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The Effect of the Cultural Background on Client Satisfaction in the Context of Universal Website Development

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Abstract: The transition to freelance work is a feature of the current era and was increased by the Covid pandemic in 2019. Talents in the field of web design were not excluded from this move, which enabled them to obtain clients from all over the world. Website design is one of the most popular businesses today. Client satisfaction is the cornerstone of business success. Companies and independent business owners strive to enhance client satisfaction. Client satisfaction in the case of developing a website is not affected only by factors such as the quality of the service or product, but also the relationship, and interaction with the service provider, which in turn enhances the quality of the service. This relationship is affected by several factors based on cultural backgrounds such as communication methods, the scope of trust, respect time, understanding of technology, and interaction during the development process. The research aims to shed light on the factors related to the client's cultural background that control the relationship between the website designer and the client. Knowing these cultural backgrounds, website designers will enhance their knowledge and understanding of different cultures that help them to gain client satisfaction.

Keywords: website development, cultural background, freelance job, client satisfaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

A website is a branding point of contact, a business tool, and a place to attract significant conversions. A great website can be an engine for business growth. On the other hand, a bad website can damage the brand. Being keen on owning a website is not related only to companies but also to small and personal businesses aiming for profit or spreading information and sharing their passion with a specific audience.

In the current era, many businesses have moved to cloud platforms to benefit from the globalization of client acquisition. Many talented people have also made a place for themselves on freelancing platforms.

All businesses have two aspects that affect their success. The first is the required service and the quality of its implementation, and the other aspect is a good dealing with the client. A community's structure and sense of self are defined by the complex system of evolving beliefs, ideas, sentiments, values, and symbols that make up cultural studies. In the modern world, culture is frequently seen as a key tool of globalization that is intricately entwined with local social, economic, and political situations. Therefore, when we study culture, we are also studying the world in which we live and how it works [1]. Ideas and symbols on the one hand, and artifacts (physical objects) on the other, are the two fundamental elements of culture. The values, ideas, symbols, and language that characterize a civilization are part of the first category, known as nonmaterial culture. The second form, known as material culture, consists of all the tangible components of the society, such as its clothing, tools and using technology, ways of interactions, and modes of communication.

The practice of hiring self-employed (freelancers) for various assignments is a recent trend. Due to its enormous value, the freelance industry is one of the most thriving and promising in the world. Clients post various assignments on freelance marketplaces [2]. The self-employment industry is rapidly developing and emerging as a new market for service professionals. Freelancing platforms have succeeded in fascinating professionals from diverse service backgrounds [3]. It was possible that in this new environment, the role of temporary contract workers might change so drastically that it might change the frequently assumed competitive relationship between freelancers and employees to one that is cooperative and symbiotic—indeed, where freelancers can create and support employees [4]. The digital

interaction made it difficult to understand the client's personality compared to the traditional interaction that were mostly based on actual meetings. This, on the one hand, the different customs and traditions and the diversity of the cultural background posed a new challenge when dealing with clients from diverse geographical areas.

There is research that examines the extent and mode in which freelancers provide additional value and drive net job change, despite the growing recognition that businesses are engaging freelancers or temporary contractors to enable them to become more dynamic and innovative [4]. Moreover, a presumption that both parties will behave in their own best interests. For these reasons, trust is a crucial component of productive teamwork, efficient communication, and both parties' dedication. It promotes healthier organizational culture and more effective working relationships.

An increasing collection of research on trust in the workplace has led to the emergence of models that explain how trust is created and preserved. Dennis and Michelle Reina's model [5] is one example. Their trust model identifies three crucial elements: communication trust, character trust, and capacity trust. Competence trust, also known as capability trust, develops when others have faith in someone's alleged level of expertise. Character trust is the conviction that people will follow through on their commitments and can be relied upon. The ability to retain confidentially, communicate the truth, and accept faults is a sign of communication trust [5]. Trust and cultural values are closely intertwined. Particularly, those from nations with high levels of power distance and uncertainty avoidance tend to show less trust in others, whereas individuals from nations with high levels of individualism and long-term orientation are more likely to do so [6].

II. Methodology and Research Aim

The current research aims to identify the elements of the cultural background and its impact on the relationship between the web designer and the client to achieve client satisfaction. We believe in awareness of these backgrounds by website designers will enhance their knowledge and understanding of different cultures that help gain client satisfaction. Yemen has been chosen as a model for developing countries, as Yemen has many customs and traditions that are most common in developing countries.

The main purpose of the current paper is to determine the key factors of diverse cultures on client satisfaction (CS) that would be critical to website developers especially those who aim to transmit to freelance platforms and treatment with clients from all around the world. Our motivation to conduct the research was raised out of the observation that many website designers have moved into freelancing, so the diversity of cultures can form a barrier to understanding between the websites designer and the client to get a clear picture of the client's desires.

The current research relied on the quantitative methodology which is done from the point of view of the website developers. The systematic investigation of phenomena through the gathering of numerical data and the use of mathematical, statistical, or computational methods is known as quantitative research [7].

The researcher extracted from previous studies the cultural factors that can affect the relationship in the business areas that affect client satisfaction. The research concludes that the most important cultural factors that are related to the business are trust, communication modes, capability to explain and discuss, respect for time, ways of interactions, and the understanding of technology.

A questionnaire has been conducted for this research. Sukamolson, S., 2007 [8] defines survey research as the use of a prepared questionnaire and a scientific sampling technique to measure the characteristics of a specific population using statistical methods. This questionnaire focused on three stages of website development; the first stage acquaintance stage, the second stage development process stage, and the third stage delivery stage. Several possibilities for client interaction and communication with the website designer were identified [9]. The first stage is the initial acquaintance stage before agreeing to the work, and it includes what the developer knows about the client and vice versa, several initial meetings and how the client evaluates the ability of the web developer, the method of contracting, and what this agreement includes, as well as the method of paying the fees. It also includes the methods of communication and the nature of the relationship development (formal/informal). The second stage is the development stage which aims to find out the client's interaction and cooperation during this stage in terms of the ability to identify requirements, commitment to time and meeting, respect for the privacy of the developer time, the styles of the interaction of the client with the developer's proposals, and finally, the client's understanding of the technology used. The third stage is website delivery which aims to find out user satisfaction.

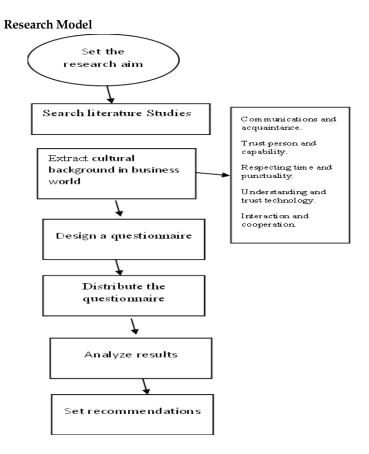


Fig.1: Research Model

III. Literature Studies

Effective communication within an online brand community has always been seen as a requirement for the development of a healthy business culture and a strong sense of organizational identity [10], [11]. Each client has a different understanding of aesthetics and visuals. The harmonious relationship between clients and website developers is very essential as it helps the developers to bring their clients' imaginations to life on their websites.

Clear communication serves as a link between confusion and understanding. If the client does not adequately express his set of standards and ethics, it not only hinders communication but also raises the potential for disappointment, which also breeds resentment and low expectations for work completion. For a positive working relationship to occur, the developer—who may be working with the client for the first time—must be well-versed in client expectations. To facilitate the easy exchange of ideas between the two parties, communication is crucial [12].

The first stage in gathering information from the client and paying attention to their demands is getting to know the clients and confirming the aims of their website. When a client is unsure of their actual needs or when their proposed course of action lacks a grasp of website design or technology, it is helpful to probe more. The needs of the client are always prioritized in website design. Client consultations play a crucial role in the early stages of website page creation, design, and development. If the client's needs are not fully met, even a talented and imaginative designer may run into problems. To produce the greatest website for a satisfied client, it is crucial to ask the proper questions and gather the appropriate data throughout the initial design process.

Arranging an introductory meeting with a client, talking about the proposed budget, and asking the client to list the top things they must be on the site and others they want but are not required now, are very essential to building the relationship with the client. Moreover, keeping the client updated regularly throughout the design process by arranging for regular meetings and conference calls and approvals and acceptance of contributions, ideas, and criticism from the client during the process will build trust between the website designer and the client.

Haq, N., et al.,2018 [2] in this study aim to pinpoint the key elements of client satisfaction (CS) that are essential for successful website development projects on freelance marketplaces. From the perspective of the clients of website development services, a quantitative analysis is conducted. The authors identify five key factors from the literature as CS determinants: user interface, information, security, and privacy.

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The literature review on client satisfaction was conducted methodically in Hult, M., et al. 2022 [13] study, with the literature being divided into three generations of thinking and emphasis, with the most recent, third generation, placing a strong emphasis on global business phenomena. These third-generation studies primarily examined the client satisfaction concept as it is used internationally and across national boundaries in a variety of market contexts. Szkudlarek, B., et al. (2020) [14] addressed the theoretical and empirical development of communication research in international business by capturing iterative and interactive context-dependent communication processes to improve local and global business practices.

IV. Data Analysis

5.1 Sample Characteristic

The research sample included 27 participants, most of whom were between 20 and 35 years old (89%). The percentage of males (59%) is slightly higher than the percentage of females (41%). The majority of participants entered the field of website design by obtaining a bachelor's degree in the field of information technology (74%), but it is noticeable that (22%) entered the field of website design through self-training.

5.2 Cultural factors which are adopted in the current research

The cultural factors that play a role in the business environment, especially the work between the website designer and the client, have been extracted from previous studies. These factors are:

- 1. Communication and acquaintance.
- 2. Trust person and capability.
- 3. Respecting time and punctuality.
- Understanding and trusting technology.
- 5. Interaction and cooperation.

5.2.1 Communication and acquaintance.

The methods of communication and exchange of information in the first encounters in the business environment vary from issues that depend on different cultural backgrounds. Commonly, societies in developing countries are more open to communicating and sharing personal information, while societies in developed countries tend to be more conservative towards privacy.

Table 1.: Communication and acquaintance

Question	Options	Percentage	Question	Options	Percentage
How do you often get	I found an	19%	How many meetings	3 or less	82%
your work?	advertisement for		during the		
	the client's request		acquaintance period?		
	Required work	59%		Between 4-6	15%
	from the company				
	I work for				
	By a friend	74%		More than 6	4%
	The client	74%			
	contacted me				
	Advertising	7%			
	campaigns to				
	promote my				
	business				
	From my account	19%			
	on the freelance				
	platform				
What do you usually	full name	87%	What does the client	full name	78%
know about your			know about you?		
client?					
	A copy of the	15%		workplace	63%
	identity card				
	workplace	59%		C.V	4%
	The nationality	70%			

	The country they	79%			
	reside in				
What does the client	Online interviews	59%	How often does the	permanently	22%
prefer to use for	(eg Zoom		client ask to know		
communication?	meetings)		what has been done?		
	Personal	37%		now and then	63%
	interviews				
	Phone calls and	74%		Upon completion of	7%
	social media			the initial design	
				At the end of the	4%
				project	
	Formal interaction	70%			
What was the nature	throughout the				
of the development of	project period				
the relationship?					
	Informal and	30%			
	friendly				
	interactions				

From the results shown in the above table, the most common method of obtaining a client is "through a friend" and "the client contacts me" which were 74%, and these methods reflect the culture of satisfaction with a person who is known by others the client knows them. In the number of meetings that took place before agreeing to work, 82% of the participants were consistent with the number "three or less", and this is a good indicator for reaching a clear vision through a small number of meetings. The personal information exchanged between a website designer and a client reflects an important cultural factor in communication methods. It turns out that the website designer knows the name (87%), nationality (70%), and workplace of the client (59%), which is information that he may complete by understanding the target audience of the site. In return, the client knows the name of the website designer (78%) and does not care about knowing the CV (4%) of the website designer.

The preferred methods of communication for the participants in this survey are phone calls and social media such as email and WhatsApp (74%), on the other hand, zoom meetings are acceptable (59%). When studying the frequency of the client's communication with the website designer to find out what has been done, it is noticed from the results that most clients communicate from time to time (63%). In the end, we note that the highest percentage indicated that the relationship remained within the official relationship (70%), and a few said that it turned into friendship (30%).

5.2.2 Trust person and capability

Trust is one of the most important factors of culture and depends on a variety of issues. In the business environment, there is confidence in the person himself/herself, confidence in the person's capabilities to complete the work required in the best way, and confidence in the safety of financial dealings related to commercial projects.

Trusting the person (website developer/client)

Q1. Do you have a lawyer to draft project contracts with the client or solve problems that you may encounter working with the client?

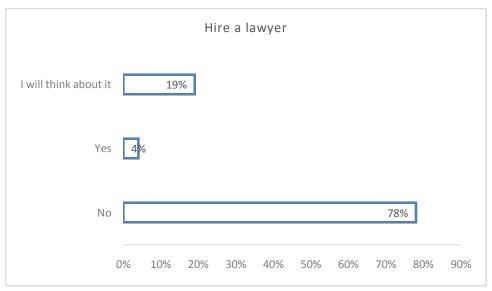


Fig. 2: Hire a lawyer.

In terms of trust in the person, which is the client in this question, fig. 1 shows that there is no agreement made for a lawyer to solve potential problems (78%). Perhaps this is due to the trust of the friend who recommended the client, or because the website developer has not previously encountered problems that require recourse to the law

Q2. Does the client require signing a confidentiality agreement before explaining the idea or requirements?

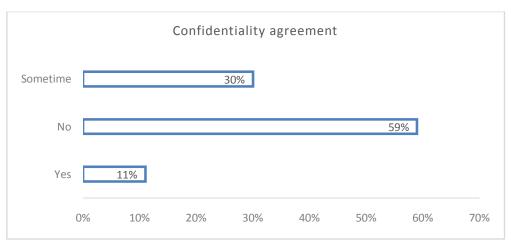


Fig. 3: Confidentiality agreement.

In terms of trust in the person, which is the website designer in this question, as shown in fig. 2 there is no confidentiality agreement between the two parties (59%). Also, this result may be due to the presence of a well-known person between the client and the developer of websites, as it is common in developing countries not to expect problems and to rely on simple business relationships.

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Q3. How is the client contracted?

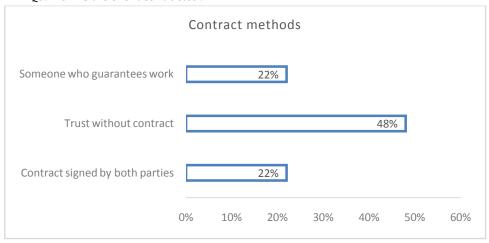


Fig. 4: contract methods.

A high percentage indicated that there is no formal contract between the two parties (48%) as shown in fig. 3,moreover, guaranteeing a well-known person is a common method (22%) to establish the work between them. This result confirmed the results of the previous figures.

Q4. How are you paid?

Q1.110 ure you puru.		
Pai	d system	
When website delivery	7%	
irregularly	19%	
Payments after each stage of completion	19%	
Down payment upon signing the contract		
and scheduling payments according to the contract	56%	
	0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%	

Fig. 5: paid systems.

In terms of the installment of the website designer's fees, the majority of the participants referred to the method of scheduling the fees (56%) as shown in fig. 4. In case of a breach of the delivery of dues by the agreement, the majority of participants indicate that they inform the client of the suspension of work and the keeping of the website until an understanding is reached with the client.

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Trusting the capabilities of the website developer

Q5. How does the client evaluate your skills to start contracting and trust you?

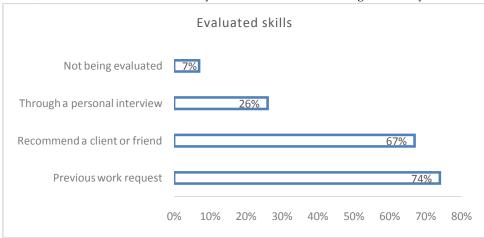


Fig. 6: evaluated skills.

In terms of confidence in the capabilities of the website designer, fig. 5 shows the assessment of the website designer's ability is done by viewing previous sites (74%) and the recommendation of a friend (67%) was based. It is noted that having a mutual friend takes many dimensions to ensure work.

Q7. How did the client usually accept the request to pay additional amounts of money to make additions or techniques to improve the website?

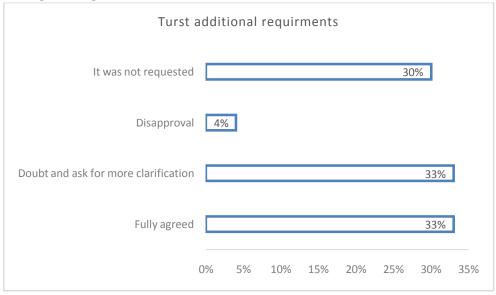


Fig.7: trust additional requirements.

The diagram above shows that the client trusts any additional requirements that require sums of money in an equal ratio between approval and doubt (33%).

5.2.3 Respecting time and punctuality

Respect for a time in terms of commitment to meetings and respect for the privacy of personal time are factors of the culture in which societies vary in developing and developed countries.

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Q1. What is your impression of the client during the development stages? In terms of respecting time

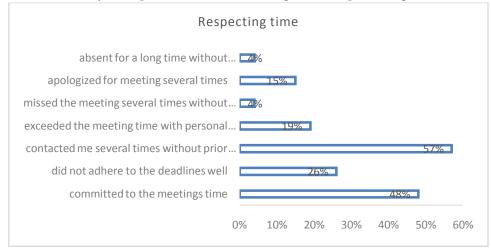


Fig. 8: Respecting the time.

Through fig. 8, we find that communication by the client to the website designer without prior permission is common (57%). But punctuality was good (48%), although several participants indicated that there was no such commitment (26%). In developing countries, it is common not to value the privacy of time and think their calls should be answered at any time.

Commitment to deadline

Q2. What was the next step after handing over the website? In terms of the agreed delivery date?

Delivery time			
Delivered after the deadline due to a default on my part	4%		
Delivery is carried out after the deadline due to problems by the client	26%		
It was delivered before the deadline	22%		
It was delivered on the specified deadline	41%		
	0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45%		

Fig. 9: delivery time.

In terms of meeting deadlines, the majority of respondent website designers indicated that they met deadlines (41%). Some participants indicated that they exceeded the deadline due to client problems (26%).

5.2.4 Understanding and trusting technology

Although technology has now become available to a large degree, and although the majority have become users of it in one way or another, the understanding of technology is still less in developing countries, as it did not take up space in daily life transactions.

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Understanding Technology

Q1. What is your impression of the client during the development stages? In terms of understanding technology

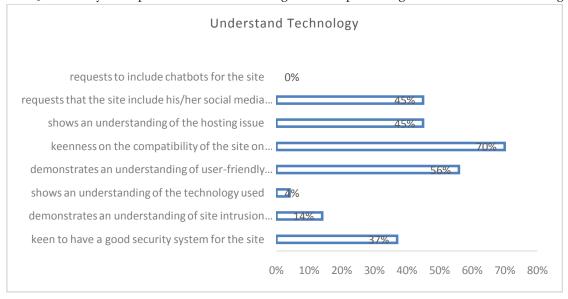


Fig. 10: understand technology.

The results of the above chart showed the client's impression concerning understanding the technology, although the results indicated that the client did not understand the issues of the breaches (14%), they showed interest in the security aspect (37%). The client took care of the interfaces (56%), the necessity of compatibility of the site with smartphones (70%), and the sharing of links to the client's social sites (45%). None of the website designer clients in this survey showed an interest in chatbots (0%), and overall approval of the client's understanding of technology was not high (4%).

Trusting Technology

Q2. What are the payment methods that the client prefers to apply in commercial projects?

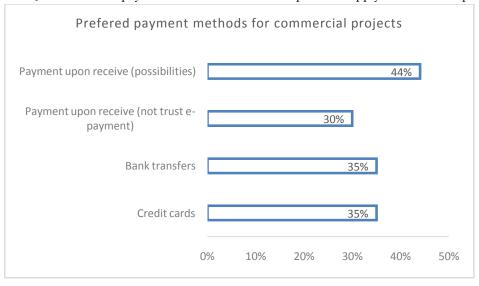


Fig. 11: preferred payment methods for commercial projects

It is noted from the results in the figure. 11, the client prefers cash payment in financial transactions at commercial sites by (44%), due to what is available to clients. And (30%) lack confidence in digital transactions (electronic payment). The non-adoption of electronic payment in developing countries may be due to a lack of confidence in electronic payment methods, or due to the unavailability of these methods by paying in an easy way for customers.

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5.2.5 Interaction and cooperation

The interaction between the two parties to the work represented by the site designer and the client is one of the most important factors that contribute to the success of the project. But some clients show an inability to define requirements and keep changing and modifying them because they do not imagine the final form of the product. The client's satisfaction depends mainly on his contribution and his knowledge of the steps of developing the site.

Q1. What is your impression of the client during the development stages? In terms of the ability to specify the requirements.

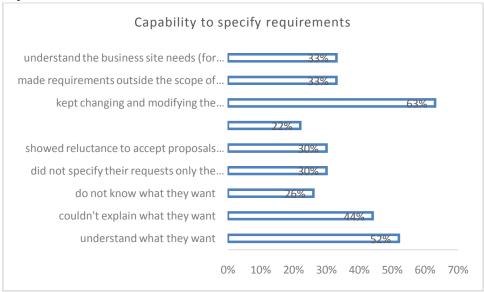


Fig. 12: the capability to specify requirements.

The above diagram shows the interaction of the client in terms of understanding the needs of the site and not providing requirements outside the agreed framework, as well as the ability to clarify and explain the requirements and accept the proposals submitted by the site designer. Participants in this survey indicated that the problem of changing client requirements was high (63%), the client knows what he wants (52%) but cannot clarify his requirements (44%).

The problem of changing the requirements comes because the client does not know the final form of the website, so we find that client cannot explain their requirements in a way that makes it easier for the website developer to meet their requirements.

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Q2. What is your impression of the client during the development stages? In terms of interaction during the development process.

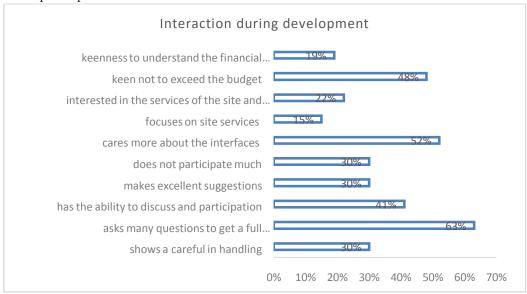


Fig. 13: interaction during the development process.

The above diagram examines client interaction during the development phase. The results showed that most clients ask a lot of questions to get a good understanding of the business, and this is a good indicator of client satisfaction. But respondents indicated that clients are careful not to go over budget. In general, respondents indicated that clients can participate and discuss during the development process.

By asking them how to deal with requirements outside the scope of the project, some respondents mentioned that they resort to clarifying the situation to the client that they require additional amounts and trying to convince them that these requirements are an advanced stage of the project.

5.3 Client Satisfaction (CS)

O1. Does the client have new feedback when the final version is delivered?

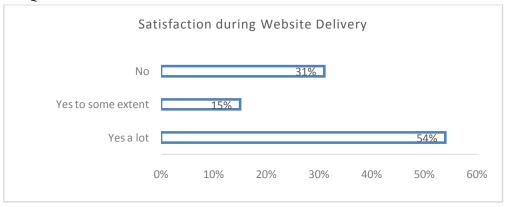


Fig. 14: satisfaction during delivery.

In the graph above, client satisfaction with the final delivery of the site was surveyed, and the results showed that (54%) of the respondents answered that there were a lot of new feedback.

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Q2. What was the next step after handing over the site? In terms of the impression of most clients.



Fig. 15: satisfaction after the final delivery

The above figure aims to know if the client is satisfied with the delivery of the website, which can give indications of client satisfaction. The results indicated that the client recommended the website designer (54%) to other clients. However, (56%) of the participants confirmed that the client contacted them because of some technical problems that made the client less satisfied.

Q3. How was the reaction of the client when the final website failed to meet his/her expectation?

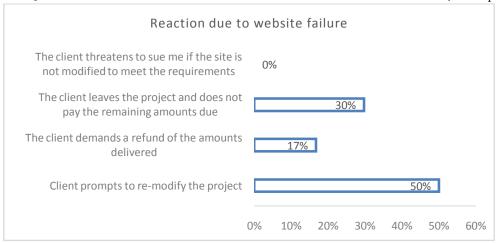


Fig. 16: reaction due to website failure.

The above graph studies the client's dissatisfaction in the case of website failure. The common reaction was to demand modification and repair of the website (50%), and the other disposition was to leave and not pay the remaining dues (30%). But the results did not show that the client resorted to suing the website designer (0%), and a small percentage showed the client's claim to recover the amounts paid (17%).

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V. Discussion and conclusion

Website design is one of the professions that depends to a large degree on a clear and smooth relationship between the website designer and the client. This profession aims to obtain client satisfaction, which helps to obtain other clients and business growth. A strong relationship can only be established by knowing and realizing the many different concepts and behaviors that relate to participating in a clearer understanding of the required site design.

The current research sheds light on the importance of knowing and realizing the diverse cultural backgrounds that have imposed themselves in light of the globalization of business because this helps to converge ideas, have a clearer understanding, and make greater use of relationships and dealings in the field of business.

After interpreting the results in the table and charts and resulting from the questionnaire that was distributed to website designers in a developing country called Yemen, it was found that the preferred communication between the website designer and clients is written means such as email and WhatsApp, which is the best for documentation as approved by one of them. Online video meeting like Zoom remains acceptable but not popular.

A mutual friend's recommendation is one of the most popular ways to get a client. Moreover, the presence of a mutual friend raises the level of confidence in the person and his capabilities, and thus less concern for making official contracts, being careful with the hiring a lawyer, or editing a private document. Although adherence to time and deadlines is widely disrespected in developing societies, the results of this study showed keenness on them, and in return, communication without prior appointment, which is a violation of the personal time of the website designer was one of the common behaviors.

The interaction between the client and the website designer is one of the most important factors for the success of the website and obtaining client satisfaction. The results were relatively good, but caution was common, especially regarding any additions that require additional payments. The website designer also suffers from the inability of the client to explain and clarify his requirements from the website, in addition to the problem of modifying and changing the requirements and deviating from the agreed scope.

On the other hand, website designer in developing countries still suffers from the client's lack of understanding of the technology to be used on the website that the client should use to manage the website. Although, some clients showed an understanding of hosting and demanded compatibility of the site on smartphones but do not adopt the applications the latest like instant chat apps.

Finally, regarding the reasons for the failure of the project to obtain client satisfaction. Several participants pointed out that the lack of the necessary budget for the success of the website is one of the reasons, and some participants mentioned that the client's failure to fulfill the information or clarifications required of them led to tension in the relationship and caused the client to be dissatisfied even with the success of the required website.

VI. Research Challenges and Future Studies Recommendations

The researcher suffered from the inability to distribute the questionnaire to a similar group (website designers) from developed countries to make a comparison of cultural factors between developed and developing countries. Thus, the aim of the current research was limited to shedding light on the cultural factors in developing societies that affect client satisfaction.

For future studies, the researcher recommends expanding the user group of website designers in developing countries and comparing them with a wide range of developed countries such as Europe, America, and Canada. Thus, we can learn about the different cultures that will in one way or another influence the work on the freelance platforms, which will expand the dealings with clients from diverse and geographically distant countries.

Knowing the influence of diverse cultures may benefit not only the development of a website but also the exchange of services and the expansion of business relationships on a global scale, all of which belong to the relationships between individuals of diverse cultures.

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