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**The Applicability of 'Voice of the Customer' Tools
To an Indigenous Organisation in a Developing Country**

**A Thesis submitted to Massey University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of
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Abstract

The value and applicability of western management theories and practices to the developing world is rarely discussed within the current rush to globalise the world economies, capture untapped wealth and seek to establish businesses within indigenous societies. This is especially relevant to the use of Voice of the Customer (VOC) methods and tools when applied to indigenous peoples and service organisations, where customer information is used to design or improve services. There has been limited concentration and much debate as to whether VOC tools are as effective as anticipated, and can solve the unique problems that appear when used in unfamiliar diverse cultures in developing countries.

A risk when using a particular method or management technique is the desire and expectation that it will be transferable for use in similar businesses in other countries. Service quality is reliant on what the customer feels and often cannot be measured easily. This can be compounded in a developing nation scenario, by the fact that methods are usually developed, implemented, interpreted and validated through a western 'lens'.

Armstrong and Pont et al (2011, page 6 -7) describe these issues succinctly when they state... *'a survey of the leading academic journals suggest that well over 90% of the articles published are concerned with establishing basic causality behind certain phenomena. Very few studies investigate whether a certain method used by management is effective or not as practitioners we are more interested in what works than the intricacies of causality'*.

This research specifically explored the use of VOC tools in the Bougainville Village Court (VC) to identify service elements customers considered important to the functioning of the VC in their village communities. Tools that were used included quantitative measurement tools - a combined Garvin-SERVQUAL tool, the RATER model, and Quality Function Deployment (QFD) principles, and the more qualitative New Zealand Business Excellence Criteria (NZBEC).

The research demonstrated that the quantitative VOC methods used did not fully fit, or account for some service elements important to the customer in this particular context, where societal trust and continuous contact are important service elements. The methods used were thus, unable to completely capture the full humanistic elements and contributing causal factors.

In this research study cultural context in the form of history, environment, tradition, community relationships and structures, played a vital role in determining what the customer considered were important service elements. It was found that these elements were more easily captured through use of the more qualitative NZBEC as it enabled collection of more diverse perspectives through its open question structure.

Generic VOC 'western developed' quantitative tools did gather VOC information. However, they were only effective after adaptation to each VC location and after cultural input. Cultural analysis from indigenous people to interpret the data is recommended as a prerequisite and standard part of VOC methodology in a developing country scenario.

This research suggests assessment and analysis based solely on 'western' VOC methods and statistics will not capture the VOC fully and could lead to misinterpretation or fail to acknowledge the real voice of the customer and the causal and contextual factors contributing to customer responses.

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N.B. Individuals shown in photographs are not necessarily those who were respondents surveyed as part of this research.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ABG | Autonomous Bougainville Government |
| AROB | Autonomous Region Of Bougainville |
| AGDISP | Attorney General Department of Institutional Strengthening Project |
| BPS | Bougainville Police Service (Regular Police Officers) |
| CAP | Community Auxiliary Police officer (Volunteer part time Police officers) |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| CID | Criminal Investigation Division |
| COC | Council of Chiefs |
| COE | Council of Elders |
| Crisis | Civil war in Bougainville locally called the Crisis or the Conflict (1989 – 1999) |
| Kastom | Custom – Indigenous customary practices |
| LLG | Local Level Government, Bougainville |
| MID | Mid-distance in proximity to state court services on mainland Bougainville |
| NZBE | New Zealand Business Excellence |
| PMV | People Moving Vehicle – any vehicle that carries passengers. |
| PNG | Papua New Guinea |
| POM | Port Moresby (Capital of PNG) |
| QFD | Quality Functional Deployment |
| VC | Village Court |
| VCC | Village Court Clerk |
| VCM | Village Court Magistrate |
| VCO | Village Court officials |
| VCP | Village Court Peace Officer |
| VOC | Voice of the Customer |

Glossary

Adversarial - Overt conflict relating to the system of common law in which representatives of the prosecution and defence, or victim and offender, argue the case in opposition to each other (Howley, 2002).

Belief system - Is a way of thinking, understanding and perceiving relationships and dealings with others in the village community and within society.

Bureaucracy - A system based on hierarchy, different levels of labour and rules and procedures (Branine, 2011) and (Macquarie Dictionary, 1998).

Collectivism - Is a societal cultural dimension where people from birth onwards are integrated into strong cohesive in- groups and they protect this by unquestioning loyalty (Branine, 2011), (Chambers, 2008) and (Hofstede, 2000).

Cross culture communication – the way people communicate across work, business, village community, social, society and political situations (Branine, 2011).

Context - The political, social, economic, historical, state, interrelationship and institutional landscape within which the Village Court, Village Court Officials and allied organisations must work.

Culture - Shared norms, values, belief systems, traditions, rituals, crafts and art; history; tradition and heritage. (Branine, 2011)

Cultural identity - Is the common norms and values including language and relationships by which a group identify each other as belonging. (Wantok is the local name for belonging to a group with similar values, beliefs, language and customs).

Custom - Locally known as ‘Kastom’ - Rules; activities and practices peculiar to a particular location and is the norm for that community.

Developing Country - A country perceived as under-developed, less developed, third world or poor in comparison to western values and beliefs and economies. Countries seen as at the opposite end of the spectrum are those which are industrialised, developed, rich and wealthy and are usually called “the west”. (Branine, 2011)

Diversity - Recognising and respecting and understanding individual differences in a country, region or in an organisation with the realisation that individual groups have unique needs, abilities and potentials.

Ethno-centric - A belief in the superiority of ones own ethnic group or country over others. In managing across cultures it is where managers from home rather than the host country apply their own countries culture, values and beliefs, organisational culture and management practices into similar foreign organisations. They do this with a belief they are assisting in developing the country or organisation to improve. Often this is delivered in the context of their own personal experiences, beliefs and culture with a view that establishing systems and processes or managing an organisation is superior and or they are superior (Branine, 2011).

Expatriate - Someone who has left their own country to work and or live in another.

Formal structure – A structure or format explicitly known, described and written with a formally designed pattern of relationships, authority, with patterns of decision making evidenced by coordination of policies and procedures, the organisational systems and processes explaining how the VC is expected to function for every action under the Village Court Act (1989).

Globalisation - A concept used to describe the causes of international transformations in society, economies and geography (Branine, et al., 2011, p592).

Indigenous people - The native people of a land, territory or country that was later populated by people of foreign nationalities and countries.

Individualism - Where a single individual is expected to look after themselves or their immediate family. Ties to each other are loose and are more about individual needs or desires for oneself and less consideration of others (Branine, 2011).

Melanesia – A region in the western south pacific comprising of islands north east of Australia and south of the equator including Bismarck, Archipelago, the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea and Fiji (Webster’s New Geographical Dictionary, et al., 1988, p748).

Reciprocity - The relationship and dealings with in which mutually corresponding advantages and privileges are given shared and or received. This can be active across and within generations of people (Branine, 2011).

Values - Respect to worth; excellence; usefulness; or importance; to highly regard or esteem highly certain attributes such as skills, knowledge, age or characteristics.

Village Court – In PNG and Bougainville it is not a building, but a system of processes that are generally unwritten. It encompasses (in no particular order) extensive mediation, negotiation, conflict resolution, counselling, restorative justice practices, rehabilitation, reconciliation and compensation.

Village Court sitting - An informal court held at any location suitable to complainants and alleged perpetrators. It may be held anywhere including under a tree or by the sea and is the serious end part of the village court justice process. A village court sitting occurs when all attempts at mediation, negotiation, resolution and reconciliation have failed.

Westernisation - A process of adopting and adapting indigenous societal organisational practices, value and belief systems and processes to those similar to western cultures such as individualism, singular ownership, separation and isolation of organisations from village communities and free market economic capitalism.