

# Individual's Cultural Orientation and Perceived Service Quality in the Hospitality Industry

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## Abstract

The study assessed the effects of individual's cultural orientation on perceived service quality in the hospitality industry. The study focused on nine (9) rated hotels (3 to 5-star rating) in Ghana. In all, 676 clients were selected from these hotels within a period of 3 months. The dimensions of Hofstede's model were used in measuring individual's cultural orientation, while the SERVQUAL model was also used in measuring perceived service quality. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was run to check for the validity and reliability of the measurement instrument. The study concludes that, low power distance cultural orientation had a positive effect on all the dimensions of perceived service quality of high rated hotels. Low uncertainty avoidance had a positive effect on perceived service assurance, tangibility and responsiveness. It also had a negative effect on perceived service empathy. Low uncertainty avoidance however had no significant effect on perceived service reliability. Individualism cultural orientation had a negative effect on perceived service assurance, reliability, empathy and tangibility of rated hotels. It however had no significant

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effect on perceived responsiveness. Femininity had a positive effect on perceived assurance and service reliability. For perceived service empathy, tangibility and responsiveness, femininity however, had a negative effect. Finally, short-term cultural orientation also had a positive effect on all the dimensions of perceived service quality.

**Keywords:** Cultural Orientation; Service Quality; Hotel; Hospitality.

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## Introduction

The Ghanaian service industry has become an important component of the economy, having being the highest contributor to gross domestic product (GDP) since 2006 to 2017 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2018). The service sector currently stands at 56.2 % with the hotels and restaurants being the third highest contributor to the service sector (GSS, 2018). The hotel sector across the globe is regarded as unpredictable and competitive due to its intangible service components nature (Crick & Spencer, 2011; Kuada & Hinson, 2014; Narteh, Agbemabiese, Kodua, & Braimah, 2013). Despite its competitive nature, the hotel sector has seen significant growth in the Ghanaian economy over the past decade due to the opportunities that the sector presents (Hinson, Abdul-Hamid, & Osabutey, 2017; Narteh et al., 2013). Big brands such as Holiday Inn, Movenpick Ambassador, Kempiski, Golden Tulip, La Palm Royal Beach Hotel etc. have become more visible (Hinson et al., 2017) as a result of the opportunities the sector presented. The entry of these big players have brought so much competition in the sector forcing managers of these hotels to become more customer focus (Hinson et al., 2017; Narteh et al., 2013)

In attempt to become more competitive, the sector has seen much improvement in strategies such as improved relationship marketing, better market orientation practices, better positioning, better location and accessibility selection decision, better communication services and improved service quality (Adam & Amuquandoh, 2013; Ayeh, 2007; Hinson et al., 2017; Kim, Zhou, & Liu, 2018; Narteh et al., 2013). And since the hotel sector is an area where the client determines the kind of service he or she wants, service quality has remained one of the main strategic tools that boost firms' competitive advantage in the sector (Narteh et al., 2013).

The delivery of quality service to meet mass customers' expectations is one of the headaches of service producers in the service industry (Novixoxo, Pomegbe, & Dogbe, 2018), and meeting the individual customer's expectations becomes even more challenging. Service quality according to Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1993) is the evaluations of customer's expectations as against the actual performance of the service. This therefore means that customers deem services to be satisfying if the performance of the service meet their expectations. However, individual expectations are not the same. These different individual expectations are sometimes influenced by measures such as the actual and implied service promises that are within the control of the customers (Zeithaml et al., 1993). Other measures such as needs and wants of the customer, self-perceived service role and service alternatives and word of mouth communication which are not

within the control of the customers are also deemed to influence the customers' expectations (Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Zeithaml et al., 1993). Others have suggested that the evaluation of service quality is also likely to be influenced by cultural disposition (Abdussalam & Ryan, 2011; Echchabi, 2012; Kueh & Ho Voon, 2007).

Culture according to Hofstede (1991) is a shared mind-set or belief among a group of people living in the same environment. Based on the Hofstede's work on culture, studies have attempted to find the relationship between culture and other variables (such as, consumers' consumption, quality management, consumer trust) to assess their effectiveness (Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2018; Kim et al., 2018; Lagrosen, 2003). Other studies have also explored the influence of culture on perceived service quality (Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Endara, Ali, & Yajid, 2019; Morales Espinoza, 1999; Trivellas & Dargenidou, 2009). While some of these studies found a strong relationship between culture and service quality (Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Endara et al., 2019; Furrer, Liu, & Sudharshan, 2000; Mattila, 1999), others have also found weak or negative effect of culture on some of the dimensions of service quality (Endara et al., 2019; Furrer et al., 2000; Morales Espinoza, 1999).

Most research works (such as, Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Endara et al., 2019; Furrer et al., 2000; Kim et al., 2018; Mattila, 1999; Sharma, Tam, Kim, Zhan, & Su, 2018) based on Hofstede's researches on culture focused on national culture, cross-culture and organizational culture, except Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) whose study focused solely on Generation Y consumers in Malaysia which lacked generalization. Our current study seeks to resolve this by looking at the entire consumer set in the hospitality sector. We believe, this study is necessary because of the little attention that has been paid to the significant influence of individual's cultural dispositions or orientation on service quality judgment. This is to say that individuals though born in the same settings or environments, may have different mind-set or attitude based on their personality traits. This we believe constitute an individual's cultural dispositions which are embedded in the national culture, and can therefore affect the way these individuals perceive and evaluate service quality. Also, most of the studies (like, Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Endara et al., 2019; Furrer et al., 2000; Mattila, 1999) that have been done on culture in relations to service quality have been done out of the sub-Saharan Africa.

Although Hofstede's definition of culture focused on the dissimilarity among societies (Hofstede, 1991), we opine that individuals within a specific society, individuals could have their own cultural dispositions, which is worth studying as part of consumer behavior. Donthu and Yoo (1998) emphasized that studying individual level culture was as much important, as within a specific country there are many subcultures. They cited for example that, Canada and United States could generally be deemed to be having similar culture, however, in United States, there are many subcultures (such as the Hispanic Americans, Caucasian Americans, Asian Americans and African Americans). Our study further falls on The Big Five personality traits theory (conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness and extraversion), which we believe explains why individuals living in same society may have different cultural orientations (Costa Jr & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1981, 1990; John & Srivastava, 1999; Norman, 1963). This therefore inform our study regarding the individuals' cultural dispositions and how these

dispositions influence their service quality evaluation in the patronage of high star-rated hotels in Ghana.

## Literature Review

### *Cultural Orientation*

The concept of culture has been studied for over a century and its definition still remains varied based on the scholars' perspectives. Whiles some scholars defined it from the perspectives of shared value (Geertz, 1973; C. Kluckhohn, 1951; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952; Triandis, 1972), others have also defined it from geographical point of view (Hofstede, 1991, 1994). F. R. Kluckhohn (1951) from a shared pattern on value perspective defined culture as “patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values” (p. 86). Kroeber (1952) defined culture as “the historically differentiated and variable mass of customary ways of functioning of human societies” (p. 157). Nakata and Sivakumar (2001) describe culture as a situation where individuals' think, feel and practice beliefs and values that have been accepted by the individual's society over a period of time. Schein (2010) also defined culture as a social setting with a purpose and includes a set of behavioral and intelligent distinctiveness. However, Hofstede in an attempt to define culture looked at it from the geographical point of view, by stating that culture is the differences that exist between members of one society to another based on the individuals' shared behavior and mind (Hofstede, 1991). From Hofstede, individuals who live in the same social setting are likely to share the same belief and mind set. His description of culture has enjoyed so much review from both practitioners and academic scholars. He also came out five dimensions of culture that are deemed to have an influence on society and individual's way of life (Hofstede, 1991). These dimensions include, power distance, individualism or collectivism, masculinity and femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and short/long-term orientation.

The first dimension which is *power distance* is about how minorities within an organization or an institutions accept the fact that power is not evenly distributed (Hofstede, 1991). This is also about the imbalance nature of power and authority that exist between the elites and the minorities in the family, organizations, and any social setting (Endara et al., 2019). It therefore means that the greater the power distance, the greater the level of discrimination and the lesser the power distance, the more accommodating individuals at different levels become. Regarding power distance, areas such as school, families, workplaces, communities, age, gender, race, occupation and educational level also experience differences based on where the individual find him or herself. Higher power distance brings about formalization and centralization which results in power hierarchy (Hofstede, 1991).

Also, the second dimension which is *masculinity and femininity* refers to the majority of individuals that are found to be dominant based on the pattern of their sex roles in the traditional and modern society (Hofstede, 1991). Masculinity is the extent to which the individual solely concerns itself with success, achievements, assertiveness and

competitiveness (Hofstede, 1991). It also adopts the analytical, hard and rational way of doing things while femininity is the extent to which individuals approach issues in a manner that is regarded as modest, soft, humane, holistic and intuitive (Endara et al., 2019; Guesalaga & Pitta, 2014; Hofstede, 1991).

Furthermore, the third dimension is *individualism and collectivism*. Individualism is a situation where the focus is on individual fulfilment than group fulfilment. Collectivism is the opposite of the individualism where the focus is on group fulfilment. It is also a situation where individuals look for one another's interest rather than the individual interest. So in a culture where the individual focuses on his or her personal interest or goal as against the group or the society's interest or goal, then that individual is regarded to be practicing the culture of individualism and the vice versa (Endara et al., 2019; Guesalaga & Pitta, 2014; Hofstede, 1991).

The fourth dimension which is *uncertainty avoidance* is also a situation where individuals having felt threatened by the occurrences of the future which is unknown find ways and means of preventing those unfortunate occurrences. It is also a culture where the individual finds it difficult to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty. Under this dimension of culture, the societies are governed by rules and regulations because their level of uncertainty avoidance is very high. They also tend to be very anxious when their level of uncertainty avoidance is very high. Societies seem to be more daring and willing to open up when their level of uncertainty is very low (Endara et al., 2019; Guesalaga & Pitta, 2014).

The last dimension which is, *long-term orientation versus short-term orientation* is also known as Confucian dynamic. This was a study based on a cultural value among students of twenty-three countries. The long-term orientation is said to favor a cultural setting where there is a sense of perseverance, ordering relationships and observation of order. Individuals who have the tendency to plan and pay attention to tradition are said to have a long term perspective (Endara et al., 2019). Short-term orientation on the other hand is concerned with the past and the present which is identified with saving face, personal steadiness and stability, respect for others and reciprocation of greetings, favors and gift (Hofstede, 1991, p. 165)

### *Service Quality*

Due to the intangible nature of service, service providers have made meeting customer expectations their major priority. Service according to Collier (1994) is any collaborative activities that result in the production of intangible goods. To him, the intangible nature of the service, makes it expedient for service providers to assess the performance of the service as against customers' expectations. This is because customers in recent times have made the service quality their priority due to abundant knowledge and multiple service providers (Bamfo, Dogbe, & Osei-Wusu, 2018b; Endara et al., 2019; Solomon, Polegato, & Zaichkowsky, 2009). Unfortunately, individual customer's perception of service quality is different based on the circumstances under which the service is provided and the timing of the service delivery. In the service marketing literature, service quality is the measurement of how customers perceived service quality as against their expectations (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, Berry, & Berry, 1990). Conceptualization of service quality is

seen as the disparity of service provided in relation to customer expectation and customer perception (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). Based on this premise, measurement scale known as the SERVQUAL model was created to measure the gap regarding customers' expectations and perceptions. The scale which was originally made up of ten (10) dimensions, were later abridged to five major dimensions (Berry & Parasuraman, 2004). These five dimensions include; reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The SERVQUAL scale has enjoyed wide spread acceptance from both academicians and practitioners (Morales Espinoza, 1999) though it was criticized for its theoretical and operational underpinning regarding the expectation and disparity score during its original stage by scholars (Babakus & Boller, 1992; Brown, Churchill Jr, & Peter, 1993; Carman, 1990; Cronin Jr & Taylor, 1992, 1994; Finn, 1991; Teas, 1993, 1994) also suggested the unidimensional construct of service quality as they were against the assertion that service quality is multidimensional. However, Scholars (such as, Brady & Cronin Jr, 2001; Dabholkar, Thorpe, & Rentz, 1996) have later calls for re-examination of the service quality construct. Due to recent assessment of service quality from several levels of perception, scholars have concluded that service quality should be conceptualized as multidimensional and hierarchical (Brady & Cronin Jr, 2001; Dabholkar et al., 1996; Dagger, Sweeney, & Johnson, 2007; Liu, Bishu, & Najjar, 2005; Lu, Zhang, & Wang, 2009). Despite all these criticism, re-evaluation and conceptualization of new service quality scale, the SERVQUAL model has remained relevant. Also the studies like Endara et al. (2019), Kueh and Ho Voon (2007), Furrer et al. (2000) and Donthu and Yoo (1998) that have tried to assess the impact of culture on service quality used the SERVQUAL scale. It was also said to be robust, reliable, stable and valid (Khayyat & Heshmati, 2012). Hence, this study deems it appropriate to assess the influence of individual culture on service quality in the Ghanaian hotel sector, using the SERVQUAL scale.

### *Cultural Orientations and Perceived Service Quality*

Scholars have called for studies into the influence of culture on service quality (Anderson & Fornell, 1994; Collier, 1994; Horovitz, 1990). These calls have triggered studies (Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Endara et al., 2019; Furrer et al., 2000; Kueh & Ho Voon, 2007; Mattila, 1999) trying to find the relationship between cross-culture and service quality between nations.

For Endara et al. (2019), they attempted to understand the relationship between culture and perceived service quality among 329 customers of three top private and public banks each in the cities of Misurata and Tripoli in Libya. Using SmartPLS to analyze the result, their study revealed that collectivism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance have strongly predicted perceived service quality. Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) in their work wanted to find out whether generation Y consumers' expectations are influenced by the individual level cultural dimensions. In their analysis, existing scale for service quality and individual level cultural dimensions were used. The study revealed that uncertainty avoidance and long term orientation were positively linked with the service quality expectations of Generation Y consumers. Whiles Masculinity and collectivism have no significant relationship with Generation Y consumers' service quality expectations, power distance on the other hand was negatively related to service quality expectations of Generation Y consumers. They concluded that generation Y consumers are found to

have high service quality expectations and are low in power distance. Their study however was also limited in terms of generalization due to its focus on Generation Y consumers only.

Furrer et al. (2000) did an extension of Mattila (1999), Donthu and Yoo (1998), and Winsted (1997) studies by testing each of the five dimensions of both Hofstede cultural dimension and SERVQUAL dimensions argued that service quality perceptions of consumers will differ across cultural settings. Their result shown that Hofstede's dimensions of culture and the SERVQUAL dimensions were correlated. However, the relationship between individual dimensions vary. Out of the twenty-five (25) hypotheses that were formulated, twenty-one (21) were supported. Their study though elaborate, failed to recognize the effect of individual cultural orientations on service quality by conducting their study using students from different cultures like USA, Singapore and Switzerland. Since their study was also focused solely on the university students, it will be difficult for organisations to tailor their services to different generation of customers they have on their accounts.

The purpose of Mattila (1999) research was also to evaluate the influence of culture on consumers' complex services expectations. In their work, they wanted to comprehend the concessions that the Western and Asian customers are ready to make in respect of personalized service and pleasant environment in the luxury hotels. The result of the study posited that consumers from western countries are more likely to be influenced by tangible cues from the physical environment of consumers from the Asian countries. Hedonic dimension of consumption experience was also found to be more relevant to consumers from Western countries than that of their Asian counterparts. However, Furrer et al. (2000) questioned Mattila's study for not controlling for the dimensions when she divided her sample into three categories (Westerners, Asian Chinese and Asian Indian).

Furthermore, Donthu and Yoo (1998) investigated the influence of consumers' cultural orientation on service quality encounters. Their research employed the Hofstede's dimension of culture and SERVQUAL scale to test hypotheses regarding service quality dimensions as against cultural dimensions. The results of their study showed that low power distance consumers have high overall service quality expectations and also expect their service providers to offer responsive and reliable service. The study also found individualistic consumers to have high overall service quality expectations and expect their service providers to exercise empathy and assurance in their service delivery. High uncertainty avoidance and short term oriented consumers have high overall service quality expectations. Furrer et al. (2000) again questioned their focus on only six (6) hypotheses out of the twenty-five possible hypotheses and went on further to state that the study is limited because they did not consider contingency variables or construct to put in control measures.

With all these studies attempting to examine the influence of culture in one way or the other, coupled with their limitations, we also believe that cross-cultural research cannot be the only way to assess consumers' service quality expectations with regards to their cultural disposition or orientations. We opine that individual consumers irrespective of their society, have some unique identity and cultural orientations. These unique identity

and cultural orientations have the tendency of affecting their perception of service quality of high star rated hotels in Ghana.

### Power Distance and Service Quality

Power distance explains the possibility of the minority members of an organization, institution and social setting, expecting and agreeing that power is not evenly distributed (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Cultural orientation that desires hierarchy, inequalities, centralization, autonomy and formalization is said to be large power distance culture. Likewise, wealth and power distribution is also based on the level of the hierarchy one finds him or herself (Hofstede, 2003). According to Donthu and Yoo (1998), customers with higher power distance orientation tend to have lower service quality expectations, because they feel service providers' expertise is beyond their domain.

Findings from past studies on the relationship between power distance and service assurance have been a mixed one. As Furrer et al. (2000) found a positive relationship, Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) found a negative relationship. The relationship between power distance and service reliability & responsiveness have been found to be negative (Furrer et al., 2000; Kueh & Ho Voon, 2007), implying that consumers with high power distance orientation would have less expectations of service reliability & responsiveness. Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) also found that power distance negatively correlates with service empathy. Furrer et al. (2000) however found no significant relationship. Consumers with high power distance orientation also have higher service tangibility expectations (Furrer et al., 2000; Kueh & Ho Voon, 2007). From the above review, the hypotheses for the various relationships between power distance and the five dimensions of service quality ( $H_{1a-e}$ ) are given in Table 1, in addition to their expected signs (positive or negative).

### Uncertainty Avoidance and Perceived Service Quality

Uncertainty avoidance is “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 167). Individuals with high uncertainty avoidance tries to minimize ambiguity and the unknown uncertainties by putting in place rules and regulations. It is said that all dimensions of service quality are very important in order to minimize uncertainties in societies where there is a strong uncertainty avoidance (Furrer et al., 2000). Donthu and Yoo (1998) asserted that tangible cues are appropriate replacement of service quality for culture where there is strong uncertainty avoidance. The tangible cues (staff appearance and facilities) are the attributes that assure the customer of service quality. If these tangibles are not managed properly, then the customers feel that the service may not be of good value. It is also expected that perceived risks will be reduced in service situations where more emphasis is placed on the tangible evidences that the customer encounters.

On the individual dimensions of service quality, Furrer et al. (2000) and Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) found that consumers with high uncertainty avoidance would have higher expectations of service assurance, reliability, empathy & responsiveness. Mixed findings were however found from past studies on the relationship between uncertainty avoidance and service tangibility. Furrer et al. (2000) found a negative relationship, whiles Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) found a positive relationship. From the above review, the hypotheses

for the various relationships between uncertainty avoidance and the five dimensions of service quality ( $H_{2a-e}$ ) are given in Table 1, in addition to their expected signs (positive or negative).

### Individualism & Collectivism and Perceived Service Quality

Individualism relates to cultural orientation that exude values such as self-orientation, freedom, self-confidence, fairness, and independence whiles collectivism also relates to values such as interdependence, cooperation, harmony, conformity, forgiveness, social usefulness and others-orientation (Furrer et al., 2000; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). Individualistic customers always consider their interest first before the group. It is therefore clear that individualistic customers have high expectation for service quality. Collectivist customers on the other hand lay more emphasis on 'we' rather than I. This is because the collectivist consumers believe in interdependence relationships (Donthu & Yoo, 1998).

While Furrer et al. (2000) suggested that individualistic consumers have less expectation of service assurance, Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) found no significant relationship between collectivism and service assurance. Previous studies found no significant relationships between individualism & collectivism and service reliability (Furrer et al., 2000; Kueh & Ho Voon, 2007). Although Furrer et al. (2000) presented a negative relationship between individualism and service empathy, Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) found no significant relationship between collectivism and service empathy. Although consumers with individualism orientation have higher expectation of service tangibility (Furrer et al., 2000), there was no significant relationship between collectivism and service tangibility (Kueh & Ho Voon, 2007). Both individualism and collectivism were found to have no significant relationship with service responsiveness (Furrer et al., 2000; Kueh & Ho Voon, 2007). From the above review, the hypotheses for the various relationships between individualism and the five dimensions of service quality ( $H_{3a-e}$ ) are given in Table 1, in addition to their expected signs (positive or negative).

### Masculinity & Femininity and Service Quality

Masculinity cultures is a society where male employees are assumed by their customers to be more reliable, more responsive and professional in their service delivery. Empathy is however associated with female employees. So in an institution where male is dominated, service quality is said to be more assured than female dominated institutions (Endara et al., 2019). However, femininity culture is where the employees are more feminine in the delivery of service quality. (Furrer et al., 2000) thought that service quality expectations will be affected based on the gender of the service provider, that assumption was however not supported. This therefore give credence to the study of (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) that service provider's gender is not relevant when it comes to service quality but rather the type of value required from the service delivery. Service quality delivery is required to conform to the core feminine value irrespective of whether the employee is male or female (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). However, female employees dominate the hotel industry in Ghana.

Considering the individual dimensions, (Furrer et al., 2000) presented negative relationships between masculinity and service assurance & responsiveness, although (Kueh & Ho Voon, 2007) found no significant relationships. Masculinity was however found to have no relationship with service reliability & empathy (Furrer et al., 2000; Kueh & Ho Voon, 2007). Furrer et al. (2000) also presented a positive relationship between masculinity and service tangibility, while Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) found no significant relationship. From the above review, the hypotheses for the various relationships between femininity and the five dimensions of service quality (H<sub>4a-e</sub>) are given in Table 1, in addition to their expected signs (positive or negative).

### Long-term Orientation versus Short-term Orientation and Perceived Service Quality

Long-term orientation regards the situations where individuals begin to take long-term measures as against short-term measures. Endara et al. (2019) in their study; “the influence of culture on service quality leading to customer satisfaction and moderation role of type of banks”, proposed that customers that are deemed to be in long-term relationship with their service providers tend to give excuses even if they feel the services quality do not meet their expectations. On the other hand, customers that are in a short-term relationship with their service provider will not accept any poor service.

Consumers with long-term cultural orientation have higher expectations of service reliability & responsiveness (Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Furrer et al., 2000; Kueh & Ho Voon, 2007). Furrer et al. (2000) and Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) also indicated that consumers with long-term cultural orientation have higher expectation of service assurance. Mixed findings were presented by previous studies on the relationship between long-term cultural orientation and service tangibility. Furrer et al. (2000) suggested that consumers with long-term cultural orientation have higher expectation of service tangibility, while Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) rather presented a negative relationship between these variables. Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) further suggested that long-term orientation consumers have a higher expectation of service empathy, while Furrer et al. (2000) presented no significant relationship. From the above review, the hypotheses for the various relationships between short-term orientation and the five dimensions of service quality (H<sub>5a-e</sub>) are given in Table 1, in addition to their expected signs (positive or negative).

Table 1. Summary of Hypotheses

Variables	Assurance	Reliability	Empathy	Tangibility	Responsiveness
Low Power Distance	H <sub>1a</sub> <sup>+</sup>	H <sub>1b</sub> <sup>+</sup>	H <sub>1c</sub> <sup>+</sup>	H <sub>1d</sub> <sup>-</sup>	H <sub>1e</sub> <sup>+</sup>
Low Uncertainty Avoidance	H <sub>2a</sub> <sup>-</sup>	H <sub>2b</sub> <sup>-</sup>	H <sub>2c</sub> <sup>-</sup>	H <sub>2d</sub> <sup>+</sup>	H <sub>2e</sub> <sup>-</sup>
Individualism	H <sub>3a</sub> <sup>-</sup>	H <sub>3b</sub> <sup>-</sup>	H <sub>3c</sub> <sup>-</sup>	H <sub>3d</sub> <sup>+</sup>	H <sub>3e</sub> <sup>-</sup>
Femininity	H <sub>4a</sub> <sup>+</sup>	H <sub>4b</sub> <sup>+</sup>	H <sub>4c</sub> <sup>-</sup>	H <sub>4d</sub> <sup>-</sup>	H <sub>4e</sub> <sup>+</sup>
Short-Term Orientation	H <sub>5a</sub> <sup>-</sup>	H <sub>5b</sub> <sup>-</sup>	H <sub>5c</sub> <sup>-</sup>	H <sub>5d</sub> <sup>+</sup>	H <sub>5e</sub> <sup>-</sup>

<sup>+</sup> ~ represents positive effect

- ~ represents negative effect

## Methods

### *Sampling Design and Data Collection*

The study used a survey approach, by administering structured questionnaire to clients of highly rated hotels in Greater Accra region of Ghana. Two non-probability sampling techniques were adopted for the study, which were purposive and convenience sampling techniques (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). First, purposive sampling was used in selecting hotels which had a rating of at least three-stars (\*\*\*)). This was to ensure that the hotels selected were of high standard. High rated-star hotels are also luxurious and highly competitive (Hinson et al., 2017; Narteh et al., 2013). Secondly, convenience sampling technique was used in selecting clients who were occupying the hotels during the period of data collection, and were willing to partake in the study.

In all, 9 highly rated star hotels were selected, from which 676 clients were sampled, depending on the availability and willingness of clients to respond to the questionnaire. As at December 2017, Ghana Hotels Association had published the list of 634 hotels in Greater Accra region (with their physical location, address and contact), and 12 of them were being rated 3-5 star. An official permission letter detailing the aims of the study and the potential benefit were initially sent to these 12 highly rated-star hotels. But 9 responded favorably, and were subsequently selected for the study. Questionnaires were delivered to the management of the selected hotels, who placed them at the reception. Clients who lodged at the hotels within the period of data collection (which took 3 months) were requested to pick a copy and send to their rooms to fill out and submit when signing out of the hotel. After the data gathering process, 676 questionnaires were appropriately completed, and subsequently used for the study.

### *Measures*

The study had two major concepts for consideration, which were cultural orientation and service quality. The SERVQUAL scale developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) was adopted for measuring service quality. The SERVQUAL scale had five dimensions, namely, reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The Hofstede's cultural model was adopted measuring cultural orientation (Hofstede, 1980, 1991). This also had five dimensions, namely, power distance, individualism/ collectivism, masculinity/ femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and short/ long-term orientation. In other words, each of these dimensions had a mirror image. A culture could be characterized by low or high power distance, individualism or collectivism, masculinity or femininity, low or high uncertainty avoidance, and short or long-term orientation. Each of these extended 10 dimensions, has their own characteristics and cannot be used interchangeably. Depending on the nature of analysis, studies like Donthu and Yoo (1998) studied the dimensions with their mirror images, whiles other studies like Endara et al. (2019), Yoo, Donthu, and Lenartowicz (2011) and Yoo and Donthu (2005) studied only one side of the dimension (that is five). Due to the nature of the current analysis, only one sided-dimension was adopted, which were *low power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, individualism, femininity and short-term orientation*. The respondents were to respond to

the observed items under service quality and cultural orientation on a Likert scale of 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-indifferent, 4-agree and 5-strongly agree. Although the study only measured one side of the cultural dimension, respondents' choice of answer could determine if they belong to the dimension measured or its mirror image. For example, when respondents disagree with the observed items measuring low power distance, then it means they lean more towards high power distance, and vice versa. Similarly, when respondents agree to the observed items under femininity, then it means they have feminist cultural orientation, and vice versa.

### *Individual-Level Analysis*

Although the original Hofstede's model focused on cross-cultural differences across nations (Hofstede, 1980, 1991), we opined that the dimensions are also relevant to studying individual cultural orientations. The cultural values of the individual respondents were the focus of this study and not the group culture. Some past studies like Donthu and Yoo (1998), Yoo et al. (2011) and Yoo and Donthu (2005), have taken similar positions in the past. As indicated by Donthu and Yoo (1998), the term culture is not synonymous to country. For example, a person living in a high power distance culture, may have a low power distance cultural orientation, with little influence from society. Studying high rated-star hotels with lots of guest from outside the country also makes it important to look at the culture from individual level and not national.

Since the model developed by Hofstede (1980) was based on the model of personality by Inkeles and Levinson (1969) (Donthu & Yoo, 1998), studying the individual dimension was thus also relevant. The measurement of the individual cultural orientation using Hofstede's model was also justified by The Big Five personality traits theory (conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness and extraversion), which we believe explains why individuals living in same society may have different cultural orientations (Costa Jr & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1981, 1990; John & Srivastava, 1999; Norman, 1963). Individuals living in same community may have different levels of openness to experience, appreciation of art, level of conformance, intellectual curiosity, and daring. Similarly, people living in same society may have different levels of agreeableness, that is, warmth, sympathy, trust, cooperativeness, helpfulness, generosity and optimistic. An introvert and extrovert (high energy, talkative, affectionate, sociable, etc.) personality may characterize two different people living in same household under similar conditions. These personality traits could greatly influence individual's cultural orientation, and not necessarily impact of society (environmental).

### *Controls*

As with many other studies, some variables, not part of the main dimensions but could potentially influence the outcome of the study are controlled for. This study controlled for gender of respondents, educational level, marital status and frequency of patronizing service. These are potential dimensions which could influence service quality ratings. For example, a family man (married person) may expect more service empathy depending on his experience from home.

### *Data Analysis*

STATA software was used to run the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), while SPSS was used in running the regression model. The study focused on the individual dimensions of cultural orientation and service quality. The independent variables were thus five (low power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, individualism, femininity and short-term orientation), with five dependent variables (assurance, reliability, empathy, tangibility and responsiveness). Each of the dependent variables had 2 models (that is control variables and full model), giving a total of 10 models. A hierarchical regression model was presented for each dependent variable.

### *Validity and Reliability*

To ensure the research instrument was valid and reliable, the various dimensions and observed items were founded on sound literature. Secondly, the researchers conducted a pilot study, which helped in reconstructing some statements which respondents deemed ambiguous. Finally, CFA (Table 2) was conducted to remove items that were deemed inappropriate for the study. From the CFA results, all retained items had factor loadings of greater than 0.6. Based on the recommended fit indices criteria (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), we conclude that our CFA model for the latent variables appropriately fit the data ( $\chi^2=25.06[9]$ ;  $p$ -value=0.281; RMSEA=0.062; SRMR=0.030; TLI=0.982; CFI=0.955).

Based on the factor loadings of the measures from CFA, we conducted a convergence validity using average variance extracted (AVE). Fornell and Larcker (1981) proposed that AVE greater than 0.5 is an indication of uni-dimensionality and adequate convergent validity. From Table 2, all AVEs were greater than 0.5, and was thus concluded that there was adequate convergent validity in our constructs.

Composite reliability (CR) was conducted to assess the reliability of constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and Cronbach's alpha (CA) was used in checking the degree of internal consistency (Bamfo, Dogbe, & Mingle, 2018a). Both CR and CA are expected to be more than 0.7 (Bamfo et al., 2018a; Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and this threshold was achieved for all our constructs (Table 2).

Table 2. CFA: Cultural Orientation Dimensions

Latent and Observed Variables $\chi^2=25.06[9]$ ; $p$ -value=0.281; RMSEA=0.062; SRMR=0.030; TLI=0.982; CFI=0.955	Factor Loadings
<b>Low Power Distance: CA=0.815; CR=0.881; AVE=0.650</b>	
I believe parents should treat children as equals	0.7530932
In an organization, I believe subordinates should be able to question the actions of the boss	0.8872015
I believe the most effective way to change a political system is through public debates and free elections	0.7888896
I believe the use of power should be legitimate and is subject to criteria of good and evil	0.790108
<b>Low Uncertainty Avoidance: CA=0.796; CR=0.842; AVE=0.576</b>	
I believe uncertainty is part of life, and each day should be taken as it comes	0.8174647

I believe changing multiple job is no problem	0.6007773
I believe children must be taught to cope with ambiguity	0.7326786
In religion, I believe in relativism	0.859705
<b>Individualism: CA=0.839; CR=0.863; AVE=0.618</b>	
I believe in the right of privacy	0.7459075
I believe task prevails over relationship	0.788095
I believe everyone is supposed to take care of him- or herself and his or her immediate family only	0.6178833
I see nothing wrong with a boss offering job to a relative	0.955409
<b>Femininity: CA=0.860; CR=0.897; AVE=0.687</b>	
I believe there should be balance between family and work	0.687728
I believe there should be many women in elected political positions	0.8878687
I believe both men and women should have quality life	0.9058403
I believe men and women should be modest and caring	0.8152737
<b>Short-Term Orientation: CA=0.862; CR=0.910; AVE=0.673</b>	
I believe success and failure depends on luck	0.8131862
I believe traditions should be kept sacred	0.9829519
I believe people should value personal stability and continuity	0.7301734
I believe there are universal guidelines about what is good and evil	0.8202749
I believe people remain unchanged: a good person is always the same	0.7292772
<b>Assurance: CA=0.882; CR=0.917; AVE=0.690</b>	
Behaviors of my hotel's staff instills confidence in clients	0.8070746
My hotel honors their commitments to clients	0.7012312
My hotel provides clients the services promised	0.8430034
I feel safe with my hotel	0.9971285
Employees of my hotel are always willing to help	0.7768691
<b>Reliability: CA=0.825; CR=0.852; AVE=0.591</b>	
My hotel provides clients with prompt services	0.7628477
My hotel provides wide range of services	0.7951737
My hotel has sincere interest in solving clients' problems	0.6981193
My hotel delivers service at the time promised	0.8133571
<b>Empathy: CA=0.916; CR=0.922; AVE=0.751</b>	
Help desks of my hotels are very welcoming	0.718104
My hotel's staff have the enthusiasm to understand client needs	0.998732
Individual attention given by my hotel	0.9684169
My hotels understand the specific needs of clients	0.7436202
<b>Tangibility: CA=0.899; CR=0.923; AVE=0.755</b>	
My hotel's facilities are designed to make clients feel comfortable	0.7184463
My hotel has appealing physical facilities	0.9982722
My hotel has clear guide signs and map indicating where to get which services	0.9919641
Materials associated with the hotel (pamphlets, brochures) are visually appealing	0.7239626
<b>Responsiveness: CA=0.884; CR=0.910; AVE=0.673</b>	
My hotel provides clients' precise personal services	0.7411819
Client requests are handled promptly in my hotel	0.8189548

Client service representative of my hotel are very prompt in addressing issues	0.9927635
My hotel staff tell clients exactly when services will be performed	0.7669249
My hotel understands clients' needs	0.7554438

For multiple linear regression analysis like this study, discriminant validity is a key concept that is worth considering. That is, the extent to which the observed variables distinctly measured their respective latent variables. Discriminant validity is said to be achieved when the square-root of AVE ( $\sqrt{AVE}$ ) is larger than the inter-correlation scores (Acosta, Crespo, & Agudo, 2018; Bamfo et al., 2018a). Before the comparison, the inter-correlation coefficients were assessed, to determine if there existed any high correlation among any of the variables (especially between the independent variables). Absolute correlation coefficients of greater than 0.7 are said to be high. From Table 3, the highest correlation coefficient was 0.682 (between responsiveness and tangibility), and although this was statistically significant, the two variables were dependent variables and would therefore not influence each other in the model estimation. Similarly, the correlation coefficient for tangibility and empathy was 0.603, and these were also dependent variables.

Comparing the  $\sqrt{AVE}$  to the inter-correlation coefficients, it is realized that the  $\sqrt{AVE}$  was greater in all cases, than the corresponding correlation coefficients in the columns. Discriminant validity was thus achieved for all the variables. The control variables had no AVE for comparison. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was also presented in Table 4. The VIF scores for all the variables used in the model estimation were less than 5, implying there was no confounding effect as the independent variables in the models were not same or similar to each other.

Table 3: Discriminant Analysis

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Gender (1)	N/A													
Education (2)	-.036	N/A												
Marital Status (3)	-.148**	.548**	N/A											
Frequency of Patronizing Service (4)	-.191**	.120*	.389**	N/A										
Low Power Distance (5)	.141**	-.185**	-.173**	-.177**	<b>0.806</b>									
Low Uncertainty Avoidance (6)	.090	-.381**	-.281**	-.229**	.573**	<b>0.759</b>								
Individualism (7)	.222**	-.265**	-.473**	-.054	.559**	.568**	<b>0.786</b>							
Femininity (8)	.134*	-.030	-.024	-.214**	.477**	.336**	.338**	<b>0.829</b>						
Short-Term Orientation (9)	.079	-.339**	-.272**	-.074	.304**	.219**	.451**	.206**	<b>0.820</b>					
Assurance (10)	-.184**	-.409**	-.416**	-.078	.399**	.319**	.365**	.322**	.562**	<b>0.831</b>				
Reliability (11)	.021	.132*	-.017	-.290**	.414**	.099	.137**	.552**	.234**	.554**	<b>0.769</b>			
Empathy (12)	.144**	-.160**	-.371**	-.458**	.382**	.085	.124*	.129*	.494**	.575**	.534**	<b>0.867</b>		
Tangibility (13)	.026	-.191**	-.226**	-.265**	.424**	.336**	.111*	.153**	.202**	.561**	.568**	.603**	<b>0.869</b>	

Responsiveness (14)	.135**	.032	-.203**	-.449**	.464**	.477**	.315**	.270**	.165**	.371**	.573**	.544**	.682**	<b>0.820</b>
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\*\* ~ Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* ~ Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Square-root ( $\sqrt{\phantom{x}}$ ) of AVE are on the diagonal axis (N/A means Not Applicable)

## Results and Discussions

Models 1 and 2 were the regression estimations for perceived service assurance as the dependent variable (Table 4). In model 1, only the effect of control variables was estimated. The analysis presented indicates that, gender of respondents had a negative and significant effect on assurance as a dimension of service quality. Gender was coded 0=male and 1=female, so the negative coefficient implies that, females compared to male clients of high rated-star hotels in Ghana were less likely to have a positive view of assurance provided by the hotels they patronized. Male clients thus judged more positively the assurance dimension of the rated hotels. Age of clients had a negative effect on assurance, implying that older clients (in terms of age) had less favorable perception of high rated hotels' service assurance, compared to the younger generations. Educational level of respondents had a positive but statistically insignificant effect on assurance. Marital status was coded 0=single and 1=married, and marital status had a negative and statistically significant effect on assurance as a dimension of service quality. By implication, married clients compared to singles had a less favorable view of the assurance being provided by the high rated hotels in Ghana. Finally, the frequency of patronizing the services of the selected hotels was also controlled for. The analysis pointed out that this had a positive and significant effect on the level of assurance provided by the hotels. This means that clients frequent those hotels because of the service assurance provided. Repeat purchase was high with high service assurance.

In model 2 when the main independent variables were added to the equation (low power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, individualism, femininity and short-term orientation), gender of clients still had a negative and significant effect on service assurance assessment, age and marital status of clients also had a negative and significant effect on service assurance of high rated hotels in Ghana. However, educational level and frequency of patronizing service by clients also had a positive and significant effect on service assurance.

Low Power Distance as a dimension of cultural orientation had a positive and significant effect on perceived service assurance of high rated hotels in Ghana. Clients with low power distance judge service assurance of high rated hotels favorably than clients with high power distance cultural orientation. Clients who – believe in equality irrespective of one's position, who believe in legitimate power, believes in giving subordinates and children equal right as superiors – are more appreciative of the service assurance of the high rated hotels, compared to high power distance clients. Low power distance cultural oriented people are more accommodating (Hofstede, 1991), and so are more appreciative of the level of service assurance provided by the rated hotels. Furrer et al. (2000) found a positive relationship between power distance and service assurance. Meaning, high power distance correlates with high service assurance, while low power distance also relates low service assurance (negative). Our current finding was rather contrary to Furrer et al. (2000), by indicating that low power distance oriented clients

have a more positive perception of their hotels' service assurance. Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) however found low power distance to relate with high service assurance (positive relationship), which was in conformity with this current study.

Low Uncertainty Avoidance cultural orientation had a positive and significant effect on service assurance of high rated hotels. Meaning clients with high uncertainty avoidance cultural orientation have less favourable view of high rated hotel's service assurance. Clients who –believe that uncertainty is part of life, that each day should be taken as it comes, who believe children must be taught to cope with ambiguity, and believe that religion is about relativism – have a more favorable view of service assurance compared to high uncertainty avoidance clients. Clients who are more open to ambiguity and uncertainty are not critical of assurance offered by service providers, and they consider disappointment as part of everyday life. Whether high rated hotels deliver services as promised or not, is not much of a worry to low uncertainty avoidance clients, compared to clients with high level of uncertainty avoidance. Furrer et al. (2000) and Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) however found a contrary result, as their result suggested that higher uncertainty avoidance relates with higher service assurance, while low uncertainty avoidance also relates with low service assurance.

Individualism cultural orientation had a negative and significant effect on service assurance from high rated hotels. Clients who are of the view that task prevails over relationship and are much concern about their privacy have less favourable view of the rated hotels' service assurance, compared to clients with collectivism cultural orientation. Clients who believe in the welfare of all are less critical of service assurance from rated hotels, compared to clients with self-interest mind-set. Clients with individualism cultural orientation have security as part of their major concerns, and would therefore rate service assurance less favourable. The current findings confirm that of Furrer et al. (2000), who also identified individualism to negatively relate with service assurance.

Femininity cultural orientation had a positive and significant effect on assurance provided by the rated hotels. Clients with more affinity to femininity held more positive view of service assurance rendered by the hotels, as compared to clients with masculinity cultural orientation. Hotel clients who believed in the equality for both men and women in the society were more positive towards service assurance, while clients believed in well-defined roles for men and women in the society had less favourable view of service assurance. This finding was similar to the study of Furrer et al. (2000), who also found a negative relationship between masculinity and service assurance, although Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) found no significant relationship.

Short-Term cultural orientation also had a positive and significant effect on service assurance. Hotel clients who believed in luck, held traditions dear, believed in personal stability, and believed that people remained unchanged over time (good person is always good, and vice versa), are positively opened to the service assurance provided by the rated hotels. In other words, clients with short-term cultural orientation believes that the current level of service assurance from the rated hotels meet the status quo. On the other hand, long-term oriented clients seeking for much improvement in service assurance from the rated hotels, rated it negatively. As indicated by Hofstede (1991), short-term cultural orientation is characterized by saving face, and the more reason why clients with short-

term cultural orientation would rate their hotels' service assurance positive, is just to save face. Furrer et al. (2000) and Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) also found a negative relationship between long-term cultural orientation and service assurance.

Models 3 and 4 were the regression estimations for perceived service reliability as the dependent variable (Table 4). Model 3 presented the effects of only control variables. From the analysis presented, gender of clients had a negative and significant effect on perceived service reliability. Thus, females compared to male clients of high star-rated hotels were less likely to have a positive perception of service reliability provided by the hotels they patronized. Age of clients had a negative and significant effect on service reliability, implying that older clients had less favorable perception of high rated hotels' service reliability, compared to the younger generations. Educational level of respondents had a positive and significant effect on service reliability, implying that clients with higher educational qualification had a more positive perception of the rated hotels' service reliability. Marital status and the frequency of patronizing service had no significant effect on perceived service reliability.

When the main independent variables were added in model 4, gender of clients, age and marital status had a negative and statistically significant effect on service reliability. Educational level of clients and frequency of patronizing service had a positive relationship on perceived service reliability, however, frequency of patronizing service had no significant effect.

Low Power Distance as a dimension of cultural orientation had a positive and significant effect on service reliability of high rated hotels in Ghana. Clients with low power distance judge service reliability of high rated hotels favourably than clients with high power distance cultural orientation. Clients who – believe in equality irrespective of one's position, who believe in legitimate power, believes in giving subordinates and children equal right as superiors – are more appreciative of the service reliability of the high rated hotels, compared to high power distance clients. Furrer et al. (2000) in their study, reported a negative relationship between power distance and service reliability. This means that, high power distance customers have less favorable perception towards service reliability, while low power distance consumers have a positive perception of service reliability. Our current study confirms this position, as Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) also concluded on a similar result.

Low Uncertainty Avoidance cultural orientation had a positive but statistically insignificant effect on perceived service reliability of high rated hotels. Furrer et al. (2000) and Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) however found a positive and significant relationship between uncertainty avoidance and service reliability. This explains why consumers with high level of uncertainty avoidance would rate service reliability as high (positive), while consumers with low uncertainty avoidance tendencies would rate service reliability as low.

Individualism cultural orientation had a negative and significant effect on service reliability from high star-rated hotels. Clients who are of the view that task prevails over relationship and are much concern about their privacy have less favourable view of the rated hotels' service reliability, compared to clients with collectivism cultural orientation.

This is because, by reason of their privacy concerns, their level of service reliability expectation is high, and are likely to rate the current service reliability provided by the hotels lower than expected. This position however, contradicts that of Furrer et al. (2000) who identified a positive but statistically insignificant relationship (at 5% level of significance) between individualism and service reliability. Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) also found no significant relationship between collectivism cultural orientation and service reliability.

Femininity cultural orientation had a positive and significant effect on perceived service reliability provided by the rated hotels. Clients with more affinity to femininity held more positive view of service reliability rendered by the hotels, as compared to clients with masculinity cultural orientation. Hotel clients who are less assertive and less competitive (as defining femininity - Hofstede, 1991) were more positive towards service reliability. Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) and Furrer et al. (2000) however found no significant relationship between masculinity and service reliability.

Short-Term cultural orientation also had a positive and significant effect on perceived service reliability. Hotel clients who believed in luck and personal stability, are positively opened to the service reliability provided by the rated hotels. Whiles short-term culturally orientated clients rated service reliability as high, long-term culturally orientated clients sought for much improvement in the current service reliability, and rated it negatively. Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) and Furrer et al. (2000) found a positive relationship between long-term cultural orientation and service reliability, which this current study failed to confirm.

Models 5 and 6 presented the regression estimations for perceived service empathy as the dependent variable. Model 5 had estimated the effects of only the 5 control variables. Gender, age, marital status and frequency of patronizing service had a negative and significant effect on service empathy of rated hotels. Education of clients also had a positive but insignificant effect on service empathy of rated hotels. From model 6, gender, age, marital status and frequency of patronizing service maintained their negative and significant effect on service empathy, whiles education had a positive and significant effect on service empathy.

Low Power Distance cultural orientation had a positive and significant effect on service empathy of high star-rated hotels in Ghana. Clients with low power distance judge service empathy of high rated hotels favourably than clients with high power distance cultural orientation. That is, client with the mind-set of giving subordinates and children equal right as superiors, are more appreciative of the current service empathy of the rated hotels. Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) also found that low power distance correlates with high service empathy. And although Furrer et al. (2000)) also found that low power distance correlates with high service empathy, their result was not statistically significant at 5% level of significance.

Low Uncertainty Avoidance cultural orientation had a negative and significant effect on perceived service empathy of high rated hotels. Clients who believe uncertainties are part of life, and that each day should be taken as it comes, have a less favorable view of rated hotels' service empathy, compared to high uncertainty avoidance. Since low

uncertainty is characterized by easy-going attitude, clients would normally expect a friendlier attitude from their service providers. This finding was in support of past studies by Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) and Furrer et al. (2000), who also found that low uncertainty avoidance correlates with low service empathy (negative).

Individualism cultural orientation had a negative and significant effect on perceived service empathy received from high star-rated hotels. Clients who are of the view that task prevails over relationship and are much concern about their privacy have less favourable view of the rated hotels' service empathy, compared to clients with collectivism cultural orientation. Guesalaga and Pitta (2014) opined that individualistic people are more self-centered, and that explains why they have negative perspective of service empathy. Self-centered people always seek more for themselves and are never satisfying. They would therefore expect more personalized service empathy, and would have a negative perspective if current service empathy offered by the rated hotels do not meet their high expectations. Just as this current study identified, Furrer et al. (2000) also found a negative relationship between individualism and service empathy. And although Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) also found a positive relationship between collectivism and service empathy, this relationship was not statistically significant.

Femininity cultural orientation also had a negative and significant effect on perceived service empathy provided by the high star-rated hotels. Clients with more affinity to femininity were less satisfied with the service empathy from the rated hotels, as compared to clients with masculinity cultural orientation. Femininity is characterized by warmth and affection, and such, clients who held more feminist ideology would likely to expect service providers to offer service in a friendlier and welcoming atmosphere. As such, feminist clients' expectations of service empathy are much higher, and would rate the service low if the standard is not met. That is, their level of expectations determines their level of service appreciation and satisfaction. Although Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) and Furrer et al. (2000) also found a positive relationship between masculinity and service empathy, this relationship was not statistically significant.

Short-Term cultural orientation also had a positive and significant effect on perceived service empathy. Hotel clients who believed in personal stability, are positively opened to the service empathy provided by the rated hotels. Whiles short-term culturally orientated clients rated service empathy as high, long-term culturally orientated clients sought for much improvement in the current service empathy, and rated it negative. Respect for others and reciprocation of greetings is peculiar of short-term cultural orientation Furrer et al. (2000) , and thus, individuals with such characteristics tend to appreciate the efforts of their hotels by rating them more positively. Although (Furrer et al., 2000) rather found a positive relationship between long-term orientation and service empathy, this relationship was not statistically significant.

Models 7 and 8 presented the regression estimations for perceived service tangibility as the dependent variable. Model 7 had only the effects of the 5 control variables. Gender, age and marital status had a negative and significant effect on perceived service tangibility of rated hotels. Education and frequency of patronizing service also had a positive but insignificant effect perceived service tangibility of rated hotels. From model 8, gender, age and marital status maintained their negative and significant effect on service

tangibility, while education and frequency of patronizing service had a positive and significant effect on perceived service tangibility.

Low Power Distance cultural orientation had a positive and significant effect on service tangibility of high rated hotels in Ghana. Clients with low power distance judge service tangibility of high rated hotels favourably than clients with high power distance cultural orientation. That is, client with the mind-set of giving subordinates and children equal right just as superiors, are more appreciative of the current service tangibility of the rated hotels. Studies by Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) and Furrer et al. (2000) however had a contrary result, as they identified low power distance to relate with low service tangibility.

Low Uncertainty Avoidance cultural orientation had a positive and significant effect on perceived service tangibility of high rated hotels. Clients who believe uncertainties are part of life, and that each day should be taken as it comes, have a more favorable view of rated hotels' service tangibility, compared to high uncertainty avoidance. This finding confirms that of Furrer et al. (2000), who also identified that low uncertainty avoidance relates with higher service tangibility, and vice versa. This however contradicts, that of Kueh and Ho Voon (2007), who rather found that low uncertainty avoidance relates with low service tangibility, and vice versa.

Individualism cultural orientation had a negative and significant effect on perceived service tangibility received from high rated hotels. Clients who are of the view that task prevails over relationship and are much concerned about their privacy have less favourable view of the rated hotels' service tangibility, compared to clients with collectivism cultural orientation. This was contrary to finding of Furrer et al. (2000), who presented individualism to positively relate with service tangibility. Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) however found no significant relationship between collectivism and service tangibility.

Femininity cultural orientation also had a negative and significant effect on perceived service tangibility provided by the rated hotels. Clients with more affinity to femininity were less satisfied with the service tangibility from the rated hotels, as compared to clients with masculinity cultural orientation. Femininity is characterized by beauty and attraction, clients who held more feminist ideology would likely expect service providers to offer service in a very physically attractive atmosphere. As such, feminist clients' expectations of service tangibility are much higher, and would rate the service low if the standard is not met. Furrer et al. (2000) also presented a positive relationship between masculinity and service tangibility, while Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) found no significant relationship.

Short-Term cultural orientation also had a positive and significant effect on perceived service tangibility. Hotel clients who believed people remained unchanged over time (good person is always good, and vice versa), have a more positive perception of the service tangibility of the rated hotels. In other words, short-term culturally orientated clients are more appreciative of service tangibility. Findings confirm that of Furrer et al. (2000), who also identified long-term cultural orientation to negatively relate service

tangibility, and vice versa. Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) however, found a contrary position, by identifying long-term orientation to rather positively relate service tangibility.

The last two models (models 9 and 10) also presented the regression estimations for perceived service responsiveness as the dependent variable. Model 9 presented the effects of only the 5 control variables, while model 10 presented the full model. Age and frequency of patronizing service had a negative and significant effect on perceived service responsiveness of rated hotels. Gender and marital status of respondents had a negative but statistically insignificant effect on service responsiveness. Education had a positive and significant effect on perceived service responsiveness of rated hotels. From model 10, gender, age, marital status and frequency of patronizing service, had a negative and significant effect on service responsiveness of rated hotels. Education of respondent however had a positive and significant effect on service responsiveness.

Low Power Distance cultural orientation had a positive and significant effect on service responsiveness of high rated hotels in Ghana. Clients with low power distance judge service responsiveness of high star-rated hotels favorably than clients with high power distance cultural orientation. That is, client who believe in equality irrespective of one's position, are more appreciative of the current service responsiveness of the rated hotels. Clients with low power distance cultural orientation have a positive view of the fact that their hotels provide clients' precise personal services, client requests are handled promptly, and that the hotels clearly understand clients' needs. Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) and Furrer et al. (2000) also found a negative relationship between power distance and service responsiveness. By implication, high power distance consumers have lower perceived service responsiveness, while lower power distance consumers have higher (positive) relationship with perceived service responsiveness.

Low Uncertainty Avoidance cultural orientation had a positive and significant effect on perceived service responsiveness of high rated hotels. Clients who believe uncertainties are part of life, and that each day should be taken as it comes, have a more favorable perception of rated hotels' service responsiveness, compared to high uncertainty avoidance. Furrer et al. (2000) once again found a positive relationship between uncertainty avoidance and service responsiveness. Implying that, consumers with higher uncertainty avoidance would have positive relationship with service responsiveness, while consumers with low uncertainty avoidance would have a lower or negative relationship with perceived service responsiveness. Our study therefore contradicts the position of Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) and Furrer et al. (2000), by emphasizing that low uncertainty avoidance clients rather had a positive effect on perceived service responsiveness of rated hotels.

Individualism cultural orientation however, had a negative but statistically insignificant effect on perceived service responsiveness of high rated hotels. This results fully confirms that of Furrer et al. (2000), who also found no significant relationship between individualism and service responsiveness. Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) also found no significant relationship between collectivism and service responsiveness.

Femininity cultural orientation also had a negative and significant effect on perceived service responsiveness provided by the rated hotels. Clients who believe there should be

a balance between family and work, as well as both men and women having quality life, have less favorable perception of the perceived service responsiveness of the rated hotels. Endara et al. (2019) indicated that femininity cultural orientation is characterized by modest, soft, humane, holistic and intuitiveness. Although our study found a negative effect of femininity on service responsiveness, Furrer et al. (2000) in the past rather found masculinity to negatively relate service responsiveness. And although Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) supports our current study (in terms of direction), by identifying a positive relationship between masculinity and service responsiveness, this relationship was not significant.

Short-Term cultural orientation also had a positive and significant effect on perceived service responsiveness. Hotel clients who believed in personal stability, have a more positive perception of the service responsiveness of the rated hotels. In other words, short-term culturally orientated clients are more appreciative of service responsiveness, compared to short-term culturally orientated clients. This current position once again contradicts that of Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) and Furrer et al. (2000), who rather found long-term orientation to be positively related to service responsiveness.

From the model summary presented, it is realized that the addition of the main independent variables caused a significant change in the explanatory power ( $R^2$ ) of the models. The least r-squared change ( $R^2\Delta$ ) for the full models was 0.239 for (service assurance), and the largest was 0.423 (for service empathy). The F-statistics for all the  $R^2\Delta$  were statistically significant. Figure 1 also presents the summary for 25 main relationships estimated.

Table 4. Regression Output for the Hypotheses

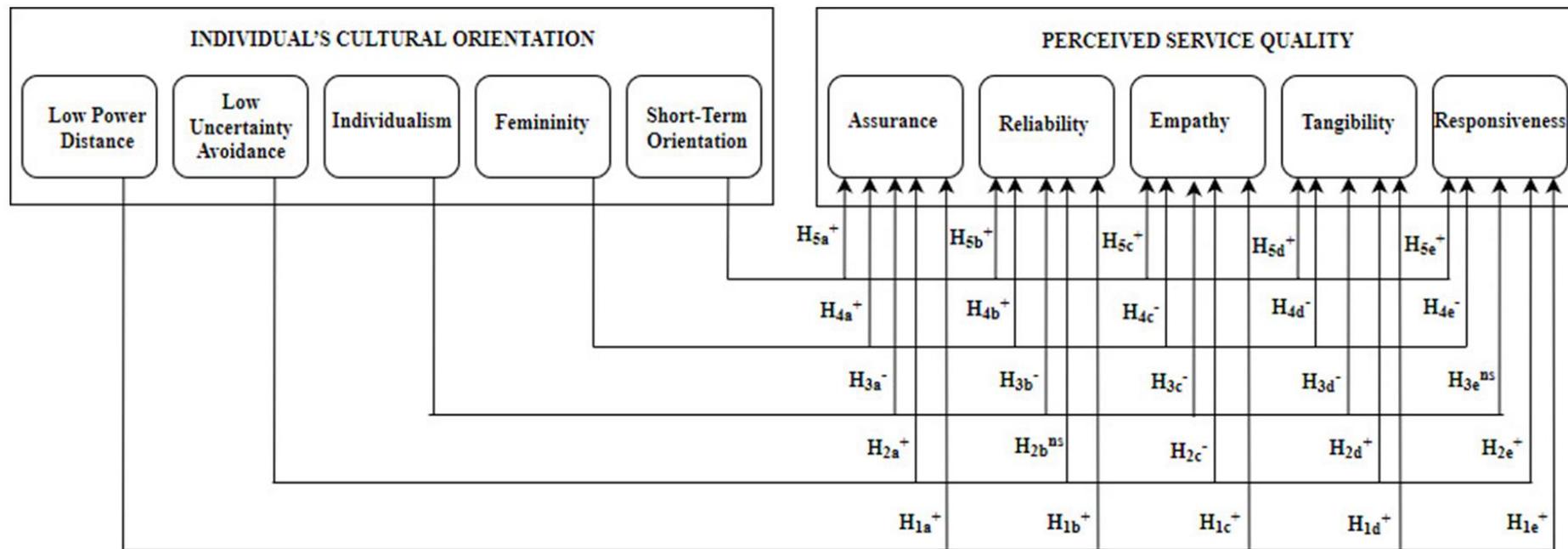
Variables	Assurance		Reliability		Empathy		Tangibility		Responsiveness		VIF
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	
<i>(Constant)</i>	5.254 (39.0**)	3.297 (14.3**)	4.458 (27.0**)	2.243 (8.4**)	4.945 (28.1**)	3.453 (14.8**)	5.229 (25.0**)	3.433 (9.9**)	4.467 (25.7**)	1.753 (6.1**)	
Gender	-.348 (-6.3**)	-.321 (-7.2**)	-.227 (-3.4**)	-.204 (-3.7**)	-.104 (-1.471)	-.124 (-2.6**)	-.253 (-3.0**)	-.237 (-3.3**)	-.041 (-0.6)	-.129 (-2.2*)	1.3
Age	-.398 (-8.0**)	-.405 (-8.4**)	-.431 (-7.1**)	-.266 (-4.8**)	-.232 (-3.6**)	-.164 (-3.4**)	-.394 (-5.1**)	-.632 (-8.8**)	-.155 (-2.4*)	-.213 (-3.6**)	3.9
Education	.008 (0.2)	.168 (4.5**)	.283 (6.2**)	.293 (6.6**)	.090 (1.9)	.180 (4.7**)	.042 (0.7)	.364 (6.3**)	.165 (3.4**)	.338 (7.2**)	2.8
Marital Status	-.159 (-7.3**)	-.245 (-10.2**)	-.007 (-0.3)	-.063 (-2.2*)	-.098 (-3.5**)	-.104 (-4.2**)	-.040 (-1.2)	-.206 (-5.6**)	-.047 (-1.7)	-.028 (-0.9)	2.9
Frequency of Patronizing Service	.190 (5.6**)	.289 (9.0**)	.015 (0.4)	.032 (0.8)	-.134 (-3.1**)	-.148 (-4.2**)	.021 (0.4)	.286 (5.5**)	-.186 (-4.3**)	-.113 (-2.7**)	3.3
Low Power Distance		.238 (6.2**)		.324 (6.7**)		.502 (12.0**)		.567 (9.0**)		.245 (4.8**)	2.0
Low Uncertainty Avoidance		.213 (4.6**)		-.070 (-1.185)		-.218 (-4.3**)		.518 (6.8**)		.420 (6.7**)	2.5
Individualism		-.405 (-7.3**)		-.223 (-3.5**)		-.269 (-4.8**)		-.690 (-8.3**)		-.011 (-0.2)	3.7
Femininity		.072 (2.0*)		.336 (8.0**)		-.173 (-4.7**)		-.198 (-3.6**)		-.108 (-2.4*)	1.6
Short-Term Orientation		.275 (10.1**)		.148 (4.4**)		.489 (16.5**)		.138 (3.1**)		.098 (2.7**)	1.4

Dependent Variables	Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	R <sup>2</sup> Δ	FΔ
Assurance	1	0.630	0.397	44.8**	0.397	44.8**
	2	0.797	0.636	58.5**	0.239	43.9**
Reliability	3	0.473	0.224	20.7**	0.224	20.7**
	4	0.712	0.507	36.3**	0.283	40.4**
Empathy	5	0.512	0.262	25.4**	0.262	25.4**
	6	0.827	0.684	76.6**	0.423	94.5**
Tangibility	7	0.396	0.157	13.3**	0.157	13.3**
	8	0.659	0.434	27.1**	0.278	34.7**
Responsiveness	9	0.471	0.222	20.4**	0.222	20.4**
	10	0.702	0.492	34.2**	0.270	37.6**

\*\* ~ P-value significant at 1% (0.01)

\* ~ P-value significant at 5% (0.05)

T-values are in parentheses



<sup>+</sup> ~ represents positive effect  
<sup>-</sup> ~ represents negative effect  
<sup>ns</sup> ~ represents no significant effect

Figure 1. Summary of Results

## Conclusions

This study reveals that some consumer demographics like gender, age, education and marital status had significant effect on the perceived service quality (assurance, reliability, empathy, tangibility and responsiveness) delivered by high star-rated hotels in Ghana, although some of their effects were significant only in the full models. The frequency of patronizing the services of the hotels also had a significant effect on the perceived service quality.

Low power distance cultural orientation had a positive effect on all the dimensions of perceived service quality of high rated hotels. Low uncertainty avoidance had a positive effect on perceived service assurance, tangibility and responsiveness. It also had a negative effect on perceived service empathy. Low uncertainty avoidance however had no significant effect on perceived service reliability.

Individualism cultural orientation had a negative effect on perceived service assurance, reliability, empathy and tangibility of rated hotels. It however had no significant effect on perceived responsiveness. Femininity had a positive effect on perceived assurance and service reliability. For perceived service empathy, tangibility and responsiveness, femininity however, had a negative effect. Finally, short-term cultural orientation also had a positive effect on all the dimensions of perceived service quality.

## Practical Implications

By studying the individual's cultural orientation in a highly competitive sector like the hospitality, this study is very relevant to the industry players. Management of the hotels would be able to segment consumers and develop strategies to meet their unique needs and expectations of the clients. Consumer database coupled with technological advancement would make the segmentation quite easier.

Our study supports the view that even in a single country, there still existed some variabilities in the cultural orientations of its members, making the study of individual's cultural orientation much more relevant. It may thus be erroneous to stereotype consumers within one territorial boundary as having a same cultural orientation. In global market segmentation, paying attention to individual consumer should be more of interest to firms, instead of territorial boundary of one country.

Although personalized service is normally part of luxury hotel experience, the customer's preferences for certain aspects of service may differ based on individual's cultural orientation. While low power distance consumers rated the five dimensions of hotels' service quality favorably high, individualistic consumers rated these service dimensions as low (negative). Hotel clients with femininity cultural ideology also perceived service tangibility as low. This is probably because clients with femininity cultural ideology have a much higher expectation of service tangibility, which the hotels are not fully satisfying.

## Theoretical Implications

This study largely contributed towards the comprehension of culture and service quality in the hospitality sector. Although the original culture dimensions (Hofstede's model) which were adopted for the study focused on cross-culture or national culture, this current study justified why studying the individual's cultural orientation was much important. A number of studies have sought to estimate the individual's cultural orientation effects (Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Endara et al., 2019; Furrer et al., 2000; Mattila, 1999; Yoo & Donthu, 2005), however, some gaps still existed, which this study sought to address.

Findings from this current study showed that individual's cultural orientation significantly influences the perceived service quality in the hospitality sector. Each of the cultural orientation dimensions could have different effects (negative or positive) on the five dimensions of service quality. Although the five dimensions of service quality are normally treated as composite variable (service quality), it is worth noting that firms may perform differently on each of the dimensions. It is therefore very important to consider the effect that cultural orientation has on each of these SERVQUAL dimensions. This would enable firms to know which aspects of their service to improve, depending on the cultural orientation of their clientele.

This study made other interesting findings, however, the context of the study should be taken into consideration in the interpretation of the results. Two main past works which assessed the five dimensions of Hofstede's model on SERVQUAL model were used (these are Furrer et al., 2000; Kueh & Ho Voon, 2007). Although Furrer et al. (2000) and Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) found that low uncertainty avoidance also relates with low service assurance and responsiveness, our current study rather finds low uncertainty avoidance had a positive relationship with high service assurance and responsiveness. Although our study confirms that of Furrer et al. (2000) who indicated that low uncertainty avoidance relates with higher service tangibility, it contradicts that of Kueh and Ho Voon (2007), who rather found that low uncertainty avoidance relates with low service tangibility.

Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) and Furrer et al. (2000) identified low power distance to relate with low service tangibility, however, our current study finds that low power distance relates with high perceived service tangibility. Although our study confirms that of Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) who indicated that low power distance relates with high perceived service assurance, it contradicts that of Furrer et al. (2000), who rather found that low power distance relates with low service assurance.

In conformity to Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) and Furrer et al. (2000), this current study also found no effect of individualism customer orientation on the perceived service responsiveness of high rated hotels. Although our current study contradicted that of Furrer et al. (2000) who found individualism to positively relate with service tangibility, Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) found no significant relationship. This study also found that individualism cultural orientation had a negative effect on service reliability, however, Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) and Furrer et al. (2000) found no significant relationship.

Furrer et al. (2000) in the past found masculinity to negatively relate service responsiveness, however, our study rather found femininity to negatively relate service

responsiveness, while Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) found no significant effect. Once again, Kueh and Ho Voon (2007) and Furrer et al. (2000) found no significant relationship between masculinity and service reliability, but the current study found a significant effect of femininity on perceived service reliability.

Generally, our study contributes to the body of knowledge that seems to suggest that culture has some influence on service quality (such as Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Endara et al., 2019; Furrer et al., 2000; Kueh & Ho Voon, 2007; Mattila, 1999; Tsoukatos & Rand, 2007; Yoo & Donthu, 2005), and contribute that, even in the hospitality sector where less attention had been paid regarding these two constructs, there remain some significant effect of individual's cultural orientation on perceived service quality.

### **Limitations and Direction for Future Research**

Just as any other research, this current study is not without some limitations. First, the study in the bid to justify the study of individual's cultural orientation, stated that The Big Five personality traits theory (conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness and extraversion) could explain why individuals living in same society may have different cultural orientations (Costa Jr & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1981, 1990; John & Srivastava, 1999; Norman, 1963). However, the analysis did not capture the influence of the various dimensions of The Big Five personality traits theory. Future studies should consider looking at the influence of these dimensions.

This current study looked at the influence of individual's cultural orientation on perceived service quality. Other studies could also look at influence of individual's cultural orientation on service quality expectations. This is because individual's cultural orientation could determine what they expect from the service provider.

Although this current study controlled for variables such as gender, age, education, etc., theoretically, these variables could also moderate the relationship between individual's cultural orientation and perceived service quality in the hospitality sector. Other studies could focus on that.

The effect of service quality on customer has been much researched, however, one's cultural orientation could also moderate the effect that service quality perceptions have on customer satisfaction. Future studies could also pay attention to these relationships.

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