Research Article

Quality Pathology Customer Service: Saudis vs. Australians

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of culture on the customers' perceptions of quality. The researcher uses two cultures which have distinct cultural, administrative, geographic, and economic differences, namely, Saudi Arabia and Australia. From the study, it is evident that culture has a potent impact on the customers' service quality. The paper examines the topic from two primary models. One of the models is the SERVQUAL service quality model, which the researcher uses because pathology is a service. The SERVQUAL model therefore provides a basis on which to examine the second model, which is Hofstede's cultural dimensions' model. Several scholars have found relationships between the two models, and therefore, one can verifiably assert that culture affects service quality perceptions. Noteworthy though, because of the limitations of the Hofstede model, the research applied additional cultural analysis concepts such as locus of control and chronemics. The researcher used qualitative secondary analysis as the methodology for the paper.

Keywords: Culture; SERVQUAL; Hofstede Dimensions; Locus Of Control; Customer Service; Quality; Pathology

Introduction

One of the common traits of the 21st century is globalisation [1]. Consequently, it is very common to find the companies are engaged in globalisation from one aspect or another. To that effect therefore, it is important to study how differences in national environments might affect the international aspects of the business. In the context of this case, the analysis would be about how customers from two culturally contrasted countries, interact with service quality. The result therefore, is that the study examines how Australian and Saudi culture might affect customer satisfaction in the two countries.

Customer service determines how much satisfaction the customers might derive from an interaction with a service provider. Noteworthy though, customer service quality is not contingent on being a service operation. Vargo and Lusch explain that even manufacturing and retail needs service quality, according to the service-dominant logic of [2]. However, customer service quality perceptions differ across all perspectives [3,4]. define quality as the level of similarity between the customers' expectations and what the company actually provides. However, the interpretation of quality might be influenced by the culture of the customer.

Noteworthy, [9] present a universal benchmark through which to measure service quality, which is the SERVQUAL model. The model contains five elements namely reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness. Nonetheless, the differences in culture might affect the priority to which the different customers attach to different elements of SERVQUAL. This paper therefore examines how culture affects the relation of the customers to SERVQUAL.

Purpose of the study

The advances in communication and transportation technologies, the world has shrunk to the size of a village in recent decades. Visitors frequently inquire about the types of services available in the country they will be visiting because traveling is such a common trend. The study aims to investigate the similarities and differences in the services provided by Saudi Arabia and Australia. This will be accomplished by looking at the cultural aspects of the two groups to compare and contrast them. The Hofstede cultural dimensions model served as the basis for investigating the cultural aspect. Scholar Geert Hofstede was the one who developed the model, which consisted of five initial aspects at the outset. These dimensions were individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and masculinity [5]. As a result, Hofstede will be used in the research project to compare the level of service provided by Australians and Saudis. The model is appropriate since the vast majority of the literature on cultural analysis employs the model as the tool for analyzing the differences between cultures. The SERVIQUAL model, which is also suitable for assessing the differences in services provided by different groups, will be used in the second part of the research project to investigate cultural differences. In the SERVIQUAL model, the research investigates how people feel about the quality of the services they receive in terms of their responsiveness, dependability, the tangibility of the services, and the empathy displayed by the organizations that provide customer service. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate how culture affects people's perceptions of the quality of customer service, with the end goal of locating areas in which these perceptions might be improved while maintaining an awareness of cultural factors.

Literature Review

Quality

Quality refers to the difference between what the customers expect, and what they actually get [6]. Pathology is a service-oriented field, and therefore, the focus should be as much on service quality as it is on the quality of the output. Noteworthy though, for organizations to match service to customer expectations, it is important to not only manage those expectations but also to understand the aforementioned expectations.

Customer expectations

Customer expectations come from implicit and explicit promises which the customers might get from the organization.

Explicit promises

Explicit promises are the promises which the business would communicate directly to the customers [6]. For example, if the company highlights in its market communications that it is a premium quality service provider, the customers will expect more from them than they expect from a discount service provider. For example, if a private pathology service advertises itself as a high-end pathology lab with quicker response service times, the clients will expect more from this service than they expect from a government aided pathology lab which offers free services. Noteworthy though, what comprises of quality differences, is subjective across cultures, so what might be considered as a premium service in one country, might not be viewed as such, in a different country. Such subjective differences in the perceptions of service quality therefore highlight the importance of studies the domestic cultures and expectations.

Implicit promises

Implicit promises are the subtler types of choices, because they are derived by the customer, from the conduct of the service provider [7]. For example, the customers might deduce that some of the more complicated services, will be more expensive than those that are easier to provide. From the context of medicine, treating cancer is implicitly perceived as more expensive than treating the flu. Moreover, the differences in the pathological environment of different countries might also necessitate differences in implicit promises. For example, testing for Ebola in a country where it is uncommon, might be more expensive than testing for diseases which are perceived as common, because of the rarity of the required inputs.

Managing customer expectations: SERVQUAL

Conceivably, companies might be trapped into overpromising in order to attract customers towards their services [8]. However, the customers might also derive implicit promises from a misunderstood perspective, thereby generating detriment to service quality. For that reason, therefore, it is important to identify the customers what they expect, and what the organisation might be able to provide. A clear communication of expectations will therefore

cause a more relevant delivery of service quality. Moreover, scholars provide a basis for customer service expectations on quality, from a universal perspective that is SERVQUAL [9]. SERVQUAL contains five elements which the customers might base their perceptions of service quality on, as explained below:

- **Reliability:** This is the element which measures the consistency and accuracy with which the organization provides services to its customers. For example, if clients have saved their money in a bank, they expect to have access to it in the ATMs whenever they need access to their funds. to that effect therefore, the customers will find that bank reliable. Conversely, if the customers consistently get the wrong results from the laboratory, then this lab will be perceived as unreliable.

- **Tangibles:** This is the element of service quality which addresses the consumers' perceptions of the physical evidence of the service providers. From the perspective of pathology, if the laboratory appeared unhygienic, then the customers might perceive the service as that of poor quality. Moreover, the physical appearance of the service provider also affects the perceived service quality.

- **Empathy:** This is the element of service quality which deals with courtesy from the customer service perspective. When the customer is treated amicably and respectably, then they might perceive the service as good. However, when the consumers are treated poorly, then the result is that they perceive that as poor service quality. Noteworthy, treating the customers amicably can sometimes be challenging if the customers are being unreasonable. However, empathy still applies as an element of SERVQUAL even then.

- **Assurance:** This is the element of SERVQUAL where the customer examines whether they trust the service provider. The individuals must be able to trust the service provider because that will retain brand fidelity. Trust should be based on two main tenets, which include the capacity of the individual to trust the service provider's ability to provide the service that they promise to provide. If the pathologist for example, seems unaware of the terms and conditions which are used in their line of work, the people who are interacting with them, might perceive it as a lack of knowledge on the topic, and the result therefore, is that

they will not trust them. Furthermore, the customer must be able to trust the reliability and continuity of the service provider. this is especially important for services which are provided in instalments, such as pathology. When the customer brings in a sample, they might not expect to get the results immediately, but rather, at a future date. Trusting the reliability and continuity of the individual is therefore very important.

- **Responsiveness:** This is the element of SERVQUAL which examines how well the service provider communicates with the customer. The communication with the customers is especially important, in order to determine the extent of what the customer requires and to offer them assurance about any concerns that they might have. To that effect therefore, communication is especially important, and the best way through which to achieve that, is through being responsive to the customers. If the customers have any question, it would improve their service experience if they received a prompt answer. To that effect therefore, it is important for the organization to be responsive.

Influence of culture on customer service

The understanding of the market should preclude the design of the customer service plan. That is especially true, because culture influences customer service in multiple ways, as discussed below:

- Culture influences the service mix of the place where the business operates [10,11]. In some cultures, there are services which must either be part of the service mix, or not at all. For example, in some cultures, the design of the service might have to include self-service, such as vending machines, while in other cultures, there must be consistent attendance to the customers. Likewise, culture might affect how the customers interact with the service provider [12,13]. For example, some customers would be better off in some cultures, where the cultural expectations involve the use of informal language, and getting informal with the customer, such as asking about the family and their personal lives. Conversely, in other cultures, that would be impossible and perceived as intrusive by the customers. Moreover, the culture affects the expectations of the customers.

- Studying the impact of culture and quality on service quality is necessary because it identifies the value proposition

which the customers require [14]. Understanding the value proposition therefore, improves the level of consistency between the expectations of the customers and the services of the company. the result is greater customer loyalty [15,16], which is the ultimate goal of any profit-seeking business model.

Cultural analysis

Hofstede model

Hofstede presents six dimensions of culture under which supposedly all the cultures can be categorised. They include power distance, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, individualism and indulgence. The six dimensions may affect the customer's expectations of service quality, as discussed in the section below. Resultantly, these expectations can be used to improve customer service and quality in pathology.

Power distance

Power distance is the dimension which examines the extent the culture nurtures hierarchy, and how much the people in a culture accept inequality. In cultures with a high-power distance, there are very distinct structures on which to base the social identity of the culture.

Individualism

Furthermore, there is the dimension of individualism. The dimension of individualism measures the extent to which the group precedes the individual needs. For example, In the cultures with high rates of individualism, the focus is on the individual, such as in terms of their own merit and their own preferences, while in the collectivist societies, the group is more important than the individual [17].

Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is the dimension which measures the extent to which the culture is averse to risk. Cultures with high rates of uncertainty avoidance tend to be rigid against change, because it is riddled with uncertainty, while the less low scorers are more dynamic.

Long term orientation

The dimension of long-term orientation is the dimension which examines the extent to which cultures relate to time. Cultures with a high long-term orientation reserve their status quo over a relatively long period of time. Moreover, these cultures also typically prefer planning for the future in advance, rather than spontaneity being the driving factor for them.

Masculinity

Masculinity is the dimension which measures the extent to which the culture displays masculine traits. In this dimension, the cultures which display high levels of masculinity will therefore be very competitive and will value achievement over social relationships. In fact, these societies do not value equality that much, and therefore, the incentive is try to be more powerful and accomplished than anyone else. The reverse is true for the feminine societies.

Indulgence

Indulgence is the dimension which measures the extent to which the culture values the pursuit of pleasure. Moreover, one of the other features, is the extent of social permisssiveness for the members of the culture to engage in all of the pleasures that they would like to.

Research gap

The gap in the research, is that most of the researchers who examine the impact of culture of customers' perceptions of service quality, do so within the boundaries of one model. None of the literature has been related to Hofstede or the GLOBE model singularly. As discussed in the limitations section, these models have analytical shortcomings, because they do not examine that many aspects of culture. It is therefore the researcher's opinion that they must be complimented with other cultural analysis concepts which are relevant to the topic under analysis.

Methodology

The researcher employed a qualitative approach to the method of investigation. In addition, an exploratory research design was utilized during the course of the study. The researcher is able to get a deeper and, as a result, more comprehensive understanding of the object of study through the use of qualitative research methods [18,19]. In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research gives the researcher the opportunity to evaluate the data in the context of a more extensive setting, and as a result, they can construct a more robust and, as a result, more comprehensive

context for the phenomenon that is being examined. The researcher investigated the issue by utilizing the explanatory research design. This allowed the researcher to do so without being required to use previous data, such as preexisting attitudes about a specific group.

The researcher will have used the SERVQUAL model as a means of investigating the cultural element of the occurrence in order to achieve their goal. The researcher examined the tangible aspects of the model, such as the appearance of the physical facilities, reliability, which is the ability to deliver the services, responsiveness, which is the ability to give customers instant help, employee assurance, and empathy toward the requirements of customers. These dimensions proved to be helpful in the collection of data required for the investigation. On the other hand, the Hofstede model will be utilized by the researcher in order to make an assessment of the clients' cultural identities. The researcher seeks to investigate the impact that each of the six cultural factors have on the various aspects of service quality using the model.

Findings

Hofstede cultural dimensions

Power distance

On this score, Saudi Arabia scores 95% while Australia scores 36%, as shown in appendix 1. This implies that the Saudi customers might tolerate and even accept differential treatment when they are being served. For example, they might expect that the royal family or a military family should be served first, when they come, before all of the customers who were therefore. However, this is an approach that would not be tolerated in Australia, where the power distance is slow. All customers should be treated equally, and therefore, honorific or even differential treatment might tarnish the brand. With the high-power distance in Saudi Arabia, the it is possible that the segregation of services might be the best way to serve customers from different backgrounds. For example, there might be a need to establish a clinic for the opulent among society, and another laboratory for the lay person. otherwise, the opulent customers might find it insulting to their status if they are served together with the rest of the community, which is not the case in Australia.

Individualism

Saudi Arabia's score of 25% implies that the Saudi culture is very collectivist, and therefore, the individual is secondary to the group.

Appendix 1: Cultural dimensions for Australia and Saudi Arabia. Source: Hofstede Insights [n.d.].

The implications for customer relations here, is that the customers might have a wider spectrum of individual requirements, while in Saudi Arabia, the customers are likely to have a predetermined set of requirements. Group norms and cultures will be persistent, and the way which the customer experiences the service, will extend to several other customers of their same group. Moreover, for example, in Saudi Arabia, if an elderly customer believes that they were treated well, the it is possible that the individuals will think that the clinic or laboratory treats the elderly customers well. If an old pharmacist is treated a certain way, then the way they are treated, will reflect broadly on the relationship between the laboratory and that group of people from which they come, and yet this is not the case with Australia. The high collectivism rates in Saudi Arabia have implications for the brand image, because collectivism will culminate into a high frequency of word-of-mouth [19]. Evidently therefore, the laboratories should manage each customer as if they were managing the entire group from which the aforementioned customer comes.

Uncertainty avoidance

Saudi Arabia at 80%, has a much higher uncertainty avoidance figure than Australia, whose uncertainty avoidance figures stand at only 51%. Evidently, the Saudi culture is not very receptive towards uncertainty. This is a culture in which things must be spelled out clearly, and where structures will be valued by the customers.

The implication for the customers therefore, is that in Saudi pathology, the rates of innovation should be relatively lower. The clients will be reserved in trying new services, because they might

perceive them as riskier than that which they know. Resultantly, the marketing mix in the Saudi market will be stable over a longer period of time than it would be in Australia. For example, even the prices should not change that frequently, because the customers are accustomed to stability, and therefore, stability will be related to the reliability element of SERVQUAL more for Saudi Arabia than for Australia.

Long term orientation

Saudi Arabia scores 36% on the long-term orientation score, while Australia scores 21%. Evidently, both cultures are very spontaneous, and hardly plan for the future. For the customers therefore, they might expect less paperwork, and less participation in their quality of service over a long period of time.

The implications for this moreover, is that brand fidelity might be challenging to achieve, because the customers are very prone towards change, and hardly value longstanding relationships Moreover, it is also an opportunity to the extent that if there is a case of customer dissatisfaction, it will not affect the business over the long term. To that extent therefore, the low scores of both countries, imply that the business must satisfy the customer each time, without consideration that they have done it before.

Masculinity

Saudi Arabia and Australia are both have nearly identical scores on the masculinity scale. To that effect therefore, the two countries both have masculine and consequently very competitive cultures.

The implications here, is that the customers would not just expect differentiated quality, but they would expect differential treatment, in order to assuage their egos. The lab is typically a business-to-business service, with a few end-user clients. The high rates of masculinity will therefore imply a high focus on tangibles as a means of the customers to visibly differentiate their service. Consequently, in both cultures, the recommendation would be to pursue multiple segmentation, and therefore provide a tiered marketing mix. There should be both premium and ordinary services, in order to enable the "achievers" to stand out from their counterparts through service consumption.

Indulgence

Saudi Arabia is a barely indulgent country, with scores of 52% against Australia's 71%. To that effect therefore, it appears that the Saudi customers might require less sophisticated services than the Australian customers would be willing to pay for. In fact, for the business, the implication is that price discrimination which is aligned with more comfortable or sophisticated service, will be appreciated more, by the customers in Australia than the customers in Saudi Arabia.

Complementary culture models

The Hofstede model, while a widespread acknowledged model of cultural analysis, fails to consider all the other aspects of culture exhaustively. To that effect therefore, there are some independent elements of cultural analysis that would facilitate the understanding of quality and customer service.

Locus of control

The element of locus of control measures the extent to which the culture encourages internal responsibilities or an external attribution of most of the individual's experiences [20].

Cultures with an internal locus of control believe that they are responsible for their own destiny and situation [16]. These people, though sometimes religious, believe in influencing their environment to achieve what they want, and their belief in fate is relatively limited. The implication for business, is that customers will take a more proactive rather than reactive part in seeking for service quality. Australia has a high score on the internal locus of control [20], which means that the customers expect greater service quality.

Conversely, countries with an external locus of control believe that there is an external power which influences their destiny. These are cultures which mostly attribute their situation to others or even supernatural being routinely [16]. Saudi Arabia definitely scores very highly on an external locus of control, because it is a theocracy. Consequently, the service provider's actual role in the perception of service quality, is relatively limited. For the business, the implications for customer service and quality vary, according to the locus of control score.

The customers with an external locus of control might attribute poor quality to fate, as a result of their take on fatalism [21]. Consider an incidence where negligence causes adverse conditions for a patient. The culture with an external locus of control might attribute it to the deities. Moreover, the implicit expectations of

the customers in these cultures would be low. Considering that they believe in an external hand affecting their lives, they might be less innovative in the field. Consequently, the expectations of the customers are typically low, as a result of the lack of competition.

Alternatively, the cultures with an internal locus of control might expect more from their service quality from their service providers [22]. These cultures might have higher rates of innovation, because they consistently seek to affect their own fate. Resultantly, the presence of innovation generates abundance and choice, and breeds a culture where the expectations are typically higher. In the event of negligence therefore, the customers are likely to be more analytical of the services they receive, than their counterparts with an internal locus of control. To that effect therefore, it is important for the business to continue being very conscious of the quality of service when it is operating in these cultures. From the perspective of SERVQUAL, these cultures would expect more reliability, assurance, tangible evidence, and reliability. Alternatively, the cultures with an external locus of control would require more empathy, and assurance more than any of the other elements of SERVQUAL [23], because they are oriented more towards the intangibles than the tangibles.

Chronemics and customer service quality

One of the elements of culture is chronemics, which defines the impact of culture one the perceptions of time. In this content, of customer service, time falls under two elements, namely reliability and responsiveness, so this section examines how the different cultures behave with time.

Monochronic cultures

Monochronic cultures are the cultures which sequentially approach time [24]. They prefer to demarcate time in clear segments, which they insist on keeping or honouring. For example, in monochronic cultures, punctuality is very important, and the allocation of time is rigid. This makes punctuality very important to the individuals in these cultures. Consequently, their perception of service quality will be highly impacted by the promptness of responsiveness from the service provider, and the reliability with which they interact with this service provider. If a client from a monochronic culture is promised results from their sample in two days, then the service provider must ensure that they provide those results in two days, without fail. it is not important if there was a

family urgency, and therefore, it is important for the business to acknowledge that. The service provider must make arrangements to be punctual and provide the relevant service when they agreed to. Consequently, several precautions are taken to ensure that the individual delivers on time. People from monochronic cultures also value accuracy in other aspects, because order appeals to them. Even if change might be acceptable to them, it might not be in a context where it conflicts with the previously agreed upon conditions. Noteworthy, the Anglophone cultures are typically monochronic, and therefore, the customers expect more reliability and responsiveness, in addition to assurance that the conditions which they agreed on, will be met.

Polychronic cultures

In the polychronic cultures, time is perceived as flexible and fluid. Schedules are not as important as relationships in these cultures [25]. Moreover, they are also open to multitasking, and therefore, their demands from service quality might be more flexible, depending on the reason why.

In such cultures for example, the individuals are more relationship oriented, so their strongest requirements from the SERVQUAL scale, are assurance and empathy. To that effect therefore, when someone is operating in such cultures, they must be willing to operate in ambiguous structures, and build personal relationships with the customers in addition to the professional relationship. they must also be willing to accommodate violations of schedules, because this is a cultural identity. For example, the pathology client might not pick their results at a given time, and then appear in the time which is allocated to another customer, expecting to be served. They expect the service provider to perceive their reasons for the violations, as their own, and therefore, the flexibility could generate more competitive advantage. Typically, the Arab cultures are more predisposed towards the polychronic approach towards time.

In synopsis therefore, the business must demarcate and understand these cultures, from the perspective which ensures that they would be able to issue relevant service quality. To that effect therefore, these stark differences are the more reason why companies must consider a multidomestic strategy with cultures with staunch CAGE differences.

Language

Language is an important aspect of customer service, yet oral and body language differs across cultures [25,26]. For some cultures such as those with high scores of power distance, honorific language is expected when talking to the customers who are elderly, richer, or politically prominent. Saudi Arabia has phenomenally higher scores of power distance than Australia, which means that the country requires honorific use of language on customers basing on their status. Doing so or failing to do so, might result into customer service perceptions on the basis of assurance, and empathy.

Noteworthy though, body language must also be examined to enforce the culturally sensitive communication that might affect customer satisfaction. For example, hugging customers might be frowned upon in a more conservative country, while in fewer conservative cultures, the service provider might eventually build an interpersonal relationship with the customer, to the extent of being informal as a sign of better service.

Political and economic culture's impact on customer service quality

In addition to the cultural implications, there are also administrative contributions to the cultural influence on customer expectations. To that effect therefore, this section examines the administrative differences and their impact on customer service and quality.

Administrative differences

Regarding administrative differences, these are political and legal aspects which might influence the customers' perceptions of quality.

Politically, Saudi Arabia is autocratic while Australia is democratic [26,27]. This bears on customer expectations of quality in a manner that the products which the customers receive, are based on the government's dictations. Therefore, the government is likely to dictate the quality of service which different people receive and consequently get accustomed to. Likewise, the organization might be able to achieve and deliver the quality of service which the government dictates. Alternatively, there is no guarantee that it will match the requirements of the customer. In a democratic country like Australia however, the economy is a market economy, which nurtures intense competition in a manner which facilitates competitive innovation. The result therefore, is that the consumers learn to expect better service quality because of the political environment which nurtures the same.

Economic differences and their impact on customer expectations and quality

The customers' expectations might vary according to their economic standing. Wealthier customers might require better service, because they can pay for it [28]. They are less price-sensitive than their counterparts where the business would be able to use price discrimination in order to satisfy the differences in economic power. However, the less wealthy the customer is, the less discerning they might be. In fact, they might be willing to forego some of the elements of quality if they are very price-sensitive [29,30]. Even if high quality services were available in a country with little prowess in the market, they might not be able to use this approach, since they will be able to approach the business with the same. To that effect therefore, it is important that the economic culture of the different countries is examined.

Both Australia and Saudi Arabia are high income countries according to the World Bank [31] Consequently, there will hardly be the differences in economic capabilities, so the business should rely on the hedonistic scores of both countries. Australia has the highest levels of hedonism, as illustrated in figure consequently, having the more hedonistic culture means that Australians will be less price-sensitive than the Saudis. The result therefore, is that it might take a stronger performance on the tangible's element of SERVQUAL if the business is to satisfy the Australian customers. They are willing to pay more, but they are also more demanding, because they seek pleasure better than the Saudis do, so the aesthetic element of service provision will especially be strong for that case.

Addressing the cultural differences in the markets

The two countries under analysis evidently bear stark differences from almost all of the aspects of culture. Such differences are not uncommon in the international setting. To that effect therefore, there is a question of whether the business should address the aforementioned differences. Consequently, any organization which sets up in the two countries, must use a multidomestic strategy rather than the ethnocentric strategy. The

multidomestic strategy will integrate the differences in the market realities of both countries. Consequently, the business could design a customised service mix for the two countries.

Conclusion

In conclusion therefore, there are distinct differences between the customer service quality expectations between Australia and Saudi Arabia. The differences are especially a result of the cultural differences between the Australian and the Saudi customer's cultures.

According to the data, Australians do not accept the power distance concerns between their customer services. However, Saudis are okay with the fact that there is a difference in power distance regarding customer services. The Saudi culture is highly collectivist, whereas the Australian culture takes a more individualistic approach to provide services, which is another significant cultural difference. The Saudi Arabian culture received a score of 25%, which indicates this. The highest levels of hedonism were found in Australia, indicating that they had a culture of hedonism [Australians will be less price-sensitive than the Saudis]. When it comes to language use, Saudis can use awful language because power distance, which is based on status, allows them to do so. When staff fails to complete a task, it may result in negative perceptions of the company's customer service from the perspective of assurance to investigator their polite language, which enables them to have pleasant conversations with the people who offer the services they are the highly competitive character of the economy of Austra has led customers there to have higher expectations regarding the quality of the services they receive. The level of customer service provided in Saudi Arabia is largely consistent across social classes due to the of try's strong belief in the concept.

The researcher has modelled the inquiry on the service quality model of SERVQUAL because it is the standardised measure of quality in service industries such as pathology. Moreover, the same applies to Hofstede's cultural dimensions' model, in the context of cultural analysis.

Limitations of the Study

One of the main limitations of the study, is the use of seminal data to assess a current issue. Even if the Hofstede model is the baseline of cultural analysis [32,33], the data entries are possibly dated. This would not have been a problem at an earlier date, when the global environment was not so dynamic. However, according to Ghezzi [34] the current environment is subject to volatile, discontinuous, and rapid change. This means that the national scores of cultures are likely to change more frequently than was previously the case.

Furthermore, the two models which have been used in the study, have various limitations and criticism. The SERVQUAL model examines only five elements from a broad spectrum of what customers might consider a highlight of service quality. The model especially ignores the role of price in service perceptions. According to the law of demand, the most frequent occurrence of demand is that higher prices reduce the quantity demanded of a product or service [35,36]. Consequently, if the service is more expensive than the value which the customers attach to it, then they would perceive it as a poor or even overvalued service, and they would of course be dissatisfied by the difference. SERVQUAL ignores this. Likewise, the Hofstede model, although later broadened to include indulgence, is still very much lacking in depth of valid cultural analysis. In fact, the researcher had to add on different tenets in order to avail a more analytical approach on the topic.

The Hofstede model also ignores the role of cultural folklore on the impact of customer service perceptions. Each culture has tales, and myths which might be unique to it [37,38]. For cultures with an external locus of control the recurrence of these tales is especially important. To that effect therefore, the service quality elements might be influenced by such folklore or myths. For example, the assurance element might be tied to participating in ritualistic behaviour which the pathologist clearly understands is wrong. inferably, a culture may believe that a woman treating the patient, is an omen, or a person of a given size one someone with a birthmark, influences the individual's luck in a certain way. Understanding the presence of these elements in different cultures, should inform the business' adherence to the implicit promises to the customers. However uncomfortable some of these many be, it is the job of the pathologist to try as much as possible to adhere to the demands of their culture. Evidently, Saudi Arabia with the high external locus of control, might have a greater extent of these beliefs than Australia, where there is a formal internal locus of control, as discussed prior.

Moreover, the study is built on mostly secondary data. The use of secondary data means that the researcher cannot validate whether the data is inaccurate or otherwise. To that effect therefore, it is important to approach the aforementioned data with some scepticism. Likewise, the study was conducted in a very brief time frame. Resultantly, it was not as exhaustive as it could have been, with a longer time frame. Some of the cultural models are missing, and the relationships between the different variables are merely qualitative. Furthermore, the use of qualitative data provides in-depth analysis, but it does not quantify the findings of the research and the inherent relationships between the different aspects of the business.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest according to the authors.

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