

A Comparative Study of Service Culture in Japan and Indonesia from a Cultural Perspective

Muhammad Naftali Nabhan Fadrian

Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

Pitri Haryanti

Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Service culture is a very important factor in the service industry as it is closely associated with the quality of interaction between service providers and customers. The manner in which service is delivered may depend on the unique cultural characteristics of individual countries. The cultural characteristics may, in turn, affect the quality of service as perceived by customers. Japan is famous for its unique service culture, referred to as *omotenashi*. It is a kind of hospitality that is delivered sincerely, where service providers seek to serve customers wholeheartedly without any particular reward. Service practice in Indonesia has developed in line with the social values and cultural norms of the community in society. The service interaction process is also affected by the friendly and courteous service attitude, as well as the social relationships between service providers and customers. Moreover, the service system in public life also affects service delivery in various service sectors.

Keywords: *service culture, omotenashi, cultural dimensions, Japan, Indonesia*

INTRODUCTION

Service is one of the major aspects of the service industry, which is closely related to customer satisfaction. In the service industry, service quality is not only dependent upon the technical competence of the service provider, but it is also dependent upon cultural values, which are often considered in service interactions (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Japan is considered an advanced country in terms of service quality. One of the key terms used to describe service in Japan is *omotenashi*. *Omotenashi* is defined as “a genuine hospitality accompanied by sincere attention to customers’ needs” (Morishita, 2021). In other words, *omotenashi* focuses on the importance of attention to detail and providing the best service experience to customers.

On the other hand, service practices in Indonesia are also influenced by cultural values that stress the importance of having a friendly and polite attitude when dealing with other people. According to Koentjaraningrat (2009), Indonesian society is characterised by a collectivist cultural character in which social relationships are vital in people’s lives. These cultural values are also reflected in service practices, which stress the importance of having a friendly and polite attitude and good relationships with people.

Service quality in Indonesia still has to face some challenges, especially in the public sector of service quality. Various studies show that the implementation of service standards is not consistent and is often influenced by factors related to the organisation and the bureaucratic system (Titania & Nursadi, 2023).

The way services work in Japan and Indonesia can also be looked at from a point of view. Hofstede (2011) said that the values of a culture in a society can influence how people in an organisation behave when it comes to service. This study wants to look at how cultural differences affect service practices, in Japan and Indonesia. It will examine this from the perspective of dimensions.

Based on this research gap, this study aims to analyse how cultural differences affect service practices in Japan and Indonesia. More specifically, this research is aimed at comparing the two countries based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, in order to better understand how cultural values influence service behaviour and customer interactions. The current study is a qualitative comparative approach, by reviewing relevant literature, past research, and theoretical frameworks related to service quality and cultural values. The main analytical tool to interpret the service practices differences and similarities between Japan and Indonesia is Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

This research indicates that service practices in Japan are deeply rooted in values such as high uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation, which lead to a uniform, detailed and highly standardised service delivery through the concept of *omotenashi*. On the other hand, service practices in Indonesia are more collectivist and power distance oriented, emphasizing friendliness, flexibility and interpersonal relationships, although they may lead to inconsistencies in service standards.

These results suggest that cultural values are important in determining service quality in both countries. The current study contributes to the field of cross-cultural services research by offering a comparative analysis that includes cultural dimensions in the study of service practices. Furthermore, the findings have practical implications for enhancing the service quality, especially in Indonesia, by incorporating the positive aspects of Japanese service practices, while considering local cultural values.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture and Service

Culture can be defined as "a system of values, norms, and customs which guide human behavior in social life." According to Koentjaraningrat (2009), "culture includes various aspects of social life, such as knowledge, beliefs, morals, and customs which are transmitted from one generation to another."

In the service industry, culture is considered an extremely important factor in defining the manner in which service is rendered to customers. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) proposed the SERVQUAL model to measure service quality in five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. This model is used to understand how customers perceive the quality of service being rendered to them.

Some studies on *omotenashi* in hospitality show that service isn't just about doing a job but also about respecting customers. For example service providers try to give customers an experience when they serve them (Wijayanti & Saifudin, 2021). The idea of hospitality is also important to understand how service works. Hospitality isn't about serving people it's also about the kind of relationship that forms, between the people serving and the customers they serve (Kuraesin, 2021).



Figure 1: Comments on Fushimi Restaurant

According to Anuraga Kartika's review, the quality of service in Fushimi Restaurant is extremely low. As Anuraga Kartika asserts, the quality of service in terms of speed is really bad because it takes more than thirty minutes for food and drinks to be delivered, and table clearing is delayed.

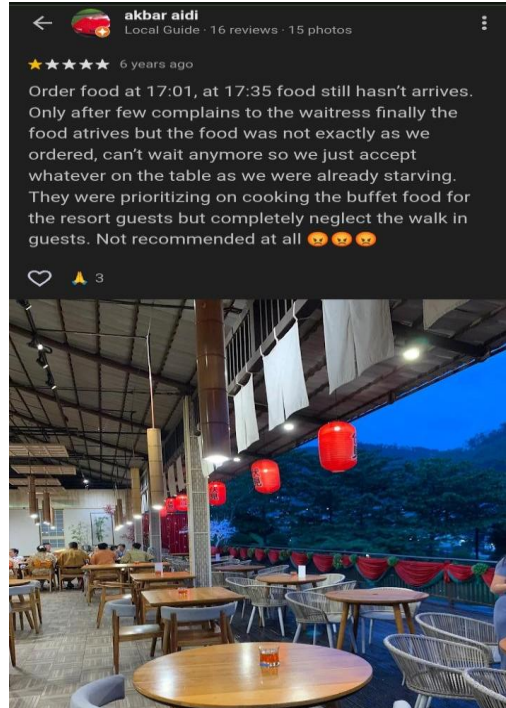


Figure 2: Comments on Fushimi Restaurant

Aidi Akbar comments on the Fushimi restaurant as follows: Order food at 17:01, and at 17:35 the food has still not arrived. After complaining a couple of times to the waitress, the food is finally brought, but it is not the food that we ordered. We could not wait any longer, so we decided to eat what is available on the table because we were very

hungry. The priority of this restaurant was serving the buffet food to the resort customers and ignoring us walk-in customers.

Omotenashi in Japanese Culture

Omotenashi is a deal in Japans service industry. It's all, about giving hospitality with a lot of care. In Japans hospitality and tourism business omotenashi means providing top-notch service that is really personalized (Morishita, 2021).

The people providing the service try to figure out what customers need even before they say it. They pay attention to customers and make sure their needs are met with omotenashi. This way customers feel special and taken care of with omotenashi (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988).

Moreover, the concept of omotenashi is also associated with the work ethics of the Japanese society, which is known for having a high level of discipline, precision, and quality (Haryanti, 2016). All of these factors contribute to the fact that service in Japan is generally perceived as professional.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

The idea of dimensions was thought of by Hofstede (2011). It helps us understand the differences in culture from one country to another. Hofstede said that we can look at a things to see what a countrys culture is like. These things are how much power is given to people if people think for themselves if people like to plan everything and if people think about the future.

When we talk about giving services to people some countries, like Japan do not like surprises. They like to follow rules when they give services to people.. Other countries are more easy going and think that relationships are important when giving services. So this idea of dimensions can help us see how the culture of a country affects what people do at work.

In conclusion, culture is involved in the provision and reception of service in different cultures. The concept of service is not constrained by technical performance but is heavily influenced by values, norms and social relations. In Japan, omotenashi is a strong dedication, attention to detail and anticipation of customer needs, underpinned by strong work ethics such as discipline and precision. At the same time, general theories of service quality, such as the SERVQUAL model, stress that customer satisfaction is also affected by such aspects as empathy, reliability, and responsiveness, all of which are affected by the cultural context. Moreover, Hofstede's cultural dimensions offer a useful framework for understanding how differences in national culture such as uncertainty avoidance, collectivism and long-term orientation influence service behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. This method is used in order to understand the cultural phenomenon of service by interpreting various relevant sources of literature (Creswell, 2014). The theory of cultural dimensions developed by Hofstede is used in this study in order to understand the differences in cultural values in Japan and Indonesia. Various cultural dimensions, such as power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation, have been used in order to understand the influence of cultural values on work behavior in society. (Hofstede, 2011).

The data for the research was obtained through literature review, which involved reviewing various academic materials such as books, scientific journal articles, and research publications on the concepts of service culture, omotenashi, and cultural dimension theory. The data was analyzed using descriptive analysis to find the differences in service practices in Japan and Indonesia from a cultural point of view.

The approach adopted in analyzing the data for the purposes of this research includes qualitative descriptive analysis. Initially, the researcher categorizes the data according to some relevant themes like service values, customer service, and culture among others. Afterwards, the data is analyzed by comparing Japan and Indonesia based on the Hofstede cultural dimensions approach. In view of the fact that this research is based on literature review, there is no need to conduct field research. In other words, there will be no respondent and institution involved in this research.

DISCUSSION

Japanese Service Culture

The service culture in Japan is really something. It is famous for being extremely good at what it does. When we talk about service in Japan we often talk about something called *omotenashi*. The idea of *omotenashi* is that people who provide services should do so in a way and really think about what the customer needs. This means paying attention to every detail to make sure the customer gets great service. Japans service culture and *omotenashi* are all about making sure the customer is happy, with the service they get. This is what makes Japans service culture so well known for having exceptionally high standards of quality (Morishita 2021).

This means that in life service in Japan is known for being very careful and detailed. Service providers are usually trained to figure out what customers want before they even say it. This is mainly done to make sure customers have an experience. Also the way people work in Japan, which's very disciplined and dedicated helps to keep service standards high. It is characterized by discipline order and a strong commitment, to work (Haryanti, 2016).

Indonesia Service Culture

Generally, the service culture in Indonesia is influenced by social values that stress the significance of having a friendly attitude and the importance of relationships in service encounters. During different service encounters, service providers in Indonesia often aim to develop good relationships with their customers through friendly communication and showing respect to the person they are communicating with.

However, service quality in Indonesia is still faced with different challenges, which include the lack of uniformity in implementing service standards and the complexity of the bureaucratic system, especially in the public service sector (Titania & Nursadi, 2023).

Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 1: Method Omotenashi

Step	Research Stage	Description
1	Research Problem Identification	Identifying the main issue regarding differences in service practices between Japan and Indonesia based on cultural values.
2	interview preparation	preparing some questions for the interviewer.
3	Data Selection (interview)	Selecting sources based on relevance to the topic, credibility (peer-reviewed and academic publications), and recency to ensure up-to-date analysis.
4	Data Classification	Organising data into key themes, including service quality concepts, Japanese <i>omotenashi</i> , Indonesian service culture, and Hofstede's cultural dimensions.
5	Data Analysis (kualitatif)	Applying descriptive qualitative analysis by interpreting the data and comparing service practices in

		Japan and Indonesia using Hofstede's framework.
6	Data Triangulation	Validating findings by cross-checking multiple sources, including theoretical frameworks (Hofstede), service models (SERVQUAL), and empirical studies.
7	Conclusion Drawing	Drawing conclusions by identifying similarities, differences, and cultural influences on service practices, as well as their implications.

According to the theory of cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede, the differences in service culture between Japan and Indonesia can be explained by understanding the cultural values of the people of Japan and Indonesia. Japan is a country with a high level of uncertainty avoidance, which means that the people of Japan work in an environment with well-established rules and regulations (Hofstede, 2011).

On the other hand, the cultural values of Indonesian people, who are flexible in their interactions with each other, emphasize the importance of interpersonal relationships in service with a friendly attitude in social interactions. It can thus be concluded that the cultural values of the people of a particular country are of significant importance in the delivery of service to customers

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study is looking at how service culture's different in Japan and Indonesia. It is looking at this from a perspective. The study found that the service culture in Japan and Indonesia is shaped by the values of each country. Japan is an example of a country with a very organized service system. This is shown in the idea of omotenashi. The idea of omotenashi is all about being sincere when you are serving someone. It is also about understanding what the customer needs. These values are also important in the workplace. People in Japan believe in working and paying attention to details. They also believe in providing service. The service culture, in Japan is really influenced by these values. Japan has a service culture because of this.

In Indonesia the way people do service work is really influenced by what people think is polite and friendly. Indonesia is a place where people think about the group, not themselves. So when it comes to service people in Indonesia like to be flexible and focus on getting along with each other. Service providers in Indonesia want to have a relationship with the people they are serving. The service culture in Indonesia is about being friendly and polite.. Some studies have said that service practices in Indonesia do not always meet the standards that they should. The service culture in Indonesia has a problem with making sure that the rules, for service are actually followed.

Japan and Indonesia are two countries with service practices. This is because of the differences between Japan and Indonesia. If we look at Japan we see that Japan has a high uncertainty avoidance index. This means that people in Japan like to follow rules and do things in a way when they are working. People in Japan prefer to maintain procedures and work standards in their work. Japan is a country where people like to do things in a way. On the hand Indonesia is different from Japan. Indonesia is a country where people're flexible when they deal with others. In Indonesia service practices focus on building relationships with people than following procedures. This is why service practices, in Japan and Indonesia are different. Japan and Indonesia have cultural factors that affect their service practices.

On a general level, this study reveals that service practice not only depends on the management system of the organisation, but also on the cultural values that have developed in society. Therefore, it can be concluded that the study of cultural perspectives is of primary importance in the improvement of service quality in different service fields. In addition, the study of cultural differences in service practice may help service organisations to develop more efficient service strategies, especially in the context of globalisation.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Muhammad Naftali Nabhan Fadrian, email: naftali.63822046@mahasiswa.ac.id

Muhammad Naftali Nabhan Fadrian, is an undergraduate student majoring in Japanese Literature at Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Bandung.

Dr. Pitri Haryanti, S, Pd., M, Pd. is a lecturer of Japanese literature in the faculty of cultural studies at Universitas Komputer Indonesia. Her field of specialization includes Japanese language, Japanese culture, and anime studies. She graduated from Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia with her Bachelors and Master's degree in Japanese Language Education. Her PhD is from Universitas Padjadjaran, specializing in Cultural Studies.