about this to support your case.

ii. Please confirm you have included the project information sheet to be given to all participants with your submission to ELMPS. If these have not been attached, please explain why this is the case.

Yes, please see attached.

iii. Please confirm you have included all the relevant informed consent forms. If these have not been attached, please explain why this is the case.

Yes, please see attached.

iv. Are the results to be given as feedback or disseminated to your participants (if yes please specify when, in what form, and by what means). If no, why not?

If requested by the participants, a summary of the findings will be provided through email after the study has been completed and any part which the participants would not like to be included will be removed.

2.9 Anonymity

In most instances the Committee expects that anonymity will be offered to research participants. Please set out how you intend to ensure anonymity. If anonymity is not being offered, please explain why this is the case. Note that if anonymity is not offered (or cannot be guaranteed) this has implications you must address in relation to the Data Protection Act (see Section 3 below). Note: if you are using a transcriber or translator you must have a signed confidentiality agreement with them.

Because qualitative methods will be used, the study will be carefully to anonymise any details which might identify individuals. Name of hotels, company and individuals will be kept anonymised. It will be stated in the invitation letter, information sheet and informed consent form.

To ensure anonymity, the researcher will remove personal identities including names from all data files and will replace with anonymous IDs such code names or numbers to all data. The researcher will store the IDs separately from the data file, in locked drawer (for hard copies) and in computer with protected password (for soft copies) which can only be accessed by the researcher. All efforts will be made to ensure anonymity in this research.

2.10 Anticipated Risks or Ethical Problems

Please outline any anticipated risks or ethical problems that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the university, and the steps that will be taken to address them. (Note: all research involving human participants can have adverse effects.) Please also refer to the **University's Health, Safety and Welfare Policy Statement and associated Management Procedures**, as well as to any ethical guidelines you have consulted. **Where relevant, risk assessments should be carried out not only in relation to the researchers themselves, but also for those participating in the project or affected by its conduct, and in relation to any impact on the environment. Researchers should ensure that appropriate insurance is in place, liaising with the University's Insurance Officer as necessary (via standard departmental procedures where these exist).**

i. Risks to participants (e.g. emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information...)

The perceived risks to participants will be minor. The participants may be reluctant to disclose information on their successful marketing strategies due to competitive marketplace. Measures will be taken for sensitivity subjects and the option for the participant to withdraw at any time. Review of transcripts by every participant will also provide an opportunity to remove any sensitive information which is not suitable for the public domain.

ii. Risks to researchers (e.g. personal safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest...)

Concerning the personal safety as I am a woman researcher and the interview will be face to face method where there is gender segregation in society, precautions will be taken to conduct interviews in safe locations, in public and with other persons knowing their whereabouts at all times. These places that I am going for my fieldwork (Peninsular Malaysia) are safe and there have not been any incident which means there are no risks created for me to visit the place. My husband will drive me to the place where the interview will take place hence the risks to the researcher will also be minor. There are no conflicts of interest for researcher.

iii. University/institutional risks (e.g. adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection...)

There is not any perceived university or institutional risk.

iv. Financial conflicts of interest (e.g. perceived or actual with respect to direct payments, research funding, indirect sponsorship, board or organisational memberships, past associations, future potential benefits, other...)

None. This study is funded by Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) Malaysia. Apart from the requirement for the scholarship awardees to provide satisfactory academic achievements and reports, there is no perceived involvement from the sponsorship in the subjects, the process involved in the research and how the awardees completing their studies. The choice of the research topic as well as how this research is conducted solely becomes the responsibility of the researcher.

2.11 Research outside the UK

If you are planning research overseas, you should also take account of the ethical standards and processes of the country/countries in question as well as those of the University. If the research is being conducted outside the UK, please specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK. Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which you are conducting research, for example, particular cultural sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants.

This research will be undertaken in Malaysia. The researcher has been taken care to meet the expectations of Malaysia's guidelines (<http://www.epu.gov.my>) for responsible and ethical conducts such as adequate funds for the duration of the research in Malaysia, the researcher is not permitted to make press statements or release any information to the media and under no circumstances is the researcher allowed to discuss policy matters with the media.

SECTION 3: DATA PROTECTION

Please ensure you have read the information on data protection at:
<http://www.york.ac.uk/recordsmanagement/dpa/> before you complete this section

3.1 Does your project involve personal data (as defined by the Data Protection Act):
Yes/No. If yes, please provide a description of the data and explain why you need to collect this data.

No

3.2 Does it involve sensitive personal data (as defined by the Data Protection Act) :
Yes/No. If yes, please provide a description of the data:

No

3.3 If the research will involve any of the following activities, please indicate so and provide further details. Explain how this will be conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act (and/or any international equivalent)

Electronic transfer of data in any form	Audio recording (MP3), A4 Paper (for drawing purpose), Personal Diary (detailed notes), Transcription (Microsoft word), Encrypted USB Stick
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Sharing of data with others at University of York	My supervisors (Professor Teresa da Silva Lopes and Dr. Carolyn Hunter)
Sharing of data with other organisations	No
Export of data outside the European Union or importing of data from outside the UK	Yes, my data will be from Malaysia and will be translated in English.
Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers	Yes, I am using Malaysian telco number for phone calls and SMS as a medium to be contacted in Malaysia.
Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals	No
Use of audio/visual recording devices	Yes (Digital voice recorder)
Use of data management system (e.g. nvivo, ATLAS.ti)	Nvivo
Data archiving	No

3.4. If the research will involve storing personal data on any one of the following please indicate so and provide further details.

Manual files (i.e. in paper form)	Yes. As this research will conduct pen and paper to draw as well as detailed notes, there will be manual files in paper forms. These files are ensured to be kept in safe in lockable drawer signed for each PhD student at The York Management School.	
University computers	The digital recording will be shared from the researcher laptop to university computers safely.	Password protected Y/N Encrypted Y/N
Private company computers	No	Password protected Y/N Encrypted Y/N
Home or other personal computers	No	Password protected Y/N Encrypted Y/N
Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks	Digital recording will be transferred to the researcher's laptop drive and will be stored safely.	Password protected Y/N Encrypted Y/N
Websites	No	Password protected Y/N Encrypted Y/N

Other	No	Password protected Y/N Encrypted Y/N
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3.5 Please explain the measures in place to ensure data confidentiality, including details of encryption and anonymisation.

Each university's computer provided by department needs a password for students to use it. Thus, the data shared and stored in university computers only can be accessed from the researcher. Those data transferred to the personal laptop only can be accessible by the researcher and the laptop has secured password to enter. Handwritten notes from the interviews, transcripts of interviews and any photocopies or hardcopy that are obtained from the data collection will be stored in lockable drawer assigned for the sole use of the researcher.

3.6 Please detail all who will have access to the data generated by the study.

The data generated by the study only accessible by the researcher, supervisors and examiners.

3.7 Please detail who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the study.

The researcher only.

3.8 Please give details of data storage arrangements, including where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why. Note the university policy that ,Where possible, relevant elements of

research data must be deposited in an appropriate national or international subject-based repository, according to their policies. Data should be kept by the researcher in an appropriate manner when suitable subject repositories are not available.”

<http://www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/information-directorate/information-policy/index/research-data-management-policy/#tab-1>

Digital data will be stored in personal laptop and shared to department’s computer with protected password. Only authorised person (the researcher) can access the protected password computer. All data in hardcopies or photocopies will be kept in the drawer. The drawer is located in PhD room and accessible only via authorised magnetic card. The key to the drawer is kept with the researcher at all times.

Data, both digital and paper will be kept for 10 years. At that point, data may be destroyed if it is no longer in use.

SECTION 4 SIGNED UNDERTAKING

In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research project will meet the University's Code of Practice on Research Integrity <https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/policies/research-code/>.

..... (Signed Lead Researcher/Principal Investigator)

..... (Date)

..... (Signed Supervisor (where relevant))

..... (Date)

Submission Checklist for Applicants

end one **signed hard copy** to Debbie Haverstock, Research Centre for the Social Sciences, University of York, 6 Innovation Close, York YO10 5ZF), and **one electronic copy** (including attachments) in **one pdf file** to: elmps-ethics-group@york.ac.uk



MPS Application form



Consent form for
participants



Formation Sheet for
participants



MPS Compliance form

The York Management School

A study on The Implications of Marketing Strategy in Changing Local Cultures in Malaysia

PARTICIPANT’S CONSENT FORM

This form is for you to state whether or not you agree to take part in the study. Please read and answer every question. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
I agree to take part in the study.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. In addition, I have the right to request the sessions to be stopped and withdraw from the research at any time and have the information withdrawn as well, without giving any reason and without any detriment to myself and my organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I confirm that I have read and clearly understand the information sheet for this research and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that the interview will be audio-taped. I can request a copy of the	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

recording or the transcript of the interview (you may take part in the study without agreeing to this part).		
I understand that the information collected is only accessible to the researcher and via translation to her research supervisors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am aware that the information collected in this study will be used to write up a PhD thesis, publications, or presented in academic conferences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the information I provide will be held in confidence and will be treated anonymously by the researcher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am aware that I have a right to be informed of the outcome of the research via a report summary, and/or be informed of any future publications.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Participant:

Date:

Signature:

Researcher:

Nurul Hayati
Abdullah

Date:

Signature:

The York Management School

A Study on The Implications of Marketing Strategy in Changing Local Cultures in Malaysia

Researchers: Nurul Hayati Abdullah, Doctoral Researcher at the University of York, UK

Information Sheet for Participants

You are invited to participate in a study on the implications of marketing strategy in changing the local cultures in Malaysia. Before you decide to participate or not in this study, we recommend that you understand the purpose of this study and the processes that will be involved by the participants. You are requested to read the following information thoroughly. If you need further information, you can contact the researcher via email or phone listed below.

What is this project about?

Despite global economic turbulence and subprime crisis in 2008, revenue results for the global spa industry were surprisingly increased up to 8.5% from expected in a year. This includes the spa industry in Malaysia which has endured with significant growth for the past seven years. In 2011, the spa industry has contributed revenue to RM20.7 million (approximately £ 3.76 million) to Gross National Income (GNI) and was targeted to generate RM830 million (approximately £151 million) in 2020 (Malaysia Performance Management and Delivery Unit, 2012). The spa industry in Malaysia has been progressed for more than 200% since then and International hotels have created more demand for spa (Jamin et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, the requirements for the spa industry is to stay abreast with the trends shifting away from being beauty spas to the rise of modern spas, especially hotel-based and wellness spas, and

changes in spa consumers include gender roles, and services and products preferences. More than 70% of global spas offer services aimed for men. In Malaysia, a study suggesting men has become the dominant sex using spa facilities with 59% of male spa goers despite previous cultural stereotype. Therefore, this research would like to investigate on how Multinational Companies (MNCs) offering spa services market their businesses to men. In addition, this study aims to analyse on how marketing strategy has altered consumer behaviours and local cultures, and to investigate the impact of appropriate marketing strategy in influencing men to use spas' services.

This research project asks the following research questions:

Through creating and changing demand for male-spa-goers, do multinational companies alter local cultures in Malaysia, especially in relation to gender and ethnicity?

- 1) *Are marketing strategies able to change local cultures without breaking traditional values in Malaysia?*
- 2) *What causes this change to happen and when and what instigated it??*
- 3) *How do multinational companies implement marketing strategies by taking account of standardisation and localisation of the particulars of culture, such as gender and ethnicity?*

Your role as a participant

This research will ask the participant to take part in a semi-structured interview which will take approximately one hour. The researcher will visit the office or spas location to conduct an interview at a date and time that would best suit the participant. During the interview, the researcher will ask participant to record the interview session. If the participant does not agree to be recorded, the researcher will take detailed notes during the interview session. After the interview, each participant will be sent a copy of the transcript and at that stage may raise any concerns they have about the

transcript to the researcher. A brief report will be given to all participants at the end of the study summarizing the findings.

Possible benefits

By taking part with this research project, you will have opportunities to share views and information on the past, current and expected trends of the spa industry in Malaysia in relation to marketing strategy. It is expected that the findings from the interviews will be of great value and knowledge in understanding about the spa industry and help to understand the behaviours, the evolution of gender roles and preferences of men in spas marketplace. At the same time, it will develop insight on whether the role of marketing strategy gives positive impacts in Malaysia local cultures. It also helps Malaysia tourism ministry in expanding health and tourism industries which spas are part of it, as proposed in Malaysia Tourism National Key Economic Areas (NKEA).

Confidentiality and anonymity

All information which is gathered in the project will be anonymized. There are few risks attached to the research as raw data is confidential and only available to the researcher and her research panel(s). The research Panel Committee entails of two supervisors and the other internal panel member from the university. All efforts will be made to keep the data anonymised in the thesis and future publications. If you have any concerns about information which might be a potential risk, please raise it with the researcher to make her aware of your concerns.

Participation in the interview is completely voluntary, and should you wish to withdraw your participation at any time, and then please inform the researcher who will do so where feasible. If you wish

to withdraw from the study during the interview, please inform the researcher who will delete the interview.

Further information

Should you have any queries about this research or would like to get in touch with me, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher; Nurul Hayati Abdullah at the address below. For any further concerns, you can contact her supervisors; (1) Professor Teresa Da Silva Lopes at teresa.lopes@york.ac.uk and (2) Dr. Carolyn Hunter at carolyn.hunter@york.ac.uk.

Thank you for your time.

Nurul Hayati Abdullah

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Thank you for participating in my research project.

Compliance Declaration

This declaration must be returned, fully completed, along with each submission made to ELMPS.

On completion, please return **two copies** of this form: one by email to elmps-ethics-group@york.ac.uk, and a second, hard-copy, **signed by the Applicant, the Applicant's Head of Department, and – if applicable – the Applicant's PhD Supervisor.**

Those making a resubmission **must also complete section 6, on page 3.**

Return Address: Prof Celia Kitzinger, c/o Debbie Haverstock, ReCSS, 6 Innovation Close, University of York YO10 5ZF.

1. The Applicant:

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Position: PhD Student
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Head of Department: Professor Bob Doherty

3. The Project:

Project Title: The Implications of Powerful Marketing Strategy in Changing
Local Culture in Malaysia

How is the project funded? Self-Funded External Funder

4. Other Jurisdictions:

Please indicate whether your proposal has been considered by any other bodies:

External Sponsor

Another University of York Ethics Committee NHS Research Ethics Committee

5. Declaration:

I confirm that I have read and understood:

the ELMPS guidelines on consent; and

the ELMPS information sheets for researchers working with human subjects; and

the University of York data protection guidelines.

Signature of applicant:

(Type name if submitting electronically)

Date:

I confirm that the applicant and myself have read and understood the ELMPS guidelines on Consent and Data Protection)

Signature of Research Supervisor (if appropriate): (Type name if submitting electronically)

Date:

Signature of Head of Research Centre or Head of Department: (Type name if submitting electronically)

Date:

6. Additional Declaration for Resubmissions:

I have read and understood the ELMPS response to the initial application and consider that the attached response deals appropriately with its recommendations.

Signature of applicant:

Date:

Please attach an additional sheet/file with a point-by-point response to the recommendations issued by ELMPS.

I have read and understood the ELMPS response to the initial application and consider that the attached response deals appropriately with its recommendations.

Signature of Research Supervisor (if appropriate):

Date:

I have read and understood the ELMPS response to the initial application and consider that the attached response deals appropriately with its recommendations.

Signature of Head of Research Centre or Head of Department:

Date:

Interview Transcription (1)

MR. H/KL

N: First of all, I would like to know about the Mandara spa in overall. Where it comes from, is it owned by the hotel?

H: ok initially Mandara spa was started by two partners from Bali. Then they started with the concept of tropical spa and the resort of couple swiss kind of stuffs. So later on, when they wanted to expand the business in international investors into the business that was Steiner Leisure from UK. Steiner Leisure Company is basically owned the Mandara spa right now.

N: owh ok that's from UK?

H: No, it was started from Bali, from Indonesia, N: But now?

H: then, it is a shareholder, right now 100 percent under steiner leisure. And this steiner, the company is not only the Mandara spas that they owned, they also owned lots of different business, a part of Mandara is shawana spa, these elemis products which international elemis products that you can see display over there, and they owned steiner cruises. So, there is lots of different business, that is what on steiner basically. So, when they involved in the international --- there was 50 percent of shareholders was steiner and 50 percents was from Japanese company shareholder. In 2000, the company shareholder now is Steiner from UK, so they owned the 100 percent shareholder of Mandara spa. But still the concept is same which still, remain the same concept only the investor changed, the company changed, so still the balinese concept, so one of the company missions was when we open the spa, we bring the Indonesia culture to you.

N: Wow

H: so, it does not really matter who's the owner but the concept never change. Exactly the same one.

N: Why it never change?

H: see, you are not buying the company shareholder to change the concept. Whatever the concept---
Mandara is popular with its balinese concept and balinese culture.

N: ok

H: That is why Mandara is famous. So, wherever we go, we represent balinese culture, and all in Malaysia, we don't have balinese therapist. Back in 2009, we used to have 14 therapists from Indonesia but somehow the reason from Malaysia is very difficult for Indonesia to get visa from Malaysia. It is extremely difficult now. So, what we did, we started recruiting the local people only from Malaysia. But all we have now around 43 to 44 spas in 13 countries, all over the world, and are all in balinese stuffs. The big training centre in Bali, with the 9 trainers and HR in Bali, our head office in Bali and all the products and everything, the team of the products, all the interior designs and all comes from Bali.

N: So, all the decisions made in Bali?

H: well, I cannot say, you can say that but our ceo in UK now, and we have regional vice president, he is over here in Malaysia. So, he is taking care of all the things. So, our teams are all over the places, but the project manager is here, but the team from you can say the packaging, the distribution, and all the materials, all comes from Bali. They get it from Bali only.

N: so is that for packaging---(pull stop due to having introduction for wet towel). ok thank you. This is for?

H: this is for your face and for your hands, the refreshing cold towel.

N: So basically, packaging and materials are from Bali? Is it customised to local market or it is standardised all over the places?

H: Yes, they are from Bali. It is standardised for all. N: why it is standardised?

H: the thing is over here to run a smooth operation, to run a standardise spa, you must have standardise collectroll (?), standardise massage sequence; you need to have p and p for everything. Is not we are using this in renaissance, and you go, we are big spa in Malaysia, you go Sheraton and use different, then is not the Mandara spa, it is not the company, it is individual? But when we owned the company, it does not matter we have 100 spas or one spa, all the spas must have same collectroll, same products, same sequence, that is why when you go anywhere in Mandara, you will feel yes I'm in Mandara. You go to UK, you go to Mauritius, you come to Malaysia, you go to Maldives, you will be in Mandara, you'll feel Mandara.

N: how about the adaptation? Like it makes like 50 percent local styles?

H: not really, we have everything in standardise. All the treatments sequences and all products and all the things, all the p&p for products and the things, all in standardise. And is easier sometimes to run the business when you have standard in everything. Otherwise tomorrow your therapist will change, you don't know what to do. So, what we have is one therapist (pull stop due to having a tea).

N: the smell is good. This is what tea? H: this is a cold ginger tea.

N: so basically, this is for what?

H: this cold ginger tea basically has lots of health benefits. Ginger basically knowns to stimulate your blood and body temperatures, is good for your digestive systems.

N: is it the towel comes with its own smells?

H: it has peppermint and more refreshing and when you walk to the spa, you are tired, and your journey is start with the welcome drinks. So, every customer who comes to the spa gets cold towel and cold ginger tea, so this is basically your experience starts with the welcome drink. And before different kind of massages they will choose oils for them. They have different scrubs and oils and usually they will come 15 minutes earlier before the spa treatments. We will explain about the products, and what we offer, by the time your treatment is about to start, and your therapist will bring drinks for your treatments. And they will show the changing room. Is everything in all Mandara spas will do the same way.

N: Mandara has branch in Mangelan

H: Mangelan has a very nice spa; we have two in KK, three in Kuala Lumpur. And we have one in club med, and one in Miri and one in Mulu.

N: why it is here? Why you chose this location? Why in renaissance?

H: first of all, we are a company which is the first spa runs in five star hotels. Renaissance is one of the biggest hotels in Kuala Lumpur. Not many people are lucky enough to get the contract in Marriott property. So, when we got contract in Marriott, we are in Mulu Marriott, we are in Miri Marriott and this is under the Marriott also, and this is the intrusion brand-chain. Having a contract with them is an honoured to work with them. So, they don't really question why we should not be or why we should. The main thing product is, we will look at the hotel's standards before we open the spa. We do not simply open the spa. And secondly the boss job is to generate profits and making the money. Having it the rooms inside the hotel in two wings, the biggest in KL, why not? You should ask them why they chose us. They will tell you why they chose us. More or less, it is because we have a good relationship with marriott. Somehow that what we have possessed, the mutual understanding between renaissance and Mandara.

N: I think, when you asked me why they chose Mandara, as I've been to Mangelan, because it is about the brand.

H: yes, it is a brand for the hotels, they told us that they want to operate the spas, so when they approaching us, they know we are Mandara spa, and of course when we came in, we have to set our own standards and kind of things in their place. Did you visit Mandara spa in Mangelan, right?

N: Yes. So how do you see the important of the spas in the hotels? Do you think that the other international hotels should have spas?

H: Yes. You know right that the five stars hotels cannot be five star hotels if they do not have spas? It becomes a requirement to standardise the five stars hotels. If you do not have the spas in the hotel, you cannot be called as five stars. So, this is basically the top priorities of hotels to have a spa. Long before, it is not a requirement. You do not need to have spas or fitness centre to be five stars. But nowadays, it changes tremendously. Every five stars must have and operate the spas. But then, most of the stars for example for seasons, six censuses, they have their own spas brand. They operated their own spas. We were the only internship company in Malaysia that got contract with the five star hotels. Before the four seasons came in, six censuses came in operating their own spas villages on top of their specialities, they still have to put the spas standard. They have to really maintain the quality of the spas, products and standard of services. And the most important thing is the quality of the treatments and your staffs.

N: which one is the most important for you?

H: Staffs are important. We told them how you are going to operate the business if you do not have staffs? At the end of the day, as a company, our big bosses are not coming down to the spas. I do not know anybody from the Steiner. They are sitting over the right? Who makes different in the business? It is employees. They are the bottom-line of therapists. They are the ones who delivering the services.

They are the ones who give the impact to the guests. They communicate with the guest. They are representing us. So, if they are not good, then it does not make any sense. And that space like this, normally we do operating in five star hotels, people stayed for two nights, seven nights, even in club med, guests stayed for three weeks, they will come ten times for massages, and they bought different types of therapies, just imagine in three weeks' time they came, they had same type of massages with different therapists, they will complain about the therapists. They said, one was good, one was not. Everybody is different. But when it comes to Mandara, no matter how many therapists you have tried same sequence of massages, same techniques, same products, same of doing it. You cannot justify what is the different.

N: How about the touch? Because every therapist has its own touch.

H: that is the pro and cons of somebody because somebody got one smiling personality, the way they are attracting with the people. But that you can put in category of very pleasant process. But when it comes to the technique, you cannot say not it was not the same. You could have the stronger pressure if you asked for it, but it does not go with the technique because the strong pressure goes on my strength.

N: so, the techniques are all standardise?

H: Yes, they are all go to the treatments' training in the same academy, and they have to follow with the same P&P which is procedure and policy in each of treatment and every sequence. What treatments should have been done, how it will be done, what products should be used, and the quantity and the step by step of what to do, even the ballocks we teach to them. And during the training, they will practice, they will do the role play and all. After the training, they all have to go through the trial process, where we invite customers to get free trial, and these therapists will get the feedbacks from the customers. And then they have to go to the exams. If somebody did not pass the exams, they have to re-sit it again and the training will be a bit longer. Once they passed the exams, they will be given a score sheet. For example, this therapist got

88% something like that. There are strengths and weaknesses for them. So when this person (therapist) goes to the spa, the report also will go to the spa, and they will get the results such this person is good at this but time management is not good, touch is just ok, so the manager of the spas will follow with the feedbacks. Then, we do have the refresher training all the times. So, if somebody got a complaint and so, they would send back to the training centre. During the refresher training, the trainers will check again. I have seen the therapists who have been working for 3 to 4 years, during the refresher training, they were failed. So, they to work on it again. Because when you are in the flow, and you missed few strokes, you will get complaint.

N: But the course, it will be charged?

H: we do not charge any course to the therapists. Only one academy around the world which is Mandara academy that gives free training plus allowances. We give training allowances and 100% job guaranteed.

N: so, if they failed, it would incur the cost.

H: For us, if they failed, no problem. For us, we need to put them on certain level, so we keep give them training. If somebody is not really able to maintain it, we might ask that person to leave. Because when we hired people, like if you have master's degree, we will not hire you. We just hired people those who really have a basic skill, not very high education. Mostly are village people. They need the job to support their family. We will invite the family to the spas and show them the spas environment and how they will work. We always connect with the family members, to make them really feel like this is the place that they really want to work. You know that this is very sensitive profession? You maybe end up in the —wrong spall. It is very surprised when the therapist's family called me directly, and told me —I have this problem, can you do this and this for me?!. Is totally fine as we do not really make a gap like; I do not want to talk with your parents. Like during their graduation, we will call their parents, we put the big set

up such as launch and refreshments. I've met with all the family members, and I'm ensuring them that I will take care of my people when they come to KL to work with us. You will be surprised because we have few of staffs who work more than twenty years already. In Malaysia, we have lots of staffs and therapists who have been working with us more than 10 years. We have our manager who works for 15 years, me myself already 8 years, the reception manager here works for more than 10 years, you go to the office downstairs, the office manager works for 6 years, if you go to the Sheraton, one of the therapist works over 10 years. So, we have lots of staffs who are working more than 10 years. And once you joined Mandara, you will feel the family feeling. Is normal here and it is a wonderful experience working here. Most of the bosses work between 10 to 15 years. Nobody changed. Only if somebody got married and they cannot work and need to stay at home then they will leave. What I am trying to say here is we do keep our staffs for a long time, and we do take care of them and their emotions sanctuary. We not only work on spas but also taking care of our staffs. And that is what important right now. We are not the highest paying in the market. But our turnover in spas is very less. We can tell you that in a year we like only one resignation where the contract of the staff ended, and he does not want to continue with the new contract. Mostly, everybody will stay. Ok you got married, you are from KK, we will transfer you back to KK instead of working in KL. If you are from KK, you are young and you want to expose with new environment, we also can offer you to work in KL or in Sunway or you can go to Club Med and then you can go back to KK. That happens a lot.

N: So, the relocation can be happened?

H: yes. But that does not happen very often. Even in the development process, you are working as assistant manager, you need to work with the manager, you will see different style of operations in KL, you go to the Club Med, Mulu, Miri, it will be different style of operations. If you are good, you also can go to the Maldives. We also have spas in Maldives like 9,10 spas in . For me, this is fourth time I have been to

Maldives, even I looked up for Malaysia's operations. So, we do have such great opportunities to develop within the company, at different level, different positions. We basically give people chances to do something which they are interested, very often.

N: Do you do any market research before offer or introduce spa services?

H: I can assure you that it has been done very nicely. Before we come to Malaysia, before we come to Renaissance, normally, even until now, whatever on the menu and pricing, we do not simply do it roughly. We did the survey around the market. Pricing is very compelling to the others.

N: Is it affordable for customers?

H: Yes of course. RM195 for 50 minutes treatments is really affordable. It is not a big price. We have not really increased our price for many years.

N: OK. Do you have any segmentation or target market for your customers? Like, you have different groups, or different segment?

H: Well, basically happens here; over 89% of guests are in-house consumers. We have different races of guests such as Chinese, Japanese, French, Malaysians. So, the market is different. French people prefer longest services. Over here we have lots of airlines crews' group. They stayed 2-3 nights. We offer them 30% discounts. Every month we have more than hundreds of airlines crews' group. So, we have different target market. If we target airlines group, we give them discounts, for French we give extra times and longer division packages for the treatments. More treatments in one package usually will be higher price. Like we have 5 hours with 10 treatments. So, we have different kind of market. I cannot say that this spa only design for Malaysian market only. It is for everybody. Local guests will find the price is quite expensive, but the others will find it is fine. Is not for particular market but only for KL spa as we talked about KL spa. We have done few things for local market, which we also focusing for local

Malaysians also. We have given them offers through Groupons for example a treatment with the price of RM49. From Groupons, we got lots of local Malaysians customers. For foreign market, we allied with travel agents, put menu in the hotels room so that when the guests checked in, they can see about our services. For in-house guests, they will get discount upon arrival. Then we promote through hotel's website and also our own website. And then through the hotel's TV which on the display screen. We do not really promote discounts in this hotel. We just promote services that we have the spas. When people see the spas, they will come in then we will introduce about the packages and discounts.

N: How about the gender preferences? Do you have like particular gender preferences like female and male services or treatments?

H: Yes, but mostly couples come to the Mandara spas. The highest customers will be couples. I can say if individually it will be 60/40. 60% female and 40% male. Only Sheraton hotel has more men customers which is 65% of them are men. Because that place has fitness centre and big steam sauna and jacuzzi and lots of guests come for the fitness purposes. The spas in Sheraton is inside the fitness centre and connected to the GYM. The rest is pretty similar with the spas in Renaissance. What we used here in Renaissance, we also used in Sheraton.

N: How about the marketing strategy for Renaissance and Sheraton? Because they are two different brands?

H: I am the one who does the marketing strategy for Mandara spas. We do not have marketing team or HR in Malaysia. So, all the marketing stuffs come from me and i will basically work with all the different strategies, contracts, and so on.

N: So, Sheraton has more males because its fitness centre?

H: Renaissance also has fitness centre, but it is outside the spas. But in Sheraton, spas is part of the fitness centre. When you go to the spa's entrance in Sheraton, you will see the fitness centre and gyms inside which closed to each other. So, they have more males as their customers.

N: The males will use spas services after the fitness training?

H: Yes. And we do have discounts for the fitness members. Even in Renaissance, the fitness members will get discounts which after their training, they can get the spas services at discounted rate. In Sheraton, that place has lots of businesspeople and travellers and also for conferences people, they usually seek for steam and jacuzzi treatments. As after the meeting you end up staying in the hotels and look for the spa's treatments.

N: So, can you explain about the different types of services that they consumed for the couples, for the males and females' consumers? What they usually look after?

H: Usually I will give them the menu. There are packages in the menu that they can choose according to their own preferences. For example, one package that includes scrub, facials, bath and steam, the longer treatments for two to two hours plus. For couple, we have couple honeymoon packages that have longer treatments overnights. If for business travellers, they just want to go for quick massages, most popular massage will be Bali massage for 15 to 18 minutes. Or if they are beauty concern consumers, they will go for Elemis treatments and products as it has collagens and anti-aging special treatments. If they are looking for tightening skin, we have it also, and if they are looking for the brightening skin treatments, we also provide it for them. Many consumers are concern on the beauty so they will go for beauty treatments. And some only want for the scrub treatments because they know that we provide the best scrubs products during the treatments. We also have mani and pedicure and skin IQ which is designated for people who are travelling a lot.

N: Do men consume this service as well?

H: Yes of course. Skin IQ is the best treatments for men. That is really fantastic treatments, trust me! There are varieties of treatments under skin IQ such scars recovering. It has complete recovering treatments that takes two hours per session. They also like foot massage. For example, they will take mix treatments such as 15 minutes foot massage and after that go for facial treatments. Then for couple, usually men will go for foot and Bali massage for 18 minutes, and women will go for facial for 18 minutes. That is pure and natural facial that used cucumber, carrots and yoghurts. 100% natural products. So that is one of the facials given even for pregnant people.

N: How important, erm because i am focusing on males spa-goers, so how important is male consumers? Do you think that nowadays, they are equally important as female consumers?

H: Yes. Definitely.

N: Previously, i know that this place is related to female domain.

H: I can tell you about my experience. Males never make fussy. They are easy and straightforward. You just tell them the exact benefits and why they need to consume the services, they just will go for it. You do not need to tell them for the whole stories. They will tell us like —excuse me sir, can I have stronger massage‖ something like that when you introduce them about spas massages. Unlike females, they usually will go for negotiating before the treatment starts. Females want to know what the skin types are, what going to happened if they consumed the services, how long the treatments. For example —I have been using the SK11, if I use this and that, what will happen?‖ With the males, it is really a straightforward and they do not have much time to ask for so many things. in my personal experience, for males' consumers, if they are not happy with the treatments, they are still paying. He may say —it could be better‖ when we asked them for the

feedbacks. Females are totally different. I hardly see men complaint. They just keep quite but may come again. N: Oh, men do not make noise?

H: Yes, men do not make noise. very simple. N: So, what you can say about men?

H: They are important and easy to approach. Trust me, when you have couple customers come in, female will ask she wants this and that before the treatments but for men they just sit and drink without asking. Females will ask for the discounts, but men just simply give their credit cards. But for couple, you must convince the madam first then their partner just pay.

N: Ok. For couple, do they prefer single room?

H: For couple, we have couple room. In the couple room, they can talk to each other and do the treatments together.

N: How about the therapists? Because female is ok with the female touch, how about the males? Do they prefer male therapist?

H: Some males prefer male therapists, because of the new market but very less demand. We do have male therapists in Sunway and KK also. only in KL we do not have male therapists because of the accommodation problem. We do provide accommodations for our staffs, so all the girls stayed in the hostel. So, we have all the girls include in Sheraton, they are staying together in one place. So, we do not have place for male therapist here. But if there is a request for male therapist, we will take it from Sunway. From Sunway to KL, it takes about 30-40 minutes.

N: How about the rooms? Is its different room for single consumers or they are sharing in one room?

H: We have a single room for single consumer and we also have double rooms. If you are coming by yourself, you will get a single room treatment. Your privacy will be guaranteed throughout the treatments

and during your experiences. Even during the massages, I will show you later the changing rooms and etc. Normally we do not expose all your body during the massages. The part of bodies will be well covered, cocoon and productive. All the priorities will be privacy. Same for males and females. Even for the couple, during the treatments, we do not expose the body to each other. not even 1%. It does not work that way. Our team is well trained and very professional. The way we covered, the way we do the changing things and all, the way we covered the —sarongl and sitting, we ensure the international standards that there is no possibility at all that your privacy will be disturb. So, it is very confidential and very comfortable.

N: What consumers seek the services in the spa?

H: Why they seek services in our spa because nowadays people are more concern on health and wellness and beauty. Somehow, your working styles, your working atmosphere and your lifestyles, have really impacted on it. People really do need their —my time, the way you stand, the way you bend, or walk will give impact on your body. Even the emotions such you lost your family, you had an accident etc., it creates emotions, and some are stressful. So, this is the place for you to recover. Ok let me put myself together. This is my personal experience, when you go to the spa, you put yourself back and prepared for a normal life because it brings relaxation, your body and soul together, and balance the body mind's also. So, when you left the spa, you will feel different. I have energy, i have the strength, i can feel a lot better. And then we talk about beauty treatment, people do need beauty treatments. Is normal for skin to change. Your skin gets sweating, drying, and tired. And people want to look good, feel good. To look good, you need to do scrub and facial while when you need to feel good, you need to go for experience bathtub services, massages with nice smelling. What we are saying is like when you bring your car to the workshop. You need to send your car to the workshop times to times. Same goes to the body. you need to bring your body to the spas. Even you feel good, but if you bring your body to the spas, it can maintain

your health. For example, our customers, the cabin crews. They have long travel hours such 18 hours, they stayed here and having jet-lagged, with the environment changes, time changes, climate changes, your body is all disturb. You cannot sleep properly. During the massage and after the massage, they really feel great and recovering for the jet-lag very quick. Then they can service the passengers again with the beauty smiles. Sunburn and jet-lagged can be treated.

N: Wow, sunburn can be treated?

H: Yes, one of the oils here is good to treat for sunburn skin. If you are travelling within Malaysia, climb the mountain such as Mountain Kinabalu, or you go to Malacca, I can tell you that during your walking, the feet are killing you, you got headache, with that pains, when you go to the spas, basically it can be treated. You can give yourself times to repair all the skins problems, regain your energy back, and recover your strength.

N: Ok. So just now you highlighted the concept of wellness and health for the wellbeing, do you highlight that things in your spas?

H: Well, we do not go particularly for well-being, this is different spas. That particular services in medical spas, they totally will do on the wellness, they will check on the heartless, medical checkup, the blood test and so on. We are totally relaxation spas. We do not really use the word of wellness and that kind of stuff. We used relaxing spas but can treat your wellness. There few spas particularly focus on aromatherapies for example you have digestive system problems, they will do the treatments. There is a treatment call Ayurveda that treat the whole body. They will use the oils like these to clean internal organs and all. So, this are different in every spa and it comes under ayurvedic range. There is also a treatment for eyes that called as therapeutic. They put the bread round like this and put the oils on the top, so the oils have lots of benefits. so, when the oils are on your eyes, when you open your eyes, it helps

a lot to improve your sensitive eyes and any kind of eyes disorders. There is something for ears also. Even for the stomach, they will put the same thing around the stomach, you can see that under the therapeutic treatments. they have a lot of things over here. It helps a lot especially for the digestive system.

N: Ok I should try this.

H: Yes, as there are different categories of spas. Ayurvedic spas usually focused on physical such if you have a sciatica or back problems, you may want to go to ayurvedic spas. But we do not offer these kinds of services here. We are not focusing on specific treatment for specific disorder. We are completely relaxing massages.

N: Ok from your own experience, you have been consumed these spas services, right? As a man, is it this service alter your masculinity or gender values?

H: You know, I've been reading one article the other day. It stated that, let say if you go to the fitness centre, and you got some injuries and had to undergo surgery, if you do spas treatments after some injuries from the surgery, it will speed up the recovering process, 40% faster than normal recoveries. If you have a shoulder treatment, you take some medicines or do some physiotherapy, it takes like 45 days. But if you go to the spas and get the services as the treatments, by 3 days it can be recovered already. As for me, a man, if you go to the spa, it does recover the strength rather than muscular thing. If you work out in the gym for 5 days, you have to take a rest and go for the massages as your body is in pain. After the massage, you start the gym again, you will feel fresh and manly and more active. So i do not think it changes the masculinity. The spas help to recover the muscle teared which muscle shows the manly things. Even when they are travelling, carrying lots of heavy things, this service helps to recover the tear of the muscles. We have the treatments to relieve the stiff muscles especially when you are carrying the laptop on your shoulder, you can see they should go down like this. so, it helps a lot for recovering process.

N: So how about the perception of the identity? Because some may misunderstand on men go to spas is not a masculine.

H: Oh, it does not go that way. That could be if men go to beauty parlor. You could misunderstand them, but spa is different.

N: Because some may perceive spas are meant for women not for me.

H: No, this is not exactly what spas offered. They must be thinking that the spas only offered the bath. Let me tell you, when the spas were starting long time ago, at they were offered royal beauty, royal bath, rose petals bath, lulur scrubs for skins and something for the face. That was earliest when only the women used the spas. Because big portion of spas were created for cleopatra, she had beauty concept in the spas in the beginning. But trust me, it has changed.

N: Since when it changed?

H: If you look at along the way of spas , now fitness centre is part of the spa, swimming pool also is part of the spa, Fitness centre and swimming pool, 90% are all comes under the spas. Fitness centre, swimming pool, with the jacuzzi and hot shower or cold shower, and then the massages, the facials are all together. this is also basically in every five star hotels. If you see the other five stars, it worked under the same person. because we are the outsider, we do not really take on the fitness centre. I have been working nearly 15 years in spas industry, before Mandara, I've been working for with lots of different five stars hotels, i always have to take care of everything such spa, gyms and all the stuffs. So, the point you said, it could be for those people who go to the hammam kind of spas, they offer services only for women. a group of women go and take a bath together, scrubs the bodies together, some kind of stuffs, it can be said that the place is more to women only. But if you to the proper spas like this, you come and choose your treatments, you start with the shower, massage in different room, you are not sharing with everyone. so,

men and women can consume treatments in one spa depending on the services you chose. everybody goes to spas. I've been to head-spa, all i can see is hair treatments. Yes, they do a head massage, but it is not a spa means. It can be confusing because spa is big not only head massage. when you put the word of spa in your business, people will come, but it is actually hair salon. it can wrongly have spas meaning. And that is why it is misunderstood spas are only for female. Like here, we have skin IQ treatments, that we have talked before which is the top treatments for men. Men shaved, and every time they shaved, especially when you put razors every day to shave, it gives damages to the skin. Do you know how many broken capillaries that you have on your skin? And trust me, men deserve more facial treatments due to this matter. Men also have travels, meetings, partying, sports etc., so they need the treatments for their own skin and body. Those men who do not go to spa or get any facial treatments, they look older than they age. So, they need more beauty treatments and attentions for the bodies. we have products special for men. they have moisturizer, even face wash, it all very well known for men.

N: Ok. ermmmm how to say, ermm do you think by offering the services, it will alter their roles as a man?

H: it does not make sense at all. N: why you said so?

H: How can, ok let say if you are doing the foot massage by the pool side, you are sitting over there and reading magazine, and suddenly my therapist comes and asks — excuse me sir, do you like to have a foot massage? How can i say no to such a wonderful experience? I'm drinking my coffee, I'm reading my newspaper, someone is doing me a foot massage, wahhh it is such a wonderful experience. How can i change my role? I still a man, right? is just i got the best feeling ever but my role as a man still the same unless i go for Botox. Let say I have been using shoes for 12 hours, 25 minutes foot massage gives me relaxation and recovering from the pain, it gives me a health satisfaction.

N: I know that but what I mean is, for example, ok one man, he prefers to keep his beard, because it shows the manly things, but one day, he tried to change, ok he thinks that he should try spa services. do the manscaping and remove the beard, his perception in his mind is like; if i do that, it will change my values as a masculine man.

H: Well, this is talking about the culture you have grown up with. Not many cultures have this kind of things, maybe you have been brought up as indian Punjabi, where you have all the beards, it is their culture like that, if you do not have a turban on your head, they will not consider you as a manly man, this is the culture you have been devoted.

N: But they want to change? They want to try...because they know the benefits for them, is just the perceptions? you know?

H: They do not change their appearance. there is always something on the menu to suit with them.

N: So, you offer that kind of service to them?

H: Massages do not change the values. It does not change their appearance at all. N: They want to change, but they do not want to change their values as being men.

H: In this spa, we do not offer anything to change people. For example, we may offer hair stylish, hair colours, yet this indian Punjabi still wear turban even they changed their hair colours. it is for their own satisfaction. From the other eyes, they are still the same indian Punjabi and the turban shows their values. In Mandara spas, we will never be crossing their lines. We will respect their privacy and so on.

N: Can you ranked the marketing strategy, which one is the most important for you?

H: Any type of spas, i think the most important things are location and place, how spas are look like. ok recently my guest was coming the other day, I still like the way he tells me. He does not really speak

English. He came to the spa and saw the reception manager, I just welcomed him to Mandara spa. He told me that — my wife looked five stars, go massage straight away!l. very smart. What i understand, by the time you look at the facilities, by entering it, 80% of the marketing has been done. This is really a good spa. It gives you the impact that you stand for a good spa, have a professional and well-trained people. When you entered the spas, you will see the appearance, the setting, they will understand that this spa have values for the price. So, the set-up, the arrangements of the spas are really important. And comes your team. Your team is your pride. They have to be good because in this industry, people talk about the employees of the spas. You go to the massage, you do a good massage, people will talk about you. If not, people will talk bad about you and you will lose such a big market in this industry. When customers experiencing a good massage from the therapists in Mandara, they will spread it to other potential consumers. it does help as part of marketing strategy to promote the Mandara spas. Especially with the local guests. Consumers from KL, they will go tell their cousins, aunties, friends and so on about the people who work in the spas. From there, more customers are coming. To the repeated guests also, people are very important. And you know now with the social media, consumers put everything everywhere. They spread through Facebook, and trip advisors. Next, the product and the quality of the services are important too to be maintained. It is very basic in marketing on how to market your products. If you have everything right on the place, you are good to go somewhere. But now all the basics are not enough. to make more money and profit, you need to work with lots of room packages, you need to work with the travel agents, and different kind of spas events. We do lots of spas events. We do complimentary spa classes for our guests. The guests will come in, and then we will teach them about spas.

N: Spa classes are for what?

H: We teach them hand massages, you know, they will walk around the spas and learn about different kind of hand massages. For example, this guest never been to the spas and cannot imagine how does the

services look like. You know, is like you go to the big restaurant with the fancy menu and you get scared by looking at the menu as you don't know what to order until the waiter comes and explains to you every menu that they have. This spa classes are pretty similar with that. These people will come and learn on what we are doing here and how the services will be delivered, our team will get them a welcome drink and show them two types of orientation in this spa. Then the bonding between the customers and the staffs started. Greetings, talking, fooling around, you start making the bonding with them during the learning process. And then they will start trusting you, they start believing you, they will feel comfortable about it, and of course they will change their mind about the spas. For example, one couple came and learnt about shoulder massage, they did not go to the spa to get the massage but to learn. So, when they went back, at home her husband had a shoulder stiff, she knows how to massage it as she learnt at the class. Even it is only 15 minutes class, she will remember for the rest of her life. So, we do lots of spa classes.

N: Ok this is so different with the other international hotel's spas.

H: This is very important nowadays you know? We do spa classes, we do spa nights, couple spa nights, might be spa kids nights, family nights, such one family comes, they have massage or bath together, kids go for the bathtubs, parents go for the massages, they all the treatments together and go back home together. They took lots of pictures together here in spas. this kind of events you know, creates the golden memories of the families. They had spas together at family night event. This will make a different. In Club Med, we used to do Zen's spas evening. This covered inners peace with yoga and spouse activities. What we did, we put Indian mantra, likes ommmm ommmm ommmmm around the swimming pool. and the guests, are sitting half of next to the swimming pool, half in the water, they did some stretching, back and forward stretching. and then, they closed their eyes with the....

N: How can you effectively accommodate different cultures because you have different races of consumers.

H: Back to the culture, this culture mix, see, I came from India, my team is from Indonesia, I want to create something that Indonesia, Malaysia and India being together, so i created culture spa nights. The culture spa night was the biggest hit ever, in my career. Trust me, my bosses, they all were amazed by the culture spas nights. experience what we have gave them. During the daytime, we set up the big space in the spas, in the garden. We put lots of candles next to the swimming pool, we put lots of chairs, we put the Balinese statues with the mattress. We make like this, one aroma statue, the mattress is like this and like this surrounding the statue. and the daytime, we start selling it by telling them that tonight we are going to do a culture spa night. We used to charge full price for the treatments, do discounts, a part of it the rest is free. So, when in the evening, at nine o'clock, when it was completely dark outside, the guests will come to the spas only for the culture nights, at the spas entrance, the lights were off. only the candles were on and the guests walked in, the mantra was on, the mantra has very strong vibrations, at the entrance of the spa, there were two girls stood with the Malaysian dress; the baju kurung. The guests came in and sat, already expected for the treatments. We served the ginger teas, closed their eyes, and let them listen to the music. and when they went to the behind reception, they will see the gardens with lots of candles. then they will walk into the garden, the first two girls , they did the arty which is the indian arty, and put the holy water of gangga on their head. So, they felt the Malaysian touched and Indian touched. And when they walked to the candles for foot bath, while they had the foot bath, the Indonesian dancers performed. So, you had foot bath in open spas, under the dark skies, with lots of candles, nice music that kept going on, with the Indonesian dances. After the dances, they went to the statues, and they sat with the Balinese girls, and they did the prayers ceremony activity. They will give you rice and flowers and scented smells, and then they passed their hands to the next person to do some kind of energy balancing. So, the next therapists who sat near to them, went behind them and brought their head downs, and covered their

eyes using the hands like this, basically is part of the treatments. when they did that, the next therapists with completed uniforms brought them to the massages rooms for the next treatments. All these things took twenty minutes and all the massages took about an hour. But trust me, who ever experienced this, they all said: —we never feel like this experience in other spas, this one full of the cultures, different styles, different music, different steps have different experience. That kind of things make people remember for the whole life. they were really said that they not only had massages but also experienced the culture differences. since the culture night spa, we always have customers who are waiting for that events and willing to pay full.

N: How often you do that kind of events? H: We used to do twice in a week.

N: So how the demand for that events?

H: They are very happy with the events. We are offering something different, they really enjoyed it. You know the routine kind of massage, is not really fun. If you do something different, they will have lots of fun.

N: So that is one kind of opportunities that you found in this business?

H: Yes, it is one of the opportunities in this business, I can say part of marketing strategies. We also used to do spas carnival. This spas carnival was inspired by the night market. lots of tables like night market. So, what i did was, i put lots of tables, one table had hand massage, one table had foot massage, back massage, all the massages we offered in the spas were placed at different table. beauty products, hot stones, cold towels, and ginger teas were all at different tables.

N: So, the customers can choose?

H: Some need towel, some need hot stones, so they will go to different tables. for example, those who want hand massage will go to the hand massage table.

N: So how about the payment? H: Free!

N: Oh that's great!

H: So, you come and do a hand massage for free. We had lots of customers took the pictures during the carnival. Lots of people came in, lots of pictures, lots of jokes, and then they got the lucky draw tickets. Then the event was finished, and everybody was return back to their home. Before they return, we thanked them and offered the 30% discounts voucher for the next treatment prior to the booking. I can tell you, that day I have had closed RM20,000 revenues. The 25 minutes free spas experienced, and got 40 booking in, it was a huge money.

N: So, it is different kind of strategy.

H: when you invited them, you are not selling anything, but you appreciate if they come, once they experienced it during the carnival, they feel like they really should go for massages etc. Then they booked because they feel it gives the values to them. So, this strategy did work.

N: So how often this night market carnival?

H: This spa night market carnival we used to do once in a week. I was crazy when i was in Club Med, that is why i have been promoted as venue manager, I used to do lots of crazy things. Other than that, I used to do sunset promotion. people will come to get spa treatments while watching the sunset. We set up the seashells next to the pool and offered the beers during the treatments. People came in and paid only for RM50 and got a glass of champagne and a foot massage. for those who were not drink champagne will get a fruit juice. and people loved it. and near to the sea-side, you put the mattress, so they were looking

at the see in front of them, having a foot massage with a champagne were really a bliss. this kind of events, we used to do actually. even shopping, we invited the guests to the shopping mall, we distributed all the goodies and vouchers, and we offered the few items with discounts. in shopping malls, we put the tea and coffee during the events. we also offered free shoulder massage or hand massage just like a night market carnival. that is basically in house strategy. we have arrival voucher such three guests coming in, they will get special prices.

N: It is really interesting. I never heard about these kinds of strategies before.

H: We did that. Yes, i do lots of strategies. but this one i never do yet but it is in my list. when i have been transferred to KL and be a revenue manager, i was thinking like television show. it used to be one of the tv shows, where they picked the couples, husbands, and wives. I want to do something like that. Pick a couple and have some fix questions to ask the couple. The event is like let see how much you know your partner. we have husband's side and wife sides with lots of questions. we will have lots of guests sitting around. the questions are like what your wife likes to do? watching tv? cooking etc. something like that and the husband needs to answer. that will be such a fun activity. those couples who participate will get good vouchers from us and it will be a good television show. the participating will be a reward.

N: so different places, different activities?

H: yes, if the place is at the seaside, you can do such sunset events, if in the city like here, we do shopping mall invitations.

N: How about the promotions? to what extent you standardised or customised your promotions?

H: We do standardise promotions for all spas. only the price wise will be different. in the club med, the prices are a bit higher compared to the other spas. under the Club Med, we do longer promotions. We do eight hour promotions, six hour promotions, but in KL we do not that one. But normally all is same.

We do one called Elemis marketing calendar, which follows the Elemis products. That promotion we do for the whole year. These products came from UK. As you can see this type of products will do a promotion in January on so on depends on the products. Every month has different promotion of Elemis products. So special design product to be promoted every month will be on the shelf. So, what have you seen here is the promotion for this product for this month? we send invitation for all the guests every month for product launching. We will serve refreshments during that product launching. We invited media, we invited magazine people, we invited newspaper people, and they will do marketing for us. Mandara spas just started with this strategy. That is what we called as our marketing calendar. We also have quarterly promotions. it goes for 3 months. That promotions are updated in our websites. then in spa, we also have promotions that running for three to four months. So, for the September promotions, i have already submitted to the graphic designer last night. They will send to Bali office and will put on the website tonight. So, these are normal promotions that we did standardised. also, we have different kind of vouchers such as arrival voucher, cabin crew vouchers and etc.

N: So, do you agree that due to the marketing exposure, people can realise the benefits of the spas?

H: Trust me, nobody knows the benefit of massages, or relaxations if they do not expose with them. They may know little bit, but the questions are, spas have varieties. Without marketing exposure, they only know that spas have massages while spas can be more than that. People nowadays are easy to access to different kind of social medias.

N: How about the trends and patterns? Do they change from previous?

H: Yes definitely. everybody is looking for the uniqueness, how can i stay unique from other people? if you look at spas designing, now they, especially when you look in magazines, they have spas with waterfalls, spas features and colours, and recently when i was in Bali in May, i was so surprised to see this spa,

wow, i was thinking how much have they spent for this spa. when you entered that spa, they are using the Bliss. Bliss also belongs to the Steiner. Very nice spa's reception, all whites, really white, and when you entered to the spa rooms, you keep asking what is coming as they have different kind of aesthetics everywhere. all the massages beds are like dinosaurs' eggs, all the lightings inside, and they operated 24 hours. Behind the rooms spas is very big bath and sitting areas. Customers are drinking and partying, i could never believe that bath can be so much fun. even it is not about health concern, but they are making money. people go to seek for the spa treatments and at the same time having fun. they have manicure pedicure in the bath also.

N: From your observation, how do consumers develop multicultural adaptiveness? Because you have created all this culture nights and everything with different cultures elements.

H: See, this one we do not do every day, but trust me people love to see what is going on, if you want people to remember you, you have to make their days memorable. you do something which they participated; they will remember what they have done. So, making this kind of experience, making them to participate let them to adapt with different kind of cultures. the thing over here, the languages can be a barrier sometimes. what the team will do is body language. In club med, we do have 5 different languages translated. In Sunway we used two to three different languages. we do translate different languages in different places. our team is also well-trained with the body languages.

N: How about the range of age?

H: We do not normally cater for the kids, so basically spas guests are basically young people, i would say between 25 to 55 or 60 years old. we do not have really old customers. N: How about the advertising to males? Do you have specific advertising targeting for them?

H: Not really specific promotions, it is normal promotions for both genders. But again, we have skin IQ, one of the special facials for men that we highlighted.

N: what is the next marketing strategy that you are planning to implement in the future? because you have done a lot.

H: what is really we want to do is trying to focus on the corporate guests for example the government corporate executives who staying in this hotel to attend any meetings, seminars, courses or conferences. and we want to focus on local KL people who come to the spas and put them in our database and offer the spa membership as we do not really have membership before.

N: for the corporate consumers, are you trying to go to their office and offer them the services?

H: No. we have our database team, they will do the market research on the target market and they will approach them by sending vouchers, invitations etc.

N: Do you offer the services for the university students?

H: In Sunway, we do have lots of students. we even sponsored for their events every year. They organised some play and roles, we also sponsored for their study classes. Sunway students come a lot of times visiting spas in Sunway. But they are not our target market. This is my second time meeting PhD students. The last time came to investigate about the therapists.

N: For the deviations, who are they, when they arose and how do you deal with them? What type of competitors you have in the market?

H: If you look at the six census, four seasons, they have their own brands, they have their own products etc. Shangri-La has one that called chi-spa which very nice and good one. They have their own

uniqueness, but we also have our own uniqueness. As far as you have products, you have your own team, you can do a business. So, we just need to maintain all of it.

N: Do you consider the products that you have is a product or do you mean your people as your product?

H: The products are like these (showing on the shelves) N: So, these products came from where?

H: They came from UK. And this is really difficult to bring in as you have to deal with the shipment's times to times, not all those things that are very expensive. Having these products in the spa is really expensive and you have to maintain it. Not many spas maintain the account things. So, they could be a challenge with the economy right now. Plus, the team, they are the products of the spas. They also have to go through the maintaining. They do not come to the contract and run a way. We really need to take care of them, and they have been paid with very good salaries. The good therapists will sell a good massage.

N: Do you think that spas need to segregate the advertising for males and females? Do you think it is important to do promotion for different gender?

H: It depends where you are promoting it, like who is really your target market. For example, if we want to focus and approach corporate clientele, we need to identify who they are and if most of them are men who come and stayed in the hotels, we may promote the male products. The languages in promoting is important. To promoting services for men, you cannot say about manicure and pedicure as extra services as they do not care about it. Segregate is depending on what you want to promote but if possible, just keep it neutral. During the enquiries, you always can add or upgrade the treatments into the packages that suits to the clients. Other than that, for the fitness members, we may add sport massage as their upgrade packages. Sport massage can help in repairing the tear and stiff muscles.

N: So for what I understood now, if you want to market your products to male spa goers and if you want to educate them, to attract them to your spa, it means you have to promote the services in direct language?

H: Yes if you have access on the direct language. Let say I am working with the travel agents from Korea or China, I do not know what kind of market that I want to promote over there, is better for me to be neutral. I gave the travel agents on our menu, and they will be promoting us. If I can see my market clearly, I will do the direct language. But if I'm not involved with it, is good to be neutral.

N: How about local Malaysian men? H: They are more into massages.

N: How about the ethnicity?

H: Chinese are the most clientele but not as big different that we can do like 70/30 with other races. Little bit different with Malays and Indians.

N: Ok that is for now. Thank you, a lot, for your participation.

H: No problem I am so happy to help. If you have anything just get back to me. All the best for your Ph.D.

Interview Transcription (2) Raziq

N: First thing first ermm how, sebab mija cakap you are not from aesthetic, you are lawyer right?

R: aah I lawyer lepas tu I buat master's in policy N: you practice it?

R: I practice 5 tahun then I buat master's in public policy dekat Singapore 2 tahun. Then I join the bank, 2 tahun, skang I kije kat sini

N: So macam mana you boleh jump in aesthetic? R: Macam mana boleh jump yek? Nasib kot

N: Because this is not, am not sure, because in UK, for men to involve with this business is very rare.

R: For me because I look it from a business perspective la. I always wanted to do a business and have been searching for something stable that I would to do la since I mean since I was practicing my lawyer, I have my own firm, family firm la, I mean is just the inner side of me that wants to do something more. So when I have an opportunity to go to Singapore, I dapat full scholarship from OCBC bank, so I said, ok why not just do something la, am not sure what is the end results is gonna be, but is just it makes me feel good, of this erm nak kata apa ye, the uncertainty makes me feel lively.

N: But why this business? This is more, erm orang cakap this business is a feminist business?

R: Oh yes, exactly N: But why?

R: So ok it is started from the desire to do a business, so when I got the opportunity from the bank, through the end of 2 years, so we wanted to set up a clinic or plus a pharmacy, wanted to do something like narqeess with pharmacy, kita jumpa kawan dia, seorang doctor, so kita kat let's combined this. So then along the way her doctor's friend said I minat aesthetic, I know this guy where ni budak-budak hannan,

he has medispa, maybe we can exploit the opportunity la. So, it looks like a good business. So, for me I just jumped in because truly desire because just to make money la.

N: ye la but as a man, how do you see aesthetic business? Because as I said this business is called as feminine area, so as a man, how do you see aesthetic? Do you think that is good for men as well? Or is no longer as feminine business?

R: This is what I always teach to men customers that walked in dengan diaorang punya wife ke ape kan, I tried to put this into this perspective la, this is not like the manja-manja like u said feminine

N: female, feminine domain?

R: Feminine domain, is not like feminine things to do la, is also manly because aaaa from hygiene perspective, so I just put in hygiene perspective, you know that you need to shower, betul tak? You basuh, you sabun diri you semua, but your most precious part of your body which is the first thing people look at you is your face, tapi you tak nak jaga. Plus, that is the part yang aged first. So kita pun ada machine, I pun, I baru realised that we have face analysing machine that can analyse you punya face skin, and can predict your age, so for me when I put my face there for the first time, it predicted my age two years older than my actual age. So, you see how your skin's age before your actual age.

N: So, you undergo all the process as well?

R: I tried the process la. N: How you find it?

R: So bagi I, I feel fresh, ok, aaa I've talked to macam mana ya, even for ladies kan, bila dia buat, maybe their first thought is to be pretty la. But actually, the side effect of this pretty is also self-confidence. So bila you pergi kerja, kan, you develop, for me a male kan, bila I keluar, bila I rasa muka I lebih bersih, of course rambut lebih bergaya apa semua, you have that self-confidence level is higher. You don't

feel saggy, you don't feel sad, you feel a bit happy, so you have this emotion, positive-emotional impacts which I feel men also should have to experience la.

N: So, you rasa lelaki pun should feel that way la? R: yes

N: It builds some self-confidence R: Builds self-confidence

N: is it constructs the masculine identity as well or do you think that it is two different things?

R: Ok aesthetic is a whole range of things that you can do la. From the very basic to clean you punya pores until botox, or in the very extreme invasive punya services kan, so we don't go to that extreme la. When you go to that extreme, if you are trying to change you punya face shape it semua, that's for me there is psychological problems to a man la. Kalau tetiba you nak ubah you punya muka apa semua, I think that there is a border line la between trying to be hygiene person, and you know, you have psychological problems or too inferior with your face, you nak change your nose, nak change you punya pipi, for me that's the border line dekat situ la. Or atau pun kata dia dah ok, muka dah ok tapi nak bagi lembut, bagi gebu, nak bagi....

N: ada lelaki yang buat macam tu? Ada demand ke?

R: aaaaa tak tak, kalau ada demand ke arah tu, that's the problems. N: Ok

R: Ok for me la, kalo macam I, for me muka macam ni, dah bersih ok, but I would not ask for eh macam mana nak bagi...

N: untuk fair skin semua?

R: bagi gebu lagi, you know, if you have that requirement, something is wrong la kan. But if you say, no, ada white-head, atau jerawat, ada jerawat, you know; scar, you want to remove, I just want to look

normal, my skin, you just want to go back to your natural skin conditions, that it. Kan? Your natural skin condition, not trying to putihkan lagi. Kalau lelaki dating nak buat whitening semua then that's ada problem la. So, for me.....

N: sebab I rasa macam ada je lelaki yang nak putih.

R: Yes, memang ada. Then can analyse what men they are. maybe you can categorise them leaning to their sexuality to tilt to the other end. Yes, because some men think when they have fair skin, they are more masculine as they are taking care of their hygenic. For me, if talking about masculine, I imagine about tough body. Pretty face is not considered as masculine.

N: definition of masculine lies in men himself. What they have been perceived and how they connected their perception with their body. It can be varied in term of definitions because some men, when I interviewed them, they said that tough body does not necessary to be masculine.

R: Then, in your opinion, academically what masculine means?

N: From the surveys I got, most referred masculine to physical shape, good looking guys, hygenic...

R: So, it is a complete package from top to toe. more masculine means they have been across what masculine have been defined? My own analysis, if you crossed the border, you are not trying to be masculine, but you are trying to be another person.

N: Some men did —manscaping, they shaved their hairy arms, legs etc. yet they still feel masculine, they are not trying to look like as another person.

R: That is another concern with those who obsessed with their own bodies. Narcistic persons. I've known more men go to the gyms now to build their body in order to be masculine, but i don't know, for me they are obsessed with their own body. It is about you and yourself. You just want to look presentable. But some

start to break the barrier by doing some injections to shape their bodies as they want to be. for example, I want to be like a body builder Malek Noor, I need to break the body barrier. Body barrier means you have to inject some parts of body to build the muscle as big as you wish like steroid so that your body can grow.

N: Ok, i never think about that.

R: But am not sure about the side effects of the injections towards your body. For me, those who come to spa just want to be a natural, get back original face after the sunbathed, reboot the energy so you can look more presentable. But if you do whitening, it means you cross the border as you want to change your original skin colours. That is not masculine as you are trying to be different person.

N: Are you receiving those kinds of consumers who came over to get that services?

R: Yes, some almost be a woman! they changed almost everything, put the filler on the nose, lips, cheeks just to be pretty, and they did whiten.