

BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS

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11th - 12th May 2017



Research Centre for Spatial and Organizational Dynamics
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INTRODUCTION

Interdisciplinarity is the main topic and the main goal of this conference.

Since the sixteen century with the creation of the first Academy of Sciences, in Napoles (Italy) (1568), and before that with the creation of the Fine Arts Academies, the world of science and arts began to work independently, on the contrary of the Academy of Plato, in Classical Antiquity, where science, art and sport went interconnected. Over time, specific sciences began to be independent, and the specificity of sciences caused an increased difficulty in mutual understanding.

The same trend has affected the Human and Social Sciences. Each of the specific sciences gave rise to a wide range of particular fields. This has the advantage of allowing the deepening of specialised knowledge, but it means that there is often only a piecemeal approach of the research object, not taking into account its overall complexity. So, it is important to work for a better understanding of the scientific phenomena with the complementarity of the different sciences, in an interdisciplinary perspective.

With this growing specialisation of sciences, Interdisciplinarity acquired more relevance for scientists to find more encompassing and useful answers for their research questions.

CIEO (Research Centre for Spatial and Organizational Dynamics) organises this conference, being Interdisciplinarity an important issue.

It is focused on social sciences with an integrative focus in the questions of well-being in society, and it is funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology. FCT rated CIEO with a classification of “Very Good” and one of the main reasons for this good evaluation was surely our potential for Interdisciplinarity.

CIEO has researchers from various scientific fields, and one of its main features is to develop knowledge from the interactions between complementary scientific areas of interest.

This conference was an excellent opportunity for strengthening and enriching our interdisciplinary systematic approach, not only for the CIEO members, but also for all the delegates researching in different scientific fields.

It was also an opportunity to show innovative research in social and human sciences, and to improve networks between researchers from different scientific disciplines.

The conference themes included topics from the following scientific fields: Economics, Management, Sociology, Psychology, Education, Sport, Tourism, Landscape Architecture, Geography and Political Sciences, just to mention a few.

As the CIEO is structured along three research areas, we have tried to organize the communications in parallel sessions corresponding to these three areas: 1) Cities and Spatial Dynamics; 2) Organizations, Innovation and Learning Spaces; 3) Tourism, Communities and Behaviour. There was also a significant number of communications included in the category of “Other topics”.

In this conference we had more than 300 communications presented in symposiums, parallel sessions, conferences and posters.

The diversity of papers and communications submitted enabled us to compile a scientific program which builds a bridge between theory and application. With its multidisciplinary focus, the scientific program covered a large number of topics, which we hope will provide many opportunities for stimulating exchange between participants in an interdisciplinary perspective.

Participants came from several countries, namely from Spain, Brazil and Portugal, and so, although the official language of the congress was English, presentations in Portuguese and Spanish were permitted.

In this “Book of Proceedings” papers could be written in English, Portuguese and Spanish.

101 of the communications presented at the conference are published here. They are organized in six parallel sessions and posters, corresponding to the structure of the conference program.

We believe this book can be an important contribution to establish the state of the art in the field of Interdisciplinarity in Social and Human Sciences.

The editors
Saul Neves de Jesus
Patrícia Pinto

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EVALUATION OF CUSTOMERS SATISFACTION IN HYPERMARKETS: THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL CULTURE AND SERVQUAL DIMENSIONS

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ABSTRACT

The importance of the retail industry for the Portuguese economy coupled with the criticality of the retailing market for its growth and the relationship between service quality and effectiveness of business deliver the motivation for this study. The aims of this research focus on the intend to develop a methodology for assessing the impact of service quality in hypermarkets of Bragança city on customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions and to specifically comprehend a conceptual model to analyse if (1) the national culture directly influences the perceived service quality (in the five dimensions of SERVQUAL) and indirectly contributes to customer satisfaction and (2) this impacts directly on the intent to return and recommend services and if the intention to return directly influences the recommendation of services. This research is of particular importance to the literature retailing and practitioners, once there are few studies in this field applied to the Portuguese hypermarkets retailing.

Keywords: Customer Satisfaction, Modern Retail Industry, Service Quality, National Culture.

JEL Classification: M10, M31

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalisation, strong competition, instable consumer demands and changes both in economic, technological and political systems force enterprises to learn faster and to adopt themselves to environmental changes (Ginevičius and Gudačiauskas, 2004). Some of the fastest growing sectors of the global economy are related to the focus on customer satisfaction. In a period of economic recession, remarkable performance will depend on those retailers who are able to create customer loyalty by answering to consumer demand (Ghosh, Tripathi and Kumar, 2010). Furthermore, customer needs and buying patterns have altered enormously. To meet several needs, enterprises to adopt customer-oriented marketing strategies and differentiated to rise a competitive advantage in the market, which allows them to stand out in the competition (Ko, Kim, Kim, and Woo, 2007). Additionally Ko *et al.* (2007) advocate that improved relationships with consumers can main to better customer loyalty, retention, effectiveness and profitability. Consequently, it is central to make a durable, strong and consistent relationship with customers in today's competitive society. Presently, providing quality of service is seen as the way to remain competitive in markets where global competition and technology have turned products and services into commodities (Nadiri and Gunay, 2013).

The retail industry is not indifferent to customer loyalty and satisfaction with the service. Although most customers do not immediately associate a commercial surface with a service, the service is one of the main tools in obtaining consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Yuen and Chan, 2010). Continued aggressive promotion based in price, such as the creation of coupons, temporary discounts, and others, while widely used, often have a minimalist effect on company results, as they tend to attract the wrong customers, and this does not always mean profit (Sirohi, McLaughlin and Wittink, 1998). Somewhat, the retail store must find a way to differentiate itself so it can stand apart from other retailers and drive more consumers to its store. Service quality is one way to accomplish this. Retailers need an efficient way to assess the service quality of their store (Simmers and Keith, 2015). However, the focus on customer retention in this area of business is one of the right strategies to generate profits (Sirohi, McLaughlin and Wittink, 1998). Loyalty is an important step in ensuring that consumers perform something that is beneficial to the firm, whether through purchase or simple word of mouth (WOM). It is believed that satisfaction is a consequence of the quality of the service, and guaranteeing it, increases the likelihood of involving the customer and loyalty. Several studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between quality of service and consumer loyalty (Yuen and Chan, 2010).

In a highly competitive industry, as is the retailing sector, it is critical that organizations have a good knowledge of the

business aspects that are important to their customers (Yuen and Chan, 2010). Only with a deep understanding, is it possible to respond positively to the expectations of customers regarding the services offered. To this extent, the strategy for creating competitive advantage resides in providing a high quality of service which results in satisfied customers (Shemwell, Yavas and Bilgin, 1998) and customer retention (Callan and Kyndt, 2001), dimensions which are essential for the survival of the retail industry.

Nevertheless, various authors have evaluated the relation between culture and service quality, in other words, how cultural dimensions influence perceived service quality and customer satisfaction (Furrer, Liu and Sudharshan, 2000; Nguyen, Cao and Phan, 2015; Tanvir, Hussain and Janjua, 2011; Veloso and Monteiro, 2013). This is so because customers of different nationalities perceive service quality in different ways, due to cultural and environmental differences (Wen, Qin and Blankson, 2012). For this reason, cultural differences have to be considered in a study which evaluates service quality (Laroche, Ueltsch, Abe, Cleveland and Yannopoulos, 2004).

From the review of literature on quality, it has been found that research efforts are concentrated on defining and measuring quality in the manufacturing sector. Since service quality is an elusive concept, there is considerable debate in relevant literature concerning which is the best way to conceptualize this phenomenon. Although an all embracing definition of service quality is not yet possible, definitions of service quality proposed by researchers revolve around the idea that it is the result of the comparison customers make between their expectations about service and their perceptions of the way the service has been performed (Grönroos, 1984; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985, 1988). If service quality is to be improved, it must be reliably assessed and measured. According to the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988), service quality can be measured by identifying the gaps between customers' expectations of the service to be rendered and their perceptions of the actual performance of the service.

Several authors have studied the relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction (Al Khattab and Aldehayyat, 2012; Chiou, Droge and Hanvanich, 2002; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Ekinci, Dawes and Massey, 2006; Jamal and Naser, 2002; Mohsin and Locker, 2009; Zaibaf, Taherikia and Fakharian, 2013; Zhang and Prybutok, 2005), confirming that service quality is an important antecedent of satisfaction. In this regard, Dabholkar, Thorpe and Shepherd (2000) argue that traditionally, most researchers conclude that customer satisfaction resulting from a particular experience of consumption, leads to an evaluation/attitude about the quality of service over a period of time. However, the reverse situation has stood out as the most relevant.

According to a recent meta-analysis, only a few outcomes of satisfaction have been investigated in the satisfaction literature (Szymanski and Henard, 2001). These outcomes are reflected in customer behaviour, the intention to return and WOM recommendation (Word-of-Mouth communication intention). Several researchers suggest that behavioural loyalty is the most powerful outcome of consumer satisfaction (Ekinci, 2001). Additionally, Oh (1999) confirms that customer satisfaction positively and significantly influences the return intention and WOM recommendation. As customers are nowadays more concerned with service quality received, it is of value to study the effect of service quality on customer loyalty (Yuen and Chan, 2010).

In the Portuguese retail industry, few research has been undertaken to directly evaluate the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions. In this context, the main objective of this paper is to propose a methodology that allows for the examination of the antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction, in retailing sector of Bragança. We specifically intend to present a conceptual model which aims to assess whether the national culture and perceived service quality promote customer satisfaction, intention to return and recommendation of services.

Although the quality of service in the retail industry has been extensively researched internationally (Dabholkar *et al.*, 2001; Das *et al.*, 2010; Durvasula and Lysonski, 2010; Khare *et al.*, 2010; Martinelli and Balboni, 2012; Mahfooz, 2014; Minh and Huu, 2016; Nadiri and Gunay, 2013; Simmers and Keith, 2015; Tang *et al.*, 2015; Yuen and Chan, 2010; Yu and Ramanathan, 2012), there has been little research done in Portugal to examine service quality as an antecedent of satisfaction and behavioural intention of customers in the Portuguese retail industry. The choice of this topic is due to the need for retailers to properly understand whether the service meets customer perceptions in the different dimensions of SERVQUAL, contribute to their satisfaction and behavioural intention (intention to return and recommend services), since they are determinant variables in maximizing profit, market share, and return on investment (Hackl and Westlund, 2000).

This research is particularly important for retail managers (survival and growth of retail companies), politicians (wealth creation, economic growth, etc.) and for the development of the literature in the Portuguese retail industry. In this paper, after this present introduction, a review of the main literature on customer satisfaction and their behavioural intention is made, then we propose the conceptual model and research hypotheses, ending with the presentation of the methodology and the contribution of the research.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 National Culture, Service Quality, Consumer Satisfaction and Behavioural Intentions

Hofstede (1990a) defined national culture as a system of values and beliefs learned during childhood. National culture is defined by Laroche *et al.* (2004, p. 62) as "patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting that are rooted in common values and societal conventions". Hofstede (1990b) suggests five dimensions of national culture: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. Various authors have verified that cultural dimension is related to the way customers perceive the service provided (Furrer *et al.*, 2000; Mattila, 1999; Nguyen, Cao and Phan, 2015; Tanvir *et al.*, 2011; Veloso and Monteiro, 2013). Moreover, according to Tanvir *et al.* (2011, p. 1242) "cultural dimensions and service quality dimensions are interrelated".

Service quality has assumed a major role both in public and private institutions, as an indispensable requirement to the costumers' satisfaction. There are two basic ways to define quality: one from the viewpoint of the service provider and the other from the costumers' perspective. The quality from the customer's perspective is the main objective of this study because it reorients the retail managers to the customer's needs. Firstly, it should be noted that the measurement of service quality is an important area of academic and scientific interest, which has assumed special prominence after the contribution of various authors (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). These authors, who represent the American school, have designed an instrument for measuring quality of service, called SERVQUAL. Initially, the proposed model incorporated 10 dimensions of quality (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, professionalism, courtesy, credibility, security, access, communication and customer understanding). However, these dimensions were revised and subsequently reduced to five (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). The dimensions of courtesy, credibility, security, competence and communication have led to a new dimension: assurance, while the dimensions of understanding/knowing customers generated the dimension of empathy. A Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) suggested the following definitions for the five dimensions:

- Tangibles: Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel;
- Reliability: Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately;
- Responsiveness: Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service;
- Assurance: Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence;
- Empathy: Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers.

SERVQUAL measures service quality from the customer's perspective of customer perceptions, through the amplitude of the discrepancy that exists between the expectations and perceptions of customers. Cronin and Taylor (1992) view that the validity of the use of expectations in the SERVQUAL model was called into question when consumers had no well-formed expectations and developed the SERVPERF scale which consists of the same 22 "items" of SERVQUAL, although centered only in measuring consumer perceptions regarding the quality of service. Despite the criticisms of SERVQUAL (Buttle, 1996; Cronin and Taylor, 1992), it remains the most widely used theoretical framework for measuring the quality of services so that, in the literature there are numerous studies that apply the SERVQUAL scale to assess quality of services across physical (Donnelly, Hull and Will, 2000; Mukherjee and Nath, 2005) and in digital environments (Wang and Tang, 2003; Kuo, 2003). Despite the diversity of studies in many fields, this study will be applied to the physical environments of hypermarkets in Bragança, city of Portugal.

Customer satisfaction is the outcome of the customer's perception of the value received in a transaction or relationships, where value equals perceived service quality, compared to the value expected from transactions or relationships with competing vendors (Blanchard and Galloway, 1994; Heskett, Sasser and Hart, 1990; Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry 1990). According to Gundersen, Heide and Olsson (1996), the crucial point of customer satisfaction is to identify the important attributes, considered by customers as their needs and expectations. As Valdani (2009) points out, enterprises exist because they have a customer to serve. The key to customer satisfaction lies in identifying and anticipating customer needs and especially in being able to satisfy them. Enterprises which are able to rapidly understand and to satisfy customers' needs, make greater profits than those which fail to understand and satisfy them (Barsky and Nash, 2003; Dominici and Guzzo, 2010). In order to be successful, especially in the service industry, managers must concentrate on retaining existing customers by implementing effective strategies towards customer satisfaction and loyalty, since the cost of attracting new customers is higher than the cost of retaining existing ones (Dominici and Guzzo, 2010). On the other hand Bennett and Rundle-Thiele (2002) argued that for customers to escalate their loyalty, their perceived value of the good or service presented need be at par with reality, forming an integral part of the corporate aims of the organization. Additionally Sirdeshmukh *et al.* (2002) reported that customers' satisfaction has close relationship to brand loyalty as well as service quality. Analogous claim is presented by Hoq and Amin (2010), who postulated that customer satisfaction is the emotional tendency of a customer towards repurchase of products and services offered by a retail store. In order to be successful, especially in the retail industry, managers must concentrate on retaining existing customers by implementing effective strategies towards customer satisfaction and loyalty, since the cost of attracting new customers is higher than the cost of retaining existing ones (Dominici and Guzzo, 2010).

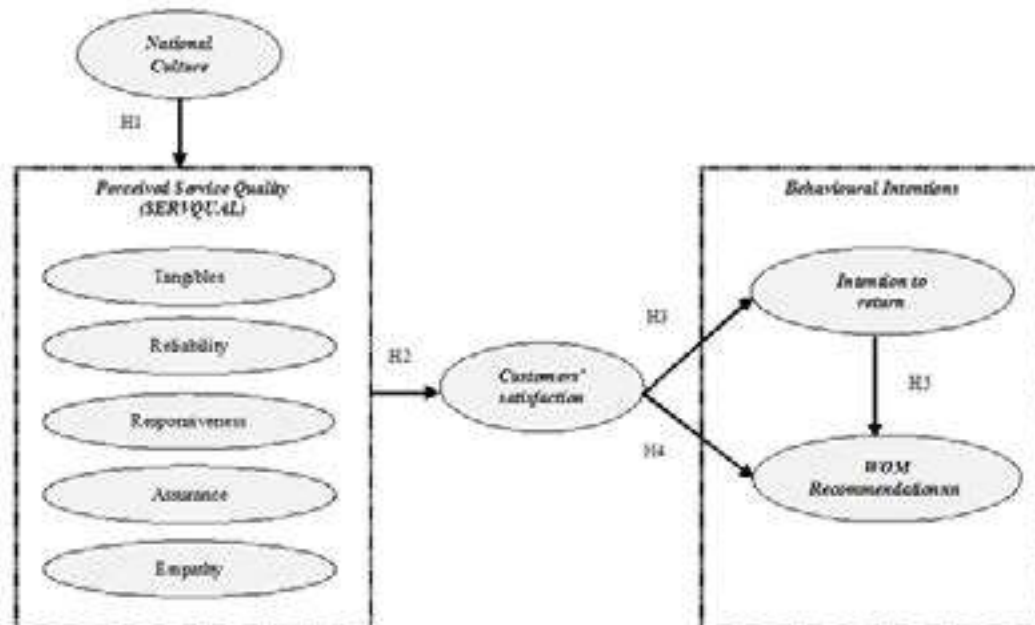
The literature suggests behavioural intentions as a construct which permits the evaluation of customer loyalty (Yang and Peterson, 2004). These are behaviours related to the intention to repurchase and even to the intention of recommending the product/service (Clemes *et al.*, 2008; Lai and Chen, 2011; Sumaedi *et al.*, 2012; Yuen and Chan, 2010; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990). Some studies developed in service industry have found the positive relationship between perceived service quality and loyalty (De Ruyter and Van Birgelen, 1998; Wong *et al.*, 1999). Customers frequently develop an attitude toward purchasing based on a prior service experience or, still, this attitude can also be influenced by previous information, based on the image of the retail in the market and even by word of mouth (WOM recommendation). With reference to the previous conception, customer loyalty has been usually defined as occurring when customers repetitively buying goods or services over time and retain positive attitudes towards the enterprise delivering the goods or services (Yuen and Chan, 2010). Service providers are increasingly developing loyalty, as they consider that it helps to rise income, and leads to largest market share, effectiveness and profitability (Al-Wugayan, Pleshko, and Baqer, 2008). In this sense, behavioural intentions can be define as the customer's judgment about the likeliness to repurchase in this firm or the willingness to recommend the firm to others. We conceptualize behavioural intentions as a higher-order construct consisting of (1) positive word of mouth (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zaithaml, 1993), (2) willingness to recommend (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1991), and (3) intentions to continue buying from a particular service provider (Bowen and Shoemaker, 1998). Based on previous definition, behavioural intention in this study may be described as a stated likelihood to repurchase in the hypermarkets in the North of Portugal and to recommend the hypermarkets to family, friends and others in the future. Research has established the many benefits of behavioural intention, such as making it a tendency for retailers to follow, as well as developing and maintaining a loyal

customer base (Yuen and Chan, 2010). There is also ample evidence of the influence of service quality on behavioural intentions, a huge body of research has demonstrated the significant relationship between service quality and customers' behavioural intentions (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005; Sousa and Voss, 2010). According to Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), behavioural intentions, and not attitudinal intentions, can be related to increased market share. Zeithaml *et al.* (1996), compiled a list of specific positive behavioural intentions, included loyalty, switching intentions, willingness to pay more, external response, and internal response. In a multi-industry study, the authors later provided evidence of the significant effect of perceived service quality on customers' favourable behavioural intentions, such as repurchase, tendency to say positive things and recommend the company (Zeithaml, Berry and Parasurama, 1996). In addition, Cronin and Taylor (1992), find a favourable association between service quality and repurchase intentions. Also, Zeithaml *et al.*, (1996) and Fullerton (2005), find a positive relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions. Moreover, preceding research has demonstrated associations between service quality and particular dimensions of behavioural intentions, like as Parasuraman *et al.* (1988), find a favourable relationship between service quality and willingness to recommend the firm, and Boulding *et al.* (1993), find a positive correlation between service quality and repurchase intentions, saying positive things, and willingness to recommend. Several authors point out that customers may not necessarily buy the greater quality service and that there may be other factors that define consumer choice, such as satisfaction (Wang *et al.*, 2004; Ryu and Han, 2010). Therefore, we expect customers who perceive the quality of the service as high to be more likely to demonstrate intentions, and we again believe that this relationship will hold regardless of the buyers' collectivist orientation. Loyal customers are main assets to firms, they make proportionally more purchases at their 'first choice' store than customers who shift (Knox and Denison, 2000). Usually, great service quality leads to customer loyalty, as it increases customer confidence towards and satisfaction with the company. It is supposed that positive perceptions of service quality enhances the possibility of customers being dedicated in supporting the company and developing and strengthening loyalty behaviour (Yuen and Chan, 2010).

3. CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

In according this theoretical background, the aim of this study can see in Figure 1, propose a model that consists of five major constructs: National Culture, Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction and two Levels of Behavioural Intentions (Intention to return and WOM recommendation).

Figure 1. Conceptual model



The hypermarkets managers should focus their attention on customer service quality evaluation as they must have actual knowledge that the service quality perceived by the client meets their expectations, as contended by Parasuraman *et al.* (1985, 1988). Based on these assumptions the purpose of this study is to examine whether the perception of the services provided in the different dimensions of SERVQUAL, exceeds the customer expectations.

However, the main objective of this study is to test the conceptual model shown in Figure 1, which includes four research hypotheses, as explained below.

The literature suggests that national culture constitutes an important construct in the study of service quality since it influences the perception of the quality of the service provided (Tanvir *et al.*, 2011; Furrer *et al.*, 2000). In this study we intend to, as have Furrer *et al.* (2000), who evaluated the impact of national culture on perceived service quality, test the following hypotheses:

H₁: The customers' national culture influences the perceived service quality

- H_{1.1} – The customers' national culture influences the perception of the tangibles service
- H_{1.2} – The customers' national culture influences the perception of the reliability service
- H_{1.3} – The customers' national culture influences the perception of the assurance service
- H_{1.4} – The customers' national culture influences the perception of the responsiveness service
- H_{1.5} – The customers' national culture influences the perception of the empathy service

The relationship between service quality and satisfaction has not been consensual in the literature as several authors argue that, on the one hand, both concepts are identical, while others consider them as distinct (Dabholkar, 1995; Dabholkar *et al.*, 2000; Oliver, 1993). According with Dabholkar (1995), while evaluation of service quality is essentially cognitive, for its part, satisfaction integrates both cognitive and affective components. This author claims that these two concepts are distinct for recent consumers of a product. However, in the long run, the affective dimension tends to be blurred and to that extent, the concepts tend to overlap. Meanwhile, Ngobo (1999) also reinforces the distinction between perceived quality and satisfaction level of the three dimensions. Assuming that these two concepts are distinct, a question that immediately arises relates to the order of their occurrence in the mind of the consumer and as such, the causal relationship between them. In this regard Dabholkar *et al.* (2000) argues that, most investigators traditionally hold that consumer satisfaction results from a particular consumer's experience of a service which leads to an evaluation/attitude on the overall quality of service over a given period of time (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). Recently, however, the reverse situation has stood out as the most relevant. This position is particularly evidenced by Oliver (1993) who suggested that the quality of service should be an antecedent of consumer satisfaction irrespective, of the experiential or the time factor. Similarly, Cronin and Taylor (1992) analysed the effect of these concepts in both directions and concluded that the quality of service perceived exerts a greater impact on customer satisfaction than otherwise. Recently, several authors have considered service quality as an important antecedent of satisfaction (Ekinici *et al.*, 2008; Zhang and Prybutok, 2005; Chiou *et al.*, 2002; Saleh and Ryan, 1991). Most studies assessing the relationship of service quality on customer satisfaction demonstrate the existence of a statistically significant level in studies of the retail industry. In line with this, and based on SERVQUAL, the following hypotheses are proposed in the present study.

H₂: The quality perceived by the customers has a positive influence on their satisfaction.

- H_{2.1} – The higher the tangibility, the greater the degree of the customers' satisfaction.
- H_{2.2} – The higher the reliability, the greater the degree of the customers' satisfaction.
- H_{2.3} – The higher the assurance, the greater the degree of the customers' satisfaction.
- H_{2.4} – The higher the responsiveness, the greater the degree of the customers' satisfaction.
- H_{2.5} – The higher the empathy, the greater the degree of the customers' satisfaction.

In reviewing the literature, we have found that marketing services have extensively researched behavioural attitudes (e.g. Andreassen and Lindestad, 1997; Bobbitt and Dabholkar, 2001; Dabholkar, 1996; Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry, 1996). Several concepts have been examined as antecedent factors of behavioural intentions, such as service quality (Brown, Churchill and Peter, 1993; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996) and satisfaction (Andreassen and Lindestad, 1997; Oliver, 1999). According to Liang and Zhang (2011, p. 156), "*it is generally believed that satisfaction leads to repeat purchases and positive WOM recommendations*", assuming that if customers are satisfied with a product/service, they are more likely to continue to purchase it, and are more willing to spread positive WOM. Thus, we propose our third and fourth hypotheses:

H₃: Customer satisfaction positively influences intentions to return.

H₄: Customer satisfaction positively influences WOM recommendations.

According to Nadiri and Hussain (2005, p. 471), "service quality promotes customer satisfaction, stimulates intention to return, and encourages recommendations". Oh (1999) found a positive and significant relationship between intention to return and WOM recommendations. In this study we intend to also propose this relationship and the following hypothesis:

H₅: Intentions to return positively influences WOM recommendations.

4. METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was designed as the survey instrument, which were included all the constructs of the proposed model. The questions in the questionnaire were based on a review of the literature in the area of the retail industry, described above in the theoretical background. This study was applied to customers from of hypermarkets of Bragança during the months of February and March 2017. It was used a non-probabilistic sampling using convenience technique. The questionnaires were distributed online and the answers came from several cities of the district of Bragança. Also some questionnaires were distributed in the near the exit of the hypermarkets of Bragança. In this study, respondents were required to fill out a three-page three sections. The first section consisted of a standard demographic profile of respondents. The second section contained the characterization of purchase process. The last section includes the statements of dimensions and

their sub dimensions. The measurement items to measure primary and sub-dimensions of service quality were adapted from several researchers (Chen *et al.*, 2011; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Dabholkar *et al.*, 1996; Wu *et al.*, 2011) and a series of items focusing on the behavioural intentions, customer satisfaction and national culture, which were adapted on the basis of several researchers' results (Furrer *et al.*, 2000; Mattila, 1999; Nguyen, Cao and Phan, 2015; Tanvir *et al.*, 2011; Wu, 2013; Yu and Ramanathan, 2012; Yuen and Chan, 2010; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996). Respondents were asked to use a five-point Likert-type scale (where 1 = "strongly disagree" and 5 = "strongly agree") to record their perceptions. Construct reliability will be assessed by using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

For the descriptive analysis it will use absolute and relative frequency tables. The Spearman correlation coefficient will be used to measure the intensity of the linear correlation between variables. Multiple linear regression will be used in order to estimate models that could identify the determinants of the behaviour of the variables under analysis. The significance level of 5% will be assumed. Additionally, to test the causal relationship between different constructs, we will use the structural equation model, given that the theoretical model includes the complex relationships between latent variables measured with different items that are presented simultaneously as independent and dependent variables.

5. FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH

The customer satisfaction and the customer loyalty process allows for significantly increased revenue from hypermarkets by obtaining sales growth and a better return of investments. With this in mind, the manager retail needs to know the real customer service needs and expectations, so that the service is tailored to the customer's satisfaction, in order to retain them and attract potential new customers.

Thus, this study proposes to develop and analyse a conceptual model that aims to explain the relationship between national culture, perceived service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions (intentions to return and WOM recommendation).

Based on research conducted in bibliographic data bases, we have identified a gap in the literature about the hypermarkets in Portugal, which relates to the knowledge of the factors affecting customer satisfaction and behavioural intention. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the development of the literature, politicians (wealth creation, economic growth, etc.) and managers of hypermarkets (the survival and growth of hypermarkets retailing). From a practitioners' point of view, the understanding of the factors that influence customers' satisfaction and behavioural intentions, on the one hand, may contribute to the retail manager's development when establishing strategies and contribute to the improvement of services provided by the hypermarkets and consequently increase profit, market share, and improve return on investment (Hackl and Westlund, 2000).

Findings are expected to report high levels of perceived quality and significant relationship between retail service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction and yet we expected to prove that the cultural dimensions and service quality dimensions are interrelated (Tanvir *et al.*, 2011; Furrer *et al.*, 2000). Furthermore we will try to show like as Furrer *et al.* (2000) also have demonstrated, that the relationships between cultural dimensions and the relative importance of the dimensions of service quality can provide useful insights for how firms should allocate resources in different cultural groups. We have shown that the relative importance of the service quality dimensions varies from one culture to another. Retail service providers need to recognize the importance of service quality dimensions in order of their significance, and implement appropriate strategy for competitive advantage over domestic and international players competing for share of an expanding consumer base (Mahfooz, 2014).

This present study will enrich the literature about cultural influences on service quality to measure individual-level cultural dimensions and by focusing on overall service quality expectations in the context of the retailing industry of Portugal which receives little attention from scholars. We will hope that the culture values show a quite good match with Hofstede's national culture scores. Furthermore, this study similar to the research developed by Nguyen *et al.* (2015) will extend prior research by identifying the most influential factor within four cultural orientations that predict service quality expectations.

Furthermore to the theoretical contributions, the research findings will have practical implications for retailing modern, namely: the modern retail store should carefully segment their targeted customers given that service quality expectations differ across individuals in a country; moreover, in order to reduce customers' uncertainty about services and supermarkets should be implemented informational interventions. Also, it is believed that customer relationship management should be considered as this helps to reinforce customers' belief that they and retail modern stores are carefully linked as a group, at the same time the employees should deal with customers' complaints and solve their problems in an effective manner to enhance hypermarkets' power. These contributions could increase customers' satisfaction and their loyalty to hypermarkets (Nguyen *et al.*, 2015).

The study results will help retail store owners and managers to recognize and prioritize the primary and sub-dimensions of service quality. Retailing management should realize that the significance customers accentuate is based on each of the primary and sub-dimension of service quality. Moreover, retail management should structure their infrastructure, processes, operations and resource allocation in terms of the relative importance of the service quality dimensions to their target at specific customers. Simultaneously, the retail managers should dedicate special attention to the national culture, because we will expect that study will show such as several studies have verified that cultural dimension is related to the way customers perceive the service provided is related.

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