

Report On
Cultural Considerations in Customer Relations: Managing Eastern
European Clients in a Startup

By

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An internship report submitted to the Business Administration in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Business Administration (MBA)

Business Administration
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The internship report submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The report does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The report does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Designation, Department

Institution

Letter of Transmittal

Syed Mahbubur Rahman, PhD

Professor,

BRAC Business School

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Subject: Submission of internship report

Dear Sir,

This is my pleasure to display my report on “Cultural Considerations in Customer Relations: Managing Eastern European Clients in a Startup” which I prepared under your guidance. I am currently serving as a **Business Pursuit Executive** at **MagpieNest Limited**.

I have attempted my best to finish the report with the essential data and recommended proposition in a significant compact and comprehensive manner as possible.

I trust that the report will meet the desires.

Sincerely yours,

Sadi Md. Nahian

22364029

BRAC Business School

BRAC University

Date: 20.05.2025

Non-Disclosure Agreement

[This page is for Non-Disclosure Agreement between the Company and The Student]

This agreement is made and entered into by and between MagpieNest Limited and the undersigned student at Brac UniversitySadi Md. Nahian.....

Executive Summary

This report explores how startups can manage customer relationships with Eastern European clients. It focuses on Magpie Nest, a holding company working with clients from countries like Romania, Poland, and Bulgaria. The research highlights key cultural differences, such as the preference for direct communication, formality, and clear expectations. It shows how misunderstandings often arise from communication styles and how startups can adapt by providing clearer, culturally aware service. The study draws on an interview with Magpie Nest's CEO and other staff to offer practical recommendations. These include hiring bilingual staff, adjusting communication tone, and focusing on trust-building through consistent delivery. The findings emphasize that cultural understanding is vital for startups aiming to succeed in cross-cultural markets, especially those serving Eastern European diaspora communities in the UK.

Keywords: cultural considerations; customer relations; Eastern Europe; startups; communication; trust-building

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List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Form
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
UK	United Kingdom
EU	European Union
HR	Human Resources
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
SaaS	Software as a Service
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
FCA	Financial Conduct Authority

Glossary

Term	Definition
Holding Company	A parent company that owns controlling stakes in other companies but does not directly operate.
Startups	Newly established companies focused on innovation and fast growth.
Eastern Europe	A region including countries such as Romania, Poland, Bulgaria, and Hungary.
Cultural Competence	The ability to understand and interact effectively with people from different cultures.
Uncertainty Avoidance	A cultural dimension indicating how much members of a culture feel uncomfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty.
Acculturation Theory	A theory describing how migrants adapt to a new culture while maintaining their original identity.

Chapter 1: Overview of Internship

1.1 Student Information: Name, ID, Program and Major/Specialization

Name: Sadi Md. Nahian

Student ID: 22364029

Program: Master of Business Administration (MBA)

Major/Specialization: Business Administration

1.2 Internship Information

1.2.1 Period, Company Name, Department/Division, Address

Internship Period: 01.01.2025 – 30.04.2025

Company Name: Magpie Nest Limited

Department/Division: Business Pursuit and Customer Relations

Address: Dhaka, Bangladesh (Head Office)

1.2.2 Internship Company Supervisor's Information: Name and Position

Name: Ashiqur Rahman Tanim

Position: Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Company: Magpie Nest Limited

1.2.3 Job Scope – Job Description/Duties/Responsibilities

During the internship at Magpie Nest, I worked within the Business Pursuit and Customer Relations division. My primary responsibilities included:

Assisting with customer relationship management, specifically focusing on the Eastern European client base.

Analyzing client communication strategies and providing recommendations for improvements.

Supporting the team in market research to understand cultural preferences and communication expectations of Eastern European clients.

Participating in the development of customer engagement strategies, ensuring that they aligned with cultural expectations.

Assisting in preparing reports and presentations for senior management on customer relationship strategies and insights gathered through interviews.

Conducting data analysis and providing support for the thematic analysis of interview data.

1.3 Internship Outcomes

1.3.1 Student's Contribution to the Company

During my internship, I contributed to the development of customer relationship strategies and supported the analysis of cultural challenges faced by the company in managing Eastern European clients. My market research helped refine the communication strategies and adapt the company's service offerings to better align with client expectations. I also provided valuable insights through data analysis and supported the creation of the final report on cross-cultural customer relations.

1.3.2 Benefits to the Student

The internship provided valuable exposure to the challenges of managing customer relationships in a multicultural environment

- Gained valuable exposure to challenges in managing customer relationships in a multicultural environment
- Developed practical experience in adapting business strategies to address cultural differences
- Improved communication and service delivery approaches tailored to diverse client needs
- Worked closely with senior management, strengthening strategic thinking and problem-solving skills
- Gained hands-on experience in conducting interviews for research purposes
- Enhanced research and analytical capabilities through thematic analysis of qualitative data

1.3.3 Problems/Difficulties (faced during the internship period)

One of the key challenges I faced during the internship was adapting to the fast-paced work environment of a startup. The company often had tight timelines, and it was challenging to balance multiple tasks while ensuring high-quality output.

Challenge	Description	Response/Strategy
Adapting to a fast-paced startup environment	Faced tight timelines and had to manage multiple tasks simultaneously	Became a faster learner and improved time management to maintain high-quality output
Understanding cultural sensitivities	Initially struggled to grasp diverse client expectations in a cross-cultural context	Collaborated with colleagues to learn about client backgrounds and preferences

1.3.4 Recommendations (to the company on future internships)

Structured Onboarding: I recommend that future interns should get a structured onboarding with the visibility into how the company works and what's expected of them.

Cross-Department Collaboration: Encouraging interns to work with other departments, they would understand business better and new training opportunities would be opened.

Cultural Sensitivity Training: Offering cultural sensitivity training at the start of the internship would serve to help the interns navigate cross-cultural communication and support the company goals more effectively.

Chapter

2

MagpieNest Limited

Chapter 2 Company Profile





1. Overview

Magpie Nest is a dynamic holding company founded in 2023 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, by Ashiqur Rahman Tanim (CEO) and Atiqur Rahman Tonoy (Chairman). The company oversees a diverse portfolio of businesses across the United Kingdom, Bangladesh, and the United States. With a lean but agile management structure, Magpie Nest provides strategic direction, investment capital, and high-level oversight to its 13 subsidiary companies (Magpie Nest, 2025).

At its core, Magpie Nest is driven by one founding belief:

"No matter what we do, we provide value to the consumer."

The company's motto, **"Beyond the Horizon,"** reflects its forward-thinking approach and its commitment to building value in underserved or high-growth markets (Magpie Nest, 2025).

2. Key Company Information

Attribute	Details
Company Name	Magpie Nest
Founded	2023
Headquarters	Dhaka, Bangladesh
Founders	Ashiqur Rahman Tanim & Atiqur Rahman Tonoy
CEO	Ashiqur Rahman Tanim
Chairman	Atiqur Rahman Tonoy
Nature of Business	Holding company
Key Activities	Asset management, strategic investment, consultancy, oversight
Regions of Operation	UK, Bangladesh, USA
Number of Subsidiaries	13
Employee Count	Approx. 400
Offices	Dhaka (BD), London (UK), USA (location TBC)
Core Motto	“Beyond the Horizon”

3. Corporate Structure and Scope

Magpie Nest functions as a **non-operational holding company** meaning it does not engage directly in production or services. Instead, it **owns controlling stakes** in its subsidiary

companies and guides them through investment, board-level governance, and high-level strategic support.

The holding company **does not centralise services** such as HR, legal, or finance. Each company in the group operates independently and tailors its services to the market it serves. However, Magpie Nest does maintain a **close advisory relationship** with key ventures, especially those in high-growth or newly established markets.

Strategic Involvement Breakdown

Subsidiary Company	Strategic Involvement	Notes
Apollo Global	High	Startup guided by HQ for EU clients
Revolvo HR	High	Custom software unit
Revolvo (Accountancy)	Medium	Market-facing but guided
Iconic Packaging & Printing	High	Bangladesh-based trading unit
Magpie Nest Finance	High	Linked directly with HQ strategy
Abroad Next	High	Work permit hub
Other subsidiaries	Low/Medium	Independently managed

4. Subsidiary Portfolio

Magpie Nest owns companies in **education, technology, finance, HR, accountancy, property preservation, and trade**. The company believes in building a balanced portfolio that combines stable revenue streams with scalable innovation opportunities.

4.1 Subsidiary Summary Table

Company Name	Industry / Sector	Country	Function
RCI	Accountancy	UK	Accountancy services for UK-based clients
Apollo Global	Education & Consultancy	UK	Education access and Eastern European support
Revolvo HR	HR Software	UK	SaaS products for HR automation
Revolvo	Accountancy	UK	Tax and financial services
Earthbound	Handicraft Production/Import	Bangladesh	Handicrafts factory and international trade
Iconic Packaging	Trading & Printing	Bangladesh	Local and export packaging solutions
Magpie Nest Finance	Mortgage Services	UK	Home financing and advisory
Hampsted	Mortgage Services	UK	Residential mortgage brokerage
East West Holdings	Mortgage Services	UK	Asset financing and mortgage management
East West Services	Property Preservation	USA	Maintenance and preservation services

Maidenhead Green	Mortgage Services	UK	Mid-market mortgage solutions
Abroad Next	Immigration / Work Permits	UK	Visa and immigration help for workers
Tropical Holdings	Mortgage Services	UK	Property and financial advisory

5. Target Markets and Clients

Magpie Nest subsidiaries serve a wide range of clients based on the nature of the business:

5.1 Client Breakdown by Region

Region	Client Type	Key Companies
UK	Self-employed, SMEs, migrants	RCI, Revolo, Apollo Global, Abroad Next, Mortgage arms
Bangladesh	Local manufacturers & traders	Earthbound, Iconic Packaging
USA	Property managers, owners	East West Services
Eastern Europe	Education seekers, jobseekers	Apollo Global, Abroad Next

Most subsidiaries in the UK cater to a mix of B2C and B2B clients. For example, mortgage businesses support self-employed workers, many of whom are immigrants or new to credit markets. Apollo Global tailors its services to Eastern European clients, supporting education and work migration processes.

6. Culture and Values

At the heart of Magpie Nest is a culture of **practical value creation**. The founders have built the company on two key beliefs:

- 1 **Every business should deliver measurable value to its customers.**
- 2 **Long-term thinking beats short-term profit.**

These principles guide hiring, partnerships, and capital investment decisions. Leadership does not prioritise scale for its own sake but aims to build **sustainable, people-centred companies**. The company fosters agility and encourages founders of each subsidiary to **stay close to their customers**.

Core Values

Value	Meaning in Practice
Value First	All business must improve people's lives
Hands-off Control	Autonomy for subsidiaries with guidance
Ethical Growth	No cutting corners; all growth is earned
People-Centric	Employees and clients are long-term assets

7. Geographic Presence

Magpie Nest currently operates across three countries. Each office manages relationships with local partners and clients and monitors regional opportunities for growth.

7.1 Office Locations

Country	City	Function

Bangladesh	Dhaka	Headquarters, strategic centre
United Kingdom	London area	Operational focus and majority of companies
United States	TBC	For East West Services operations

The company is also exploring expansion through digital services and remote delivery, especially for HR and education units.

8. Operational Strategy

Magpie Nest combines strategic control with decentralised execution. It does not interfere with the day-to-day running of its companies but intervenes when:

- 1 A business is scaling and needs funding or guidance
- 2 A subsidiary underperforms against market benchmarks
- 3 A company's leadership asks for operational help
- 4 A new business is being built from scratch

This **light-touch approach** allows founders and managers to remain entrepreneurial and accountable.

9. Workforce and Talent

The Magpie Nest group employs over **400 people** across three countries. Staff are hired and managed by their respective subsidiaries, not by the holding company. However, the group encourages **cross-company collaboration**, especially in technology and customer service functions.

Country	Approx. Staff	Roles Covered
UK	250	Finance, HR, consultancy, sales

Bangladesh	120	Production, logistics, admin
USA	30	Property and field services

Employee retention and skill development are priorities for subsidiaries. The holding company supports these goals with funding and hiring networks.

10. Future Vision and Goals

Magpie Nest has laid the foundation for a stable and diverse portfolio. Its **next strategic phase** involves three goals:

1. **Grow high-performing subsidiaries** in education, technology, and finance
2. **Refine low-margin operations** to improve cash flow (e.g., packaging and printing)
3. **Explore new ventures** in Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe

The company is also developing a roadmap for **impact-focused investment**, focusing on businesses that deliver environmental or social value alongside profit.

11. Challenges and Risk Management

Like any diversified holding group operating across borders, Magpie Nest faces a range of operational, strategic, and financial risks. These challenges stem from the nature of its business model, its regional spread, and the independence of its subsidiary companies. Effective risk management is vital to sustaining long-term stability and growth. Below are the key areas of concern and the strategies used to address them.

11.1 Regulatory Differences Across Countries

Magpie Nest operates in the United Kingdom, Bangladesh, and the United States three regions with distinct legal frameworks, tax systems, employment laws, and regulatory expectations.

Each industry the group is involved in (mortgages, education, immigration, packaging, etc.) is subject to its own set of compliance requirements.

For example, the mortgage businesses in the UK must comply with Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regulations, while the work permit and education consultancy arms need to follow Home Office policies. In Bangladesh, factory operations must align with export compliance and labor laws.

To manage this, the holding company ensures each subsidiary hires local legal advisors. These advisors interpret changes in law and help prevent violations. At the group level, the leadership monitors compliance risk and maintains a basic internal framework that ensures each business reports its regulatory status quarterly.

11.2 Client Relationship Gaps in Culturally Sensitive Markets

One of the more subtle but impactful challenges is navigating customer expectations across different cultural contexts. This is especially relevant in markets where language, communication style, and trust-building practices differ from the UK standard.

For instance, in Eastern Europe, clients of **Apollo Global** and **Abroad Next** often expect direct communication, relationship-oriented service, and face-to-face interaction even when digital alternatives are available. Misunderstandings can arise if customer service staff apply a “one-size-fits-all” approach based on Western norms.

Magpie Nest focuses specifically on cultural training and in recruiting staff from its client communities. Both Apollo Global and Abroad Next employ bilingual workers and incorporate cultural references in marketing and service delivery. This minimizes friction, improves client stickiness, and is a great way to build a reputation for respect and empathy.

11.3 Liquidity Issues in Early-Stage or Seasonal Businesses

Some of its subsidiaries, especially newer or seasonal ones such as Iconic Packaging and Printing and Revolo HR, have cash flow issues during off-peak months or before reaching stable profitability. For instance a software company such as Revolo HR shows that there are high development costs but limited revenue on early stages of growth. Equally, Earthbound, the handicrafts business, sees fluctuations in seasonal demand as a result of export orders.

To counter this, Magpie Nest maintains a Liquidity reserve and short term internal borrowing from subsidiaries in tight situations by Magpie Nest. The group's recommendations also include asking companies to broaden their client pool and offer service.

Risk Management Processes

Magpie Nest uses a light but consistent system of internal checks:

- **Diversification** across industries and regions to spread risk
- **Quarterly audits** of financial and operational performance
- **Standardised reporting templates** across all businesses
- **Direct involvement** in strategic planning for high-risk ventures

These practices help the company detect problems early and give leadership the flexibility to act before issues escalate. While each company under the Magpie Nest umbrella has its own management, the holding company ensures a shared understanding of accountability and resilience.

In short, risk is managed not by central control but by **empowering each business** with the right tools, support, and expectations.

Serve people well, invest wisely, and stay adaptable.

Chapter 2.1: Organizational Analysis – Magpie Nest

This chapter provides an in-depth overview of Magpie Nest, the company where the internship took place. It provides details of its organization, mission, operations, and management. The aim is to explore how Magpie Nest's holding company is managed and how its approaches have implications on the performance of its subsidiaries. Consideration is given to leadership style, human resources, marketing, information technology, and operations. It also examines industry competitiveness and ends with a summary and recommendations.

Objectives

- To explore the internal operations and strategy of Magpie Nest
- To understand how leadership and management shape company outcomes
- To evaluate how marketing, HR, and IT systems support business growth
- To assess Magpie Nest's position within the competitive landscape

Scope of the Study

This chapter focuses on Magpie Nest as the central unit of analysis. Some reference is made to its subsidiaries when discussing specific practices such as marketing and HR. The study is based on primary interview with the CEO and other staff, providing insights into internal operations.

2.2 Methodology

The chapter is developed using a primary qualitative method approach. Research was conducted to explore company background, strategy, and market context. A semi-structured interview with the CEO was used to understand the leadership style and operational challenges. A thematic analysis was applied to extract insights from the interview.

2.3 Significance of the Study

This study helps illustrate how a modern holding company functions across multiple sectors. It provides practical insight into how strategic leadership, marketing, HR, and technology work together under one corporate umbrella. The lessons from this case apply to other startups and growing firms with international portfolios.

2.3.1 Limitations

The research is limited by the availability of internal documents. Data was collected from one senior executive, which limits the range of perspectives. Not all subsidiaries could be reviewed in depth, so general trends are presented instead of detailed unit-level analysis.

2.4 Overview of the Company

2.4.1 Background and Founding

Magpie Nest was founded in **2023** in **Dhaka, Bangladesh**, by **Ashiqur Rahman Tanim** (CEO) and **Atiqur Rahman Tonoy** (Chairman). It is a holding company with a portfolio of **13 subsidiaries** across **Bangladesh, the UK, and the USA**.

2.4.2 Vision and Values

Magpie Nest's vision is captured in its motto, "Beyond the Horizon." The founders aim to build sustainable, value-driven businesses. Each subsidiary must serve its market in a way that improves customers' lives. The group avoids buzzwords and focuses on practical, long-term value creation.

2.4.3 Subsidiaries

The group includes companies in finance (e.g., Magpie Nest Finance, Tropical Holdings), education (Apollo Global), accountancy (RCI, Revolo), packaging (Iconic Packaging), immigration (Abroad Next), and property preservation (East West Services).

2.5 Management Practices

2.5.1 Leadership Style

Magpie Nest adopts a **participative leadership style**. The CEO and Chairman guide strategic decisions, but subsidiary managers are allowed to lead their operations. This approach builds accountability and innovation within each business. In the CEO interview, he explained that his role is not to micromanage but to support each company in reaching its goals.

Strengths of this leadership style:

- Encourages autonomy
- Supports decision-making at the ground level
- Builds leadership skills within each business

Challenges:

- Risk of misalignment if goals are not clearly communicated
- Varying leadership quality across subsidiaries

Overall, this style helps the company scale without losing flexibility.

2.5.2 Human Resource Planning

Each subsidiary manages its own **recruitment and selection** processes. Roles are advertised based on operational needs, and hiring is usually handled internally, often through referrals or LinkedIn.

- **Compensation:** Salaries are competitive and adjusted for local market standards. Some companies offer commission-based pay (e.g., mortgage advisors), while others offer fixed salaries.
- **Training and Development:** Training is mostly informal. New staff learn through direct experience, though Apollo Global and Revolo HR have basic onboarding systems. Formal training may improve as the group expands.
- **Performance Appraisal:** Performance is reviewed informally. Results are tracked monthly, and bonuses are sometimes tied to performance metrics. However, a unified appraisal system does not yet exist.

2.6 Marketing Practices

Magpie Nest companies use a **pull marketing strategy** supported by **omnichannel communication**. Each subsidiary adjusts its marketing approach to suit its service and client base.

2.6.1 Funnel and Lead Strategy

Marketing typically begins through a lead funnel, often using:

- Social media
- Google Ads
- Direct outreach (cold emails or calls)

Once leads are captured, sales teams follow up through WhatsApp, email, or phone. Clients are informed of services and guided toward conversion.

2.6.2 Omnichannel Approach

Magpie Nest businesses use **multiple platforms** to stay in touch with leads:

- Facebook and Instagram for visibility

- LinkedIn , Facebook and whatsapp for B2B leads
- Website chatbots for instant client response

This helps build trust and reach clients in their preferred channels. The strategy is practical and cost-effective, especially for startups.

2.7 Operations Management and Information Systems

2.7.1 Use of Information Systems

Information systems are used mainly for:

- Lead tracking
- Financial data
- Internal communication
- Client record keeping

Systems are built **in-house** by a member of the **Business Pursuit Executive Staff**, with support from the CEO and Chairman. These systems are not off-the-shelf products but custom-built to meet the company's practical needs.

2.7.2 Software Tools

Most companies use:

- Google Workspace (Docs, Sheets, Drive)
- Microsoft Excel for financial records
- WhatsApp and email for internal updates
- Simple CRMs for client management (e.g., HubSpot or Zoho in trial use)

2.7.3 Quality and Scheduling

Scheduling is done using shared calendars. Quality control depends on human checks. While not highly automated, systems are **fit-for-purpose**. As the group grows, more formal systems may be adopted.

2.8 Industry and Competitive Analysis

2.8.1 Porter's Five Forces Analysis

Force	Assessment
Threat of New Entrants	Moderate – Entry into consultancy or mortgages is easy, but branding and trust take time.
Bargaining Power of Buyers	High – Clients can switch to other service providers if not satisfied.
Bargaining Power of Suppliers	Low – Most services are delivered in-house or depend on digital tools.
Threat of Substitutes	Moderate – Automation and AI could replace some service lines in future.
Industry Rivalry	High – Particularly in sectors like finance and education consultancy.

2.8.2 SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Strong leadership	Limited centralisation
Diversified portfolio	Inconsistent HR practices
Cost-effective marketing	Informal systems in some units
Opportunities	Threats

Growing demand in Eastern Europe	Regulatory risk in foreign markets
Expansion into tech services	Rising competition

Common Strengths: Affordable services, flexible staffing, multilingual outreach

Distinctive Strengths: Custom-built systems, leadership experience, cross-border operations

Imitable Strengths: Marketing methods, HR processes (easily copied by competitors)

2.9 Conclusion

Magpie Nest is building a flexible and high-impact business group rooted in practical value, ethical growth, and strategic independence. With a young but experienced leadership team, the company is moving steadily toward its vision of becoming a trusted holding group across multiple sectors. Its ability to support education, finance, property, and trade services in different regions shows the strength of its model. As it grows, the focus remains clear:

3.1 Introduction**Background of the Study**

Startups often enter foreign markets to grow. When they do, they must work with clients from different cultures. One region that presents both opportunities and challenges is Eastern Europe. Countries in this region include Romania, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and others. Each has its own language, customs, and way of doing business (LUBOWIECKI-VIKUK, 2020). These cultural differences can shape how people speak, negotiate, and build trust (Bartosik-Purgat & Rakowska, 2023).

Startups are usually small and move fast. They may not have the time or resources to study cultural norms in depth. But they still need to win and keep clients. Good customer relationships help startups grow, but poor ones can cause harm. When startups do not understand the culture of their clients, it can lead to confusion, mistakes, or even lost deals.

This is a common issue for startups working with clients in Eastern Europe. Many of these clients value formal communication, clear roles, and steady trust. These values may not match the informal or fast-paced style that some startups use. If a startup ignores these norms, clients may feel disrespected or unsure.

This study looks at how startups can manage customer relationships with Eastern European clients. It draws on real work experience gained during an internship in a startup that works with clients in this region.

Rationale of the Study

This study matters because more startups are working in Eastern Europe. These markets offer new chances for growth. But entering these markets means dealing with different ways of

working. Clients in Eastern Europe may expect more formality, longer trust-building periods, or a different tone in emails or meetings. These differences can seem small but often lead to bigger issues.

While there is some research on cross-cultural business, few studies focus on startups. Most existing work looks at large firms or global companies. Startups face different problems. They may not have large teams or departments to manage client relations (Guerola-Navarro et al., 2022). Instead, a few people may handle everything sales, support, and relationship management.

The need for this study comes from this gap. It asks: how can startups manage these client relationships better? What do they need to know about the cultures they work with? And how can they avoid common mistakes?

The aim is not to create a one-size-fits-all guide. Instead, the study provides clear examples and practical steps. It focuses on cultural factors that matter in daily work, such as email tone, meeting etiquette, and decision-making styles.

Problem Statement

Startups that work with clients from Eastern Europe face a risk. If they don't understand cultural expectations, they may damage the relationship. This may happen even if their service or product is good. Misunderstandings can occur in simple ways: using the wrong tone in an email, being too direct in a meeting, or pushing for a decision too soon Hooker (2012).

These problems often stem from a lack of cultural awareness. Startups may use the same approach with all clients, assuming it will work everywhere. But Eastern European clients may want a more careful or respectful tone. They may need time to build trust before making deals. If startups don't adjust, the client may lose confidence or disengage.

Because startups have fewer resources, they need to avoid these risks. Each client matters. Losing one due to poor communication or cultural insensitivity can have real costs. The core problem is that many startups lack clear strategies for dealing with these cultural issues.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer three key questions:

- 1 What are the key cultural factors that influence business relationships in Eastern Europe?
- 2 How can startups effectively adapt their customer relationship strategies to meet the cultural expectations of Eastern European clients?
- 3 What common misunderstandings arise between startups and Eastern European clients, and how can these be effectively addressed?

Research Objectives

The objectives are:

- 1 To identify and examine cultural norms and business expectations specific to Eastern European countries.
- 2 To explore strategies that startups can use to align their customer relationship management with Eastern European cultural values.
- 3 To assess the root causes of communication or relational breakdowns between startups and clients from this region.
- 4 To recommend practical and culturally-informed approaches for improving customer relations with Eastern European clients in a startup environment.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on startups that engage with clients in Eastern Europe. It looks at how culture affects customer relationships. It includes countries like Romania, Bulgaria, Poland,

and Hungary. While each country has unique traits, the study highlights patterns that appear across the region.

The scope includes communication style, meeting etiquette, trust-building, and decision-making. It does not cover marketing, product design, or finance unless these topics relate directly to customer relations.

The study draws from real-life experience during an internship in a startup working with clients in this region. It also uses research and examples from existing literature where relevant.

This study does not aim to generalize all Eastern European countries. Instead, it looks at trends and practices that are common enough to guide startups in a practical way.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the topic of managing customer relations with Eastern European clients in a startup setting. Startups often face cultural challenges when working in foreign markets, especially when they move quickly and lack formal structures. Eastern Europe presents unique cultural norms that influence how clients expect to be treated in business settings.

The study responds to a real problem: many startups struggle to manage these relationships well. Misunderstandings, poor communication, or mismatched expectations can harm trust and lead to lost business. Startups must learn how to adapt their approach to fit the cultural needs of these clients.

The research focuses on three questions. First, what cultural factors shape customer relationships in Eastern Europe? Second, how can startups adjust their methods to align with these expectations? Third, what types of misunderstandings occur, and how can startups address them?

The objectives are to explore these issues, understand their causes, and offer simple, practical steps that startups can use. The study stays focused on customer relations and does not explore wider business functions.

The next chapters expand on this work. Chapter 2 reviews key theories and previous research. Chapter 3 explains the methods used during the internship. Chapter 4 presents the findings, and Chapter 5 offers recommendations and conclusions.

This chapter lays the foundation for the rest of the report. It shows why this topic matters and what the study aims to do. It also defines the scope and sets clear goals. The tone remains factual, the language stays simple, and the focus stays on helping startups work better with Eastern European clients.

Chapter

3.2

Literature Review

3.2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

In an increasingly globalised Britain, the importance of cultural sensitivity in service delivery has become more prominent, particularly in the context of diaspora communities. Cultural competence the ability of service providers to understand and respond effectively to the cultural and linguistic needs of clients has been linked to higher customer satisfaction and trust (Ladhari, 2009). This is of particular importance in urban centres such as London where Eastern European migrants are a large proportion of the working population. In such a setting, UK businesses are becoming more and more required to communicate with clients with expectations, ways of communicating and norms that are very different from the UK mainstream.

Startups like Magpie Nest, a multi-service holding group are frequently serving culturally isolated customers from post-communist Eastern Europe. These customers may value in particular relational trust, explicitness of negotiation, and clear hierarchies of service provision created by historical and socio-political practices (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). While this will be less of a problem for larger companies with finance and HR departments and some institutional memory around cultural adaptation, smaller companies won't have the same kind of structure to manage customers cross-culturally, which makes informal awareness or insights even more critical.

The aim of this literature review is to explore the theoretical frameworks and empirical studies that inform how UK-based startups can adapt their services and interactions to manage relationships with Eastern European clients effectively. This exploration is not just about identifying cultural “differences” but about positioning cultural understanding as a strategic component in the design of services and client communications. Theories such as Hall's 1976 high-context vs low-context communication styles and Hofstede's cultural dimensions will be examined to assess how they apply to service delivery in a UK startup setting. Additionally, studies on migrant trust in public and private services (Phillimore, 2011) will be considered to contextualise how prior experiences of bureaucracy and discrimination can affect client engagement and expectations.

Ultimately, this review supports the dissertation's broader objective: to frame cultural knowledge not as a peripheral asset but as central to effective service delivery. For a company like Magpie Nest, operating in multicultural environments, understanding Eastern European cultural norms can significantly enhance service quality, customer retention, and staff-client relationships.

3.2.2 Understanding Eastern European Diaspora in the UK

Since the 2004 enlargement of the European Union, migration from Eastern Europe to the UK has changed quite a bit. The UK saw a big increase in migrants from countries like Poland, Romania, and Lithuania, mainly because of better job opportunities and economic conditions compared to back home (Kotýnková, 2020). If you look at Fig. 1, you can see that more people have been coming into the UK than leaving since the mid-1990s. There are clear spikes in migration around 2007 and again in 2014-2015, which line up with the EU expansions and the end of temporary work restrictions for Romania and Bulgaria (Kotýnková, 2020). This growing wave of migration makes it more important than ever for businesses especially startups in the service sector to understand who these migrants are and what their backgrounds are like.

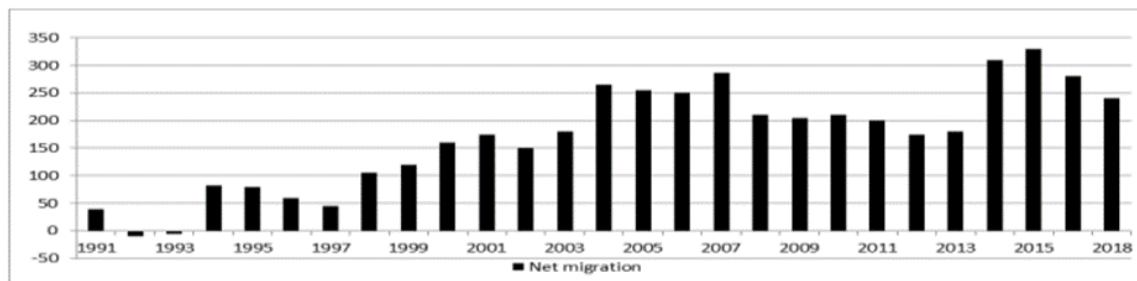


Figure 1 Fig 1 Net international migration in the UK by country of birth, 1991 - 2018

In terms of where these migrants are coming from, Fig. 2 shows that Poland has historically been the biggest source of Eastern European migrants. Although the number of Polish nationals has dipped a little recently, there's been a noticeable rise in people coming from Romania and Bulgaria (Kotýnková, 2020). These trends reflect a mix of economic and political issues in their home countries, like lower wages and instability. Most of these migrants are of working age and are very active in the UK job market.

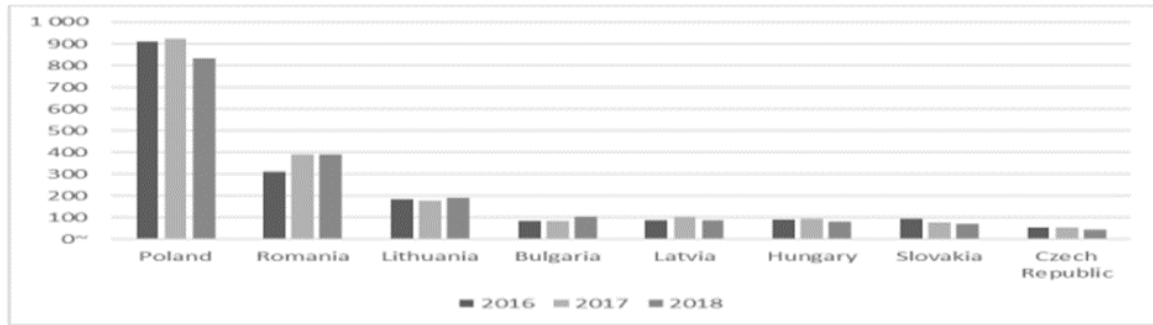


Figure 2 EU8 migrant stock in the UK by country of birth in 2016 – 2018

Interestingly, Eastern European migrants especially men tend to have higher employment rates than people born in the UK. Fig. 3 highlights this, showing that in 2018, men from EU8 and EU2 countries were more likely to be working than UK-born men. However, even though many are employed, they often earn less than their UK-born counterparts. Fig. 4 shows this wage gap clearly. A lot of migrants end up in lower-skilled jobs that don't pay much, which is in line with Piore's Dual Labour Market Theory. According to this theory, the labor market is split into two parts: the primary market, with stable jobs and chances for promotion, and the service market, which offers insecure, lower-paid work where many migrants end up (Kotýnková, 2020).

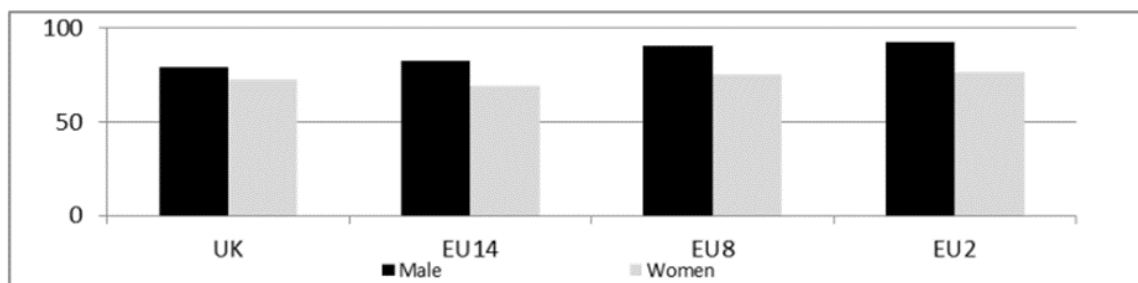


Figure 3 Employment rate by country of birth, 2018.

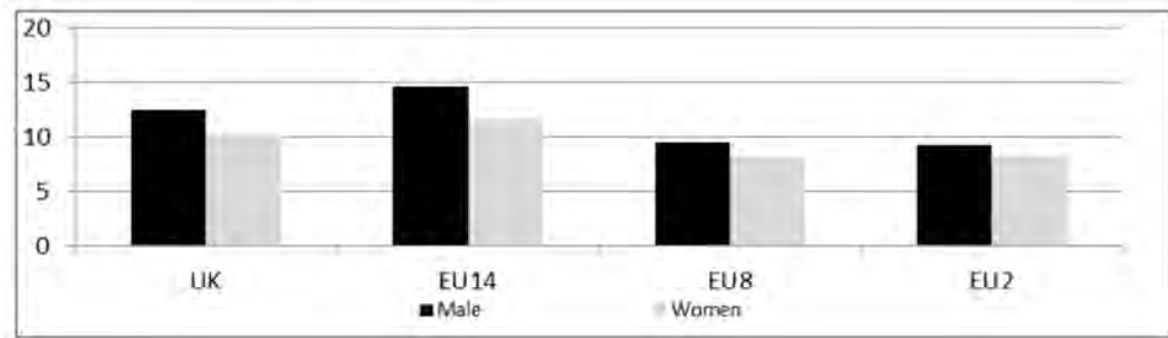


Figure 4 Median hourly wage (£) by country of birth, 2018

These working and living conditions also affect what Eastern European clients expect from service providers in the UK. Many face challenges like language barriers or mistrust of unfamiliar systems. This is where Berry's Acculturation Theory can be useful it explains how migrants adjust to new cultures. Some try to integrate, keeping their cultural identity while also engaging with UK society. These individuals usually want clear communication and helpful, friendly service. Others might prefer to stay within their own communities and seek out businesses that understand their culture and speak their language (Kotýnková, 2020).

Overall, understanding how Eastern European migrants live and work in the UK can really help service startups meet their needs. A business that takes into account their experiences and cultural backgrounds will likely earn more trust and do better in the long run.

Migration is a complex global issue that's deeply influenced by economic, social, and political factors. In recent decades, especially within Europe, migration patterns have changed significantly. As Naydenov (2018) points out, one of the main drivers behind these movements is the economic imbalance between different regions. This is particularly true in the European Union, where people often move across borders looking for better job opportunities. As shown

in Figure 5, the number of international migrants grew steadily between 2000 and 2017, with Europe emerging as one of the top destinations, alongside Asia and North America (Naydenov, 2018). This increase isn't just about work it also reflects bigger changes like the post-Cold War shifts and the expansion of the EU.

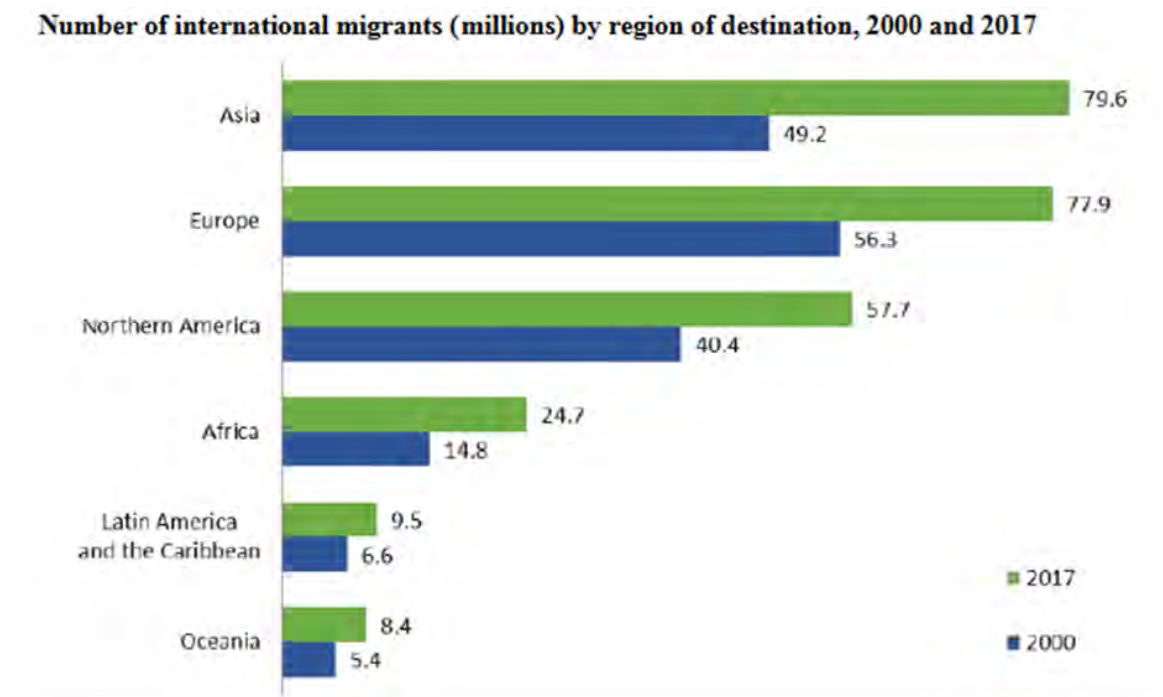


Figure 5 Number of international migrants by region of destination, 2000 and 2017

Within Europe, migration has become an important way to fill labor shortages in countries that need workers. A mix of economic opportunities, government policies, and political stability all play a role in shaping who moves where. For example, Eurostat data from 2015 shows that some EU countries like Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, and Germany have particularly high immigration rates per 1,000 people (Naydenov, 2018). The UK is also one of the major destinations, especially for people from Eastern Europe who are looking for better wages and living conditions.

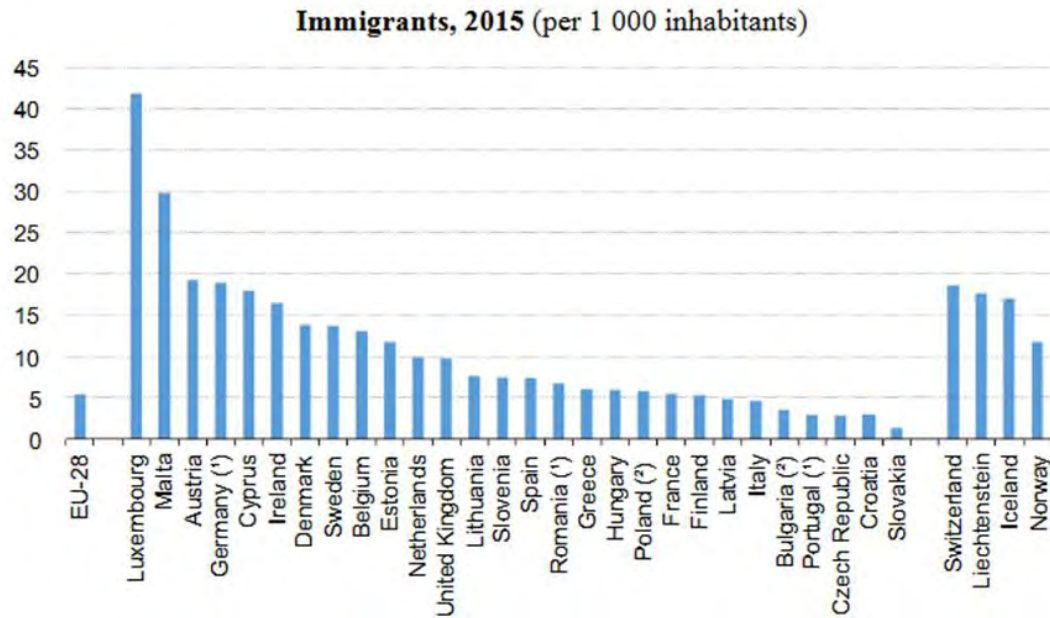


Figure 6 Immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants in EU countries, 2015

These migration trends have big implications for how businesses, especially new startups, serve Eastern European clients in the UK. Many of these migrants bring a range of cultural experiences and face real challenges when it comes to settling in (Naydenov, 2018). Language barriers, unfamiliar systems, and a general lack of trust in new institutions can significantly influence how migrants interact with services. That's why businesses need to take a culturally sensitive approach. Berry's Acculturation Theory is instrumental in this regard: immigrants can have better outcomes through services that respect where they come from and the specific challenges they face in adjusting while they work to integrate into a new society without losing their culture (Naydenov, 2018).

For startups that want to establish meaningful relationships with Eastern European clients, it's crucial to understand the migration patterns, and the insights driving them. Not only is it important to know where people have come from, but also why they have come, and how they get around in the new place. By understanding the financial, political and emotional factors that drive migration, businesses can design services that feel more relevant, trustworthy and

supportive. A thoughtful culturally informed approach can go a long way in building client loyalty and genuinely meeting the needs of this diverse group.

3.2.3 Service-Specific Cultural Expectations Among Eastern European Clients

Migrant clients can also have different expectations of service providers based on their cultural background, which can greatly affect their satisfaction and engagement. And if you are a UK-founded multi-service start-up like Magpie Nest, getting under the skin of these cultural variations is crucial particularly for a holding company that provide various business such as delivers mortgage advice, payroll support; university admissions, visa applications, business consultancy and marketing consultancy (Hejaili et al., 2009).

One practical method to investigate these differences is to use the Kano model as a tool to determine how customers view different service attributes. A study by Hejaili et al. (2009) studied the patients of Saudi Arabia, Syria, Austria, and United Arab of Emirates and indicated that these cultural attributes could be considered in the medical service quality field. Arab patients (from Saudi, UAE, and Syria) mostly gave "one-dimensional" responses, meaning their satisfaction went up when service quality improved, and down when it didn't. Austrian patients, on the other hand, were more likely to classify services into "must-be" (basic expectations) and "attractive" (bonus features), showing clearer distinctions between what's essential and what's a nice extra.

Table 1 Demographic Data Among 4 National Groups

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA AMONG THE 4 NATIONAL GROUPS^a

	Saudi patients	Austrian patients	Syrian patients	UAE patients
Sex				
Male	55	55	56	61.8
Female	45	45	44	38.2
Age, y				
18–25	10	1	14	1.5
26–39	20	9	32	25.0
40–55	34	32	32	42.6
>55	36	58	20	30.95
Education				
Below primary school	42	0	20	27.9
Primary school	16	58	34	13.2
Middle school	28	28	24	23.5
University	14	13	22	35.3
Can read and write	69	100	76	77.9
Duration on dialysis, y				
<1	15	21	20	16.1
1–2	20	22	38	29.4
>2	65	57	42	54.5
% With a previous transplantation	21	16	6	17.7

^aValues are expressed in percentages.

Table 2 Perception of Health Status Among Groups

THE PERCEPTION OF HEALTH STATUS AMONG THE 4 NATIONAL GROUPS^a

	Saudi patients	Syrian patients	Austrian patients	UAE patients
Excellent	10	16	6	8.8
Good	50	42	34	33.8
Average	35	28	48	50
Poor	5	10	12	1.5
Very poor	0	4	0	5.9

^aValues are expressed in percentages.

Table 3 Overall Customer Satisfaction Coefficients

OVERALL CUSTOMER SATISFACTION COEFFICIENTS
AMONG THE 4 NATIONAL GROUPS

	Saudi patients	Austrian patients	Syrian patients	UAE patients	<i>P</i>
Satisfaction	+0.75	+0.64	+0.69	+0.85	.04
Dissatisfaction	−0.57	−0.73	−0.68	−0.58	.01

Table 4 Table 5 Evaluation Rule of Responses

EVALUATION RULE (STRATIFYING THE RESPONSES
ACCORDING TO THE HEIGHT OF THEIR
FREQUENCIES)

Saudi patients	$O > A > M > I$
Austrian patients	$M > O > A > I$
Syrian patients	$O > I > A > M$
UAE patients	$O > A > M > I$

From this, we can draw some parallels with Eastern European clients. Many migrants from this region especially those with lower financial literacy or limited experience in competitive service markets often take a very practical view of service quality. For example, when it comes to mortgages or payroll, they might be especially focused on clarity, transparency, and trust, which ties into Hofstede's concept of uncertainty avoidance. People from cultures with high uncertainty avoidance usually prefer clear instructions and lots of reassurance when dealing with complex or unfamiliar systems (Hejaili et al., 2009).

The same logic applies to university admissions and visa applications. These are high-stakes processes that often involve the whole family, so migrants want to deal with service providers they trust ones who explain things clearly and take their concerns seriously. For marketing and business services, especially for entrepreneurs from Eastern Europe, there's a strong preference for direct communication and building personal relationships, reflecting more collectivist values. In other words, they're more likely to do business with someone they know or who comes recommended by their community (Hejaili et al., 2009).

Models like SERVQUAL help explain how expectations differ across cultures. Things like reliability, empathy, and assurance are experienced differently depending on where someone is from and what they're used to. Customer Expectation Theory also reminds us that people compare services to what they've known in their home countries so if UK-based services are less responsive or harder to understand, it can lead to frustration, even if the technical quality is good (Hejaili et al., 2009).

In the end, for Magpie Nest to be successful with Eastern European clients, it's not just about offering more services it's about offering them in the right way. That means focusing on clear communication, building trust, and respecting cultural norms. A service approach that's culturally aware and people-focused will help the company not only meet client needs but also build loyalty and long-term success.

3.2.4 Communication and Misunderstandings in Multi-Service Settings

Good communication is absolutely essential for any multi-service business, especially when working with clients from different cultural backgrounds like Eastern Europeans living in the UK. But in these cross-cultural contexts, communication can easily get derailed due to

language differences, communication styles and cultural expectations (Trompenaars, and Hampden-Turner, 2022). When this happens misunderstandings and frustration can build up ultimately lowering the quality of service.

One of the struggles in cross-cultural services is that professionals from different cultures often have divergent expectations for what professional communication should look like. For instance, a good number of Eastern Europeans prefer to use a formal and straight-laced tone. They would not want to be perceived as rude or disrespectful, so they might not want to be too direct or overt in their criticism. This gets at Face-Negotiation Theory, which posits that in some cultures, the most important thing is to “saving face” and not to call someone out in front of others—even if you’re unhappy. Therefore a client will not explicitly express their concerns but rather stop using a service or start to mistrust, for example.

Language barriers can make these issues even worse. When there is no language barrier, misunderstandings can still arise simply because clients and staff have a different accent or make use of slang or professional terminology. According to the research of Kamal and colleagues (2023), misunderstandings within the linguistic realm in the workplace are found to be causing decrease in productivity, errors at work as well as job stress for all employees. And communication isn’t only in the words nonverbal subtexts like tone, facial expressions, or gestures can also be misunderstood, particularly across cultural lines.

This is where bilingual staff or cultural mediators can play a vital role. For high-stakes services, such as visa applications or mortgage consultations, where even small misunderstandings could lead to trouble, this is particularly important.

Attribution Theory also provides an understanding of why some miscommunication can occur. People from other ethnicities may see a situation literally opposite from you. For instance, an Eastern European client might think a delayed email response means the company doesn’t care,

while the staff might see it as just a routine backlog. These different interpretations can hurt the relationship if they're not addressed with open, honest, and culturally sensitive communication.

In the end, startups that work with diverse communities like Magpie Nest need to take communication seriously. That means training staff, hiring bilingual team members, and encouraging an open, respectful communication culture. Not only will this help avoid misunderstandings, but it also helps build stronger, longer-lasting relationships with clients and boosts the overall quality of the services being offered.

3.2.5 Gaps in the Literature and Relevance to Magpie Nest

Most of the academic research on startups tends to focus on tech companies, innovation-led ventures, or businesses following proven models. But there's a noticeable gap when it comes to startups like Magpie Nest multi-service businesses working within diaspora communities, such as Eastern European migrants in the UK. These types of startups face unique challenges that aren't widely covered in traditional entrepreneurship literature. They have to deal with complex services, shifting cultural expectations, and the need to stay flexible and responsive all at the same time.

A lot of what makes startups successful comes down to company culture. As Men, Ji, and Chen (2020) point out, a strong startup culture helps with team motivation, unity, and performance. But most studies on culture look at fairly uniform or tech-focused companies. They don't really explore how culture plays out in diverse, multi-service environments that deal with things like mortgage advice, visa help, or university admissions especially when clients come from different cultural backgrounds and have different needs.

Magpie Nest is a good example of this gap. Its culture has to support both innovation and inclusiveness, while also being flexible enough to adapt to a wide range of client expectations. The chapter Building an Effective Startup Culture outlines some key traits that help startups thrive: shared values, openness, supportiveness, and a willingness to try new things. But applying those traits in a diaspora setting brings new challenges like working in multiple languages, dealing with legal complexity, and building trust with people from different cultural backgrounds.

In these types of startups, culture has to do more than just keep the team motivated. It has to act as a bridge between entrepreneurial mindset being proactive, innovative, and willing to take risks and cultural competence. Rauch et al. (2009) describe this as an “entrepreneurial orientation,” and it’s key for businesses like Magpie Nest that rely on strong community ties and repeat clients. In such a business, trust and relationships matter as much as, perhaps more than, products or services.

Right now hardly any research exists on how startup culture operates in multi-service diaspora startups, a phenomenon that is growing and serves a vital role in local economies. Case studies, internships, and on-the-ground observations like those of Magpie Nest might be used to fill this gap. They offer important lessons about how businesses can create organisational cultures simultaneously agile and inclusive and provide services to culturally diverse communities.

Research Methodology

3.3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used for this study. It explains how the research was designed, the methods chosen, and why a Primary Qualitative method approach was appropriate. The chapter also defines how primary research and describes how it was used to build context around cultural considerations in customer relations.

The **aim** of this research is to explore how cultural understanding shapes customer service practices, with a focus on managing Eastern European clients in a startup environment.

The research has the following **objectives**:

- To identify key cultural factors that influence customer expectations in Eastern Europe
- To assess how these cultural differences affect business communication and client relationships
- To examine how the startup adapts its customer service to align with these cultural needs
- To offer practical suggestions for improving cross-cultural customer management

Given the exploratory nature of the topic, a **primary qualitative approach** was used. This allowed the researcher to build an evidence base through direct sources and then explore how these themes applied in a real-world setting through an interview with the CEO.

3.3.2 Research Design

A **primary** uses qualitative and quantitative research techniques, or, as in this case, **qualitative primary data**. This method helps create a fuller picture of the topic by combining broad, existing knowledge with specific insights from the case study (Kruger & Mitchell, 2022).

In this research, the **qualitative element** is a semi-structured interview with the CEO of the startup.

On their own, they do not show how one specific company responds to these challenges. That is where the **primary interview** adds value. The interview offers a detailed view of how the CEO interprets and responds to cultural expectations within the actual work environment (Walliman, 2021).

Together, these methods ensure that the research is grounded in theory but shaped by practical insight.

3.3.3 Research

It includes academic publications, industry reports, and other published resources In this research, data was used to:

- Understand the cultural characteristics of Eastern European clients
- Identify customer service practices that work across cultures
- Explore how startups and SMEs adapt to diverse client bases

Sources Used

The following types of sources were consulted:

Table 5 Type of Source

Type of Source	Purpose
Academic journals	To understand theories of cultural dimensions (e.g. Hofstede, Trompenaars)
Industry reports	To explore market expectations and service standards in Eastern Europe
Cultural studies	To gain insight into values, behaviours, and communication norms
Customer service frameworks	To compare best practices in client management
Business books and trade guides	To understand how startups adjust their operations across markets

These sources provided the foundation for understanding why clients from certain regions might prefer a particular tone, response time, or type of communication. For example, Eastern European clients often prefer clarity, formality, and structured communication in business. This contrasts with some UK practices, which may be more casual or indirect.

By using primary sources, the research was able to:

- Map out **cultural expectations** that Eastern European clients may have when engaging with UK startups
- Explore how **trust and transparency** play a central role in service relationships
- Understand the **communication preferences** common in the region (e.g. direct language, prompt replies)

- Identify how **cultural distance** can cause friction if staff are not trained or culturally aware

These insights helped shape the **interview questions** asked to the CEO. For example, the interview explored whether client dissatisfaction was ever caused by miscommunication, and how the company resolved such issues (Goddard & Melville, 2021). Without this prior research, the interview may have missed key factors.

Primary data also helped **validate** the CEO's insights by offering a frame of reference. For example, when the CEO mentioned that Romanian clients expected a more detailed service breakdown, this aligned with published data on high uncertainty avoidance in that region.

3.3.4 Primary Research: Qualitative Interview

This part of the research focused on collecting first-hand insights through a **semi-structured interview**. The goal was to explore how the company manages client relationships in a multicultural context, especially with Eastern European clients.

A semi-structured interview allows flexibility in discussion while still covering key topics. It uses a list of open-ended questions designed to guide the conversation but also allows the interviewee to elaborate, offer examples, and raise issues not originally anticipated by the researcher (Goddard & Melville, 2021). This makes it ideal for exploring complex themes like culture, communication, and service expectations.

Interview Participants and Selection Reasons

Interviewee Name	Position	Reason for Selection
Ashiqur Rahman Tanim	CEO, Magpie Nest	As the CEO, he has firsthand insights into the company's strategies and challenges in managing Eastern European clients.

Interviewee Name	Position	Reason for Selection
Faiyaz Chowdhury	Business Manager	Pursuit He is responsible for business development and can provide insight into client relationship-building strategies.
Syeda Nabila	Chief Operating Officer	Oversees daily operations and client interactions, with experience managing operational adjustments for cultural sensitivity.
Bhuiyan Washek Faisal	HR Manager	Can offer insights into how Magpie Nest recruits and trains staff to meet cultural expectations.
Tanvir Shaon	Business Manager, Revolo HR	Focuses on HR automation for culturally diverse clients, providing key perspectives on cross-cultural communication.
Md. Raqibul Hasan Tushar	Business Operations Lead	Manages operational efficiency, essential for understanding cultural adaptation in service delivery.
Salim Ullah	Accounts Manager	Deals with the financial side of client interactions, offering insights into expectations for financial transparency.
Rakib Ahmed Ridoy	Senior Customer Relations Executive	Works directly with clients, experiencing firsthand the communication challenges with Eastern European clients.

Key Themes Expected

Before conducting the interview, several key themes were identified based on the primary research:

Table 6 Key Themes Expected

Theme	Description
Cultural Alignment	How the company adapts communication and service delivery to align with the cultural values of Eastern European clients.
Client Expectations	The specific values and behaviors that Eastern European clients bring to their business relationships.
Communication Challenges	The barriers faced in communication, including language, tone, and formality differences between staff and clients.
Trust and Relationship	How trust is built and maintained, especially in a cross-cultural context.
Feedback Loops	How feedback from clients is collected, analyzed, and integrated into improving services and customer relations.

These themes were used to shape the interview questions, which included prompts such as:

- "Can you describe any challenges you've faced while working with Eastern European clients?"
- "What differences have you noticed between these clients and those from other regions?"
- "How do you ensure that your teams are culturally sensitive in their approach?"

- "Have there been situations where a misunderstanding arose due to cultural differences? How did you resolve it?"

By exploring these areas, the research aimed to see how closely the real-world practices matched the theory.

3.3.5 Data Collection Process

The interview was arranged in advance and conducted **online via a secure video conferencing platform**, allowing flexibility and convenience for both the researcher and the participant. The session lasted **approximately 45 minutes** and followed a semi-structured format, using an interview guide prepared in advance.

Process Overview

Step	Description
Scheduling	The interview was scheduled through email coordination with the CEO's office
Platform	Conducted via Zoom for accessibility and audio recording
Duration	45 minutes
Format	Semi-structured interview with open-ended questions
Recording	With permission, the interview was recorded for accuracy
Transcription	The audio was manually transcribed and anonymised before analysis

Ethical Considerations

All ethical protocols were followed to ensure that the interview process respected the participant's rights and data security.

- **Informed Consent:** The CEO was informed of the research objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, and the expected use of the data. Written consent was obtained before recording.
- **Confidentiality:** While the CEO agreed to be identified in the research, he was given the option to anonymise his responses if he wished to do so. All data has been handled responsibly.
- **Data Storage:** Audio and transcript files were stored on an encrypted, password-protected device. Only the researcher had access to the full interview data. The files will be deleted after the completion of the study.
- **Researcher Neutrality:** The interviewer maintained a neutral tone throughout the interview. Questions were phrased carefully to avoid leading the participant. For example, instead of asking, “Did you struggle with cultural communication?” the question was framed as, “Have you noticed any cultural differences that impacted client communication?”

By keeping questions neutral and open-ended, the researcher ensured that responses reflected the interviewee’s views and not the assumptions of the researcher (Pruzan, 2016).

Advantages of the Method

This interview approach had several benefits:

- It allowed detailed explanations and follow-up questions, which provided rich, context-specific data
- The semi-structured format helped maintain focus while still allowing for the emergence of new, unplanned insights
- The digital format ensured convenience and safe data storage

At the same time, the research recognised that **one interview is limited** in scope. The insights from Mr. Tanim cannot represent all startup founders or all Eastern European clients. However, as a case study, his experience offers a valuable window into how startups handle cultural challenges in real life.

3.3.6 Data Analysis Method: Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a method used to identify patterns or “themes” within qualitative data. It helps the researcher understand key ideas and experiences expressed during an interview (Braun & Clarke, 2017). In this study, it was used to make sense of the interview with the CEO, turning a detailed conversation into usable insights that relate back to the research questions and objectives.

What is Thematic Analysis?

In simple terms, thematic analysis is a way of looking at what people say, finding repeated ideas or points, and grouping them together (Braun & Clarke, 2017). These groups or themes help answer specific questions. It is useful when the topic involves personal experiences, values, or perceptions such as cultural considerations in customer relations.

This method fits well with the research aim, which focuses on understanding how startups adapt their client strategies to match cultural expectations. Since culture is complex and context-driven, thematic analysis offers a flexible and structured approach to interpreting the CEO's insights.

Steps Followed in This Study

The process of thematic analysis involved the following steps:

Table 7 The process of thematic analysis

Step	Action Taken
1. Transcription	The recorded interview was transcribed word-for-word. This created a text file for analysis.
2. Familiarisation	The researcher read through the transcript several times to gain a full understanding.
3. Coding	Key parts of the transcript were labelled (coded) using simple tags like “trust”, “miscommunication”, or “client feedback”.
4. Theme Identification	Similar codes were grouped into broader themes. For example, “client trust” and “long-term relations” became part of the theme “Relationship Building”.
5. Review of Themes	Themes were compared against the entire transcript to make sure they accurately reflected the discussion.
6. Naming Themes	Final themes were given short, clear names such as “Cultural Expectations”, “Communication Gaps”, and “Adaptation Strategies”.
7. Interpretation	Each theme was analysed in relation to the research questions and objectives. Insights were drawn and noted for the findings chapter.

Aligning Themes with Research Questions and Objectives

After themes were finalised, they were compared directly with the research objectives and questions:

- For example, the theme “**Cultural Expectations**” related closely to Objective 1 (to identify cultural norms in Eastern Europe) and Research Question 1 (key cultural factors in business).
- The theme “**Adaptation Strategies**” matched Objective 2 (how startups align with culture) and Research Question 2 (how startups can adjust their approach).
- The theme “**Communication Challenges**” addressed Objective 3 (causes of misunderstandings) and Research Question 3 (common relational breakdowns).

This ensured that the analysis not only captured what was said but also remained focused on the research purpose.

Suitability of Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was selected for several reasons:

- It works well with **small-scale qualitative data**, such as a single interview.
- It helps uncover **complex and layered experiences**, especially those involving **cultural insight** and **human interaction**.
- It allows researchers to work **systematically**, ensuring consistency and relevance.
- It is **flexible** enough to include findings that emerge naturally, even if not expected in the beginning.

For a study dealing with cross-cultural client engagement in a startup setting, thematic analysis offered both structure and depth. It let the research go beyond surface-level responses and identify meaningful patterns in the CEO’s thinking.

3.3.7 Validity and Reliability

In any study, it is important to ensure that the data is **trustworthy**, and the results are **consistent**. Even though this study is based on a single interview, steps were taken to strengthen both its validity (truthfulness) and reliability (consistency).

Maintaining Consistency and Trustworthiness

Several practices helped maintain the quality of data:

- The same **interview guide** was used throughout the session to ensure all key topics were covered.
- The **interview was recorded and transcribed** in full to avoid memory bias.
- Notes were taken during and after the interview to preserve the context of certain responses.
- All coding and theme development followed a **transparent process**, with themes clearly linked to specific parts of the transcript.
- The analysis avoided assumptions. Quotes were used in the findings to show evidence behind each theme.

These practices help ensure that the findings accurately represent what was said and reduce the risk of personal bias by the researcher.

Limits of a Single Interview

While the interview with the CEO provided valuable insights, it is acknowledged that:

- The findings reflect the **views of one individual**.
- The CEO's experience, while broad, may not represent every staff member or client experience.
- The findings are not **statistically generalisable**, though they offer **deep contextual understanding**.

The limitations of relying on one interview are balanced by the use of **triangulation**, discussed below.

3.3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical conduct was central to the planning and execution of this research. All steps were taken to protect the rights, privacy, and dignity of the participant.

Informed Consent

Before the interview, the CEO was given clear information about:

- The purpose of the research
- What the interview would involve
- How the data would be used
- The voluntary nature of participation

A written consent form was shared and signed before the interview. Verbal consent was also confirmed before recording began.

Data Protection

All data (recordings, transcripts, and notes) were stored on a secure, password-protected system. Only the researcher had access to this data.

No sensitive personal data was collected. The participant had the option to **withdraw at any time**, but chose to continue and approved the use of his name and role in the final report.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in the interview was completely voluntary. The CEO was not under any pressure to participate and had the freedom to skip questions or end the interview early if he chose. He also had the opportunity to review the transcript and correct or clarify any responses.

Academic or Workplace Approval

Since the research was part of an academic internship, approval was sought from the workplace supervisor and acknowledged by the academic tutor. While no formal ethics committee was involved, the approach followed **standard academic ethical guidelines**, such as:

- Transparency in purpose
- Respect for participants
- Confidential and secure data handling
- Avoidance of harm or discomfort

These practices ensured that the research met ethical expectations and was conducted with full integrity.

3.3.9 Summary

This section outlined how data from the CEO interview was analysed using **thematic analysis**, and how the research maintained **validity, reliability, and ethical standards**. The themes identified from the interview were compared to research data and tied directly to the research objectives. This primary approach ensured that findings were grounded in both practice. The next chapter will explore these themes in depth and explain how they answer the research questions.

Let me know if you want to proceed to **Chapter 5: Findings and Thematic Analysis**, or if you need any visuals or tables added to support this section.

Findings

The data was collected from 10 interview participants. Each interview lasting 30 -35 minutes. The primary method was face to face personal meeting. The interviews taken from 01.05.2025 to 20.05.2025. The interviewer was myself, Sadi Md. Nahian

3.4.1 Interview Transcript**Informal Interview Transcript**

Ashiqur Rahman Tanim, CEO of Magpie Nest

Interviewer:

Sir can you give me a brief overview of Magpie Nest in general.

TANIM

VAI

(CEO)

Sure. Magpie Nest is a holding company we founded it in 2023. We're based in Dhaka but operate mostly in the UK, with some activity in the USA too. We own thirteen companies across sectors like accountancy, education consultancy, HR software, property, and mortgages. As CEO, I'm involved in strategic decisions across all businesses, but I also like to stay close to the operations especially in our newer or client-facing businesses like Apollo Global or Abroad Next.

Cultural Expectations**Interviewer:**

One of the things I'm focusing on in this project is how businesses deal with cultural

expectations especially when working with clients from Eastern Europe. How have you noticed this playing out?

TANIM **VAI** **(CEO)**

Yeah, that's been a learning curve. With Apollo Global and Abroad Next, we work with a lot of Eastern European clients Romania, Poland, Bulgaria mainly. They tend to be very direct. They expect clear communication, no fluff, and quick solutions. They're often very cautious at first, but once you gain their trust, they're loyal.

Interviewer:

And were those expectations different from what you expected at first?

TANIM **VAI** **(CEO)**

Definitely. When we first launched, we approached it like we do with UK clients polite emails, soft onboarding, letting them take their time. But with Eastern European clients, it was seen as vague or even evasive. They wanted clear answers, contracts upfront, pricing, timelines. So we had to adjust quickly.

Client Relationship Management

Interviewer:

How do you build and maintain those relationships once they're onboard?

TANIM **VAI** **(CEO)**

It's a mix of clarity and presence. We now have Romanian-speaking staff in Apollo Global, which really helps. We also keep communication regular updates by email, WhatsApp, whatever they prefer. But honestly, the big thing is delivery. If you say you'll do something in 5 days, you do it in 3. That builds trust.

Interviewer:

Have you had any situations where things went wrong?

TANIM

VAI

(CEO)

Oh yes. Early on, we had a Romanian client who misunderstood one of our forms and thought we were delaying her application on purpose. It escalated fast. We realised the translation we were using was too formal and confusing. Now we test all our communications with a few native speakers before rolling them out.

Communication Challenges

Interviewer:

Sir what would you say are the biggest challenges in communication?

TANIM VAI (CEO)

Tone, for sure. What sounds polite in English can sound passive-aggressive or uncertain in Romanian. Also, clients sometimes assume we're a big corporate they don't realise we're a startup. So expectations can be high. We've learned to set boundaries early and clarify what we offer.

Interviewer:

Did you have to train your staff for that?

TANIM VAI (CEO)

Yes, and we're still improving. We did some internal workshops. It's not just about language; it's about tone, timing, and even things like how you greet clients. Eastern Europeans prefer professionalism, not over-friendliness. They want to feel that we're capable, not casual.

Adaptation and Strategy

Interviewer:

So overall sir how would you say you've adapted your strategy to work better with Eastern European clients?

TANIM VAI (CEO)

We simplified our service menus. We added more language support. We moved from soft-sell to clear funnels showing exactly what we offer and what they'll get. Culturally, we stopped trying to build a 'warm' relationship first and focused on being useful and responsive. That won us more trust.

Interviewer:

Sir Is that different from how you work with UK clients?

TANIM VAI (CEO)

Very. UK clients expect a consultative approach. They like a bit of small talk, a bit of background. Eastern European clients want solutions and action. So we adjusted our onboarding systems to split by region. Even our marketing is segmented now.

Interviewer:

Any final thoughts on managing cross-cultural expectations?

TANIM VAI (CEO)

Listen more, assume less. Culture affects everything trust, payment behaviour, tone. And you can't learn it from a book you need to make mistakes, talk to clients, and be humble enough to adjust. That's what we try to do.

Interviewer:

That's a perfect note to end on. Thank you so much, Ashiq, this was really valuable.

TANIM VAI (CEO)

Glad to be part of it. Let me know if you need anything else.

Abul Kalam Sujon (Chief Technology Officer)

Interviewer: So, Sir, can you tell me a bit about your role as the Chief Technology Officer at Magpie Nest? What exactly do you do day-to-day?

Abul Kalam Sujon: Of course! As the CTO, I basically ensure that the technology we use supports all aspects of our operations. My job is to make sure that all our platforms, whether it's HR software, accounting tools, or customer relationship systems, work smoothly and efficiently. On a day-to-day basis, I manage the tech teams, oversee any software development projects, and ensure everything we do is aligned with the business's goals. Right now, we're working on a lot of custom-built systems to serve our subsidiaries better, so it's a lot of overseeing the bigger picture and ensuring our tech infrastructure is scalable.

Interviewer: That sounds like a pretty important role! How does technology help in the daily operations of Magpie Nest? Are there specific tools you rely on?

Abul Kalam Sujon: Oh, absolutely! Technology is the backbone of everything we do. For example, our internal CRM system is custom-built to track client interactions and feedback in real-time. It's a great tool because it lets our team stay on top of what's happening across different regions and subsidiaries. We also use Google Workspace for collaboration, which is crucial for a distributed team like ours. But the real heavy-lifting happens in the custom systems we've developed internally. Whether it's lead tracking, managing HR data, or supporting

communication with clients, these tools make sure everything runs smoothly, no matter where our team is based.

Interviewer: With all these systems in place, do you face any specific challenges related to integrating these technologies across such a diverse business?

Abul Kalam Sujon: Yes, that's a big one! Magpie Nest operates across multiple regions Bangladesh, the UK, the US so, naturally, our tech systems need to be flexible enough to handle different markets. For example, we work with various tax systems and compliance rules in different countries, so we've had to customize a lot of features in our finance and HR software to ensure compliance. Also, client expectations around tech can vary. For instance, in some countries, clients expect a more direct, no-nonsense approach to communication. In others, a more formal or relationship-based tone is important. Adapting our systems to accommodate all these different needs is a challenge, but it's something we've been working on improving continuously.

Interviewer: So, when working with clients across different markets, especially ones from diverse backgrounds, how do you ensure that your technology and systems cater to their needs?

Abul Kalam Sujon: Sadi that's a difficult question to answer without showing our systems but if I were to answer in one simple fact that I believe the key for us is flexibility and localization. For example, when we started working with more Eastern European clients, we had to ensure that our platforms supported multiple languages. Not just for communication, but also for cultural preferences around forms, layouts, and document sharing. We've customized how things are presented on our platforms to make sure they resonate with different cultural expectations. It's about making sure that when clients use our systems, they feel at ease and that everything is intuitive for them.

Interviewer: Do you think tech can ever bridge cultural gaps in customer relations?

Abul Kalam Sujon: I do, but it's a balance. Tech helps streamline communication and remove a lot of the friction that can occur in cross-cultural exchanges. However, technology can only go so far. There's still the human element understanding how a client likes to be approached or what tone they prefer. Our tech has certainly helped us adapt, but at the end of the day, it's about training the team to use it effectively and ensuring they're culturally sensitive when interacting with clients.

Interviewer: You mentioned working on custom solutions for Magpie Nest. Can you share any current tech projects you're working on?

Abul Kalam Sujon: Yes! We're currently in the middle of rolling out an upgraded version of our CRM system. It's going to have more automation features that will help streamline client interactions, especially when we're dealing with a large volume of clients. The new system will have better analytics too, so we'll be able to track client satisfaction more closely, identify trends, and improve our response times. It's part of our effort to improve efficiency while ensuring that our service remains high quality. We're also working on integrating AI to handle some repetitive tasks like answering FAQs or scheduling meetings so our staff can focus on more important tasks.

Interviewer: That sounds pretty exciting! Thanks for sharing that, Sujon vai.

Arifur Rahman Asif (General Manager)

Interviewer: Sir, thanks for your time today. What do you do as General Manager at Magpie Nest?

Arifur Rahman Asif: I manage the daily work of all our companies. I make sure each one runs well. I lead the teams, track progress, and connect them with top management. I work with department heads to make sure we follow our plans.

Interviewer: So, you keep everything on track. What problems do you often face?

Arifur Rahman Asif: The hardest part is speed versus quality. We grow fast, but we must do things right. For example, while we expand, each company still has to meet customer needs—whether it's in Bangladesh, the UK, or the US. So, we often adjust our work to fit each market.

Interviewer: How do you keep each company on the same page?

Arifur Rahman Asif: Each company runs on its own. That helps them fit their market. But we all still work toward one goal. We talk often. Every week, we meet with heads of departments. We talk about what works, what doesn't, and what to fix. That helps us stay in sync without being the same.

Interviewer: And how do you manage cultural differences?

Arifur Rahman Asif: We stay flexible. Different clients want different things. In the UK, people like to talk things through. They want a partner, not just a service. In Eastern Europe, people want clear answers. They prefer short and direct replies. We learn what each group expects and match that in how we speak and how we work. We also make sure our service is clear, fast, and steady.

Interviewer: Can you share a time you changed a service to match a culture?

Arifur Rahman Asif: Yes. One time, a team in the UK took too long to give updates. It made sense to them because they were being thorough. But our Eastern European clients saw it as a delay. So we changed our process. We set fixed times for updates and gave short, clear reports. That small change helped build trust.

Arifur Rahman Asif: Sure! One instance that stands out is when we were first working with clients in Eastern Europe. We learned pretty quickly that they wanted very direct, no-nonsense communication. So, we stopped over-explaining and simplified our messaging. We also adapted the way we set expectations with timelines. Where in the UK, we'd say, "We'll aim to get back to you by the end of the week," with Eastern European clients, it had to be more specific "We'll get back to you by Friday at 3 PM." Setting those clear expectations helped build trust and made our communication more effective.

Interviewer: That's a great example of cultural adaptation. How do you manage such differences across your teams?

Arifur Rahman Asif: It comes down to training and awareness. We have regular internal sessions where we discuss these cultural differences and how they impact our work. For example, we had a session with our marketing team where we specifically focused on the language and tone that works best with clients from Eastern Europe vs. the UK. It's about making sure everyone understands that what works in one market might not work in another. I think once the teams understand that, they can adjust their approach accordingly.

Interviewer: That's good to hear. What comes next for Magpie Nest?

Arifur Rahman Asif: We plan to grow but keep our standards high. We want to move into new places, like Southeast Asia and more of Eastern Europe. So, we're improving our plans to get ready. Inside the company, we're also fixing how we work so we can move faster as we grow. Since we deal with many markets, we must stay open to change but still follow one clear path.

Interviewer: That sounds like a smart move. Thank you for speaking with me.

Faiyaz Chowdhury (Business Pursuit Manager)

Interviewer: Mr. Faiyaz, thank you for joining me. Can you tell me about your role at Magpie Nest?

Faiyaz Chowdhury: Sure. I'm the Business Pursuit Manager. My job is to find new business, build client ties, and spot good market chances. I work with the sales and marketing teams to plan how we reach the right clients. We also study market trends to see how Magpie Nest can stand out.

Interviewer: Sounds like you stay one step ahead. What problems do you face when finding new business?

Faiyaz Chowdhury: Staying ahead of others is tough. Our markets change fast, so we have to keep up. We watch trends, listen to client needs, and know what makes us different. Each client has their own goals, so we must adjust our plan for each one. That takes time and focus. But at the same time, it's what keeps the work exciting and dynamic.

Interviewer: That's really interesting. When you're approaching new clients, how do you tailor your strategy to suit their needs?

Faiyaz Chowdhury: It really starts with listening. I spend a lot of time understanding what the client's business is about what problems they face and what their goals are. For example, if we're working with a startup in the UK, they might be more interested in innovative solutions and agility. However, a more established business might value reliability and clear, structured communication. Based on that, we adapt our pitch and customize our approach.

When we first started working with Eastern European clients, we had to shift from the UK-centric way of doing things. We quickly realized that direct communication worked best, and they valued transparency in timelines and costs. We tailored our sales approach to be more concise and upfront about what we could offer.

Interviewer: I like how you focus on listening to the client. What other strategies have you found effective for client acquisition?

Faiyaz Chowdhury: One strategy that's been really effective for us is leveraging our network. Many of our clients come through word of mouth or referrals. It's an approach that works particularly well for businesses like ours, where trust and relationships play a big role. That's why we also focus on relationship-building from the very beginning whether it's through personal outreach, events, or just consistent follow-ups. The aim is to build that trust early on, so the clients feel comfortable working with us for the long term.

Interviewer: That makes sense. And what's the process like for closing a deal once a potential client shows interest?

Faiyaz Chowdhury: It's all about setting the right expectations. Once we have a client's interest, we make sure that they have all the details they need about our services timelines, costs, expected outcomes. From there, we work on an agreement that's mutually beneficial. We never rush into a deal. We take the time to negotiate and make sure both parties are aligned on what's being offered. Closing a deal is more about ensuring clarity and setting up a long-term relationship.

Interviewer: It sounds like a very thoughtful process. How do you measure success in your role?

Faiyaz Chowdhury: For me, success is about building lasting relationships and ensuring that clients are satisfied. In terms of measurable metrics, we look at things like sales conversion

rates, client retention, and the overall feedback we get from clients after projects are completed. But at the heart of it, if clients continue to return to us and recommend us to others, that's a win in my book.

Interviewer: I completely agree satisfied clients are the best form of success. Thanks for sharing that insight, Mr. Faiyaz.

Syeda Nabila (Chief Operating Officer)

Interviewer: Syeda Ma'am, thank you for being here. Can you tell me about your role as Chief Operating Officer at Magpie Nest?

Syeda Nabila: Thank you. As COO, I make sure our operations run well across all companies. I match our day-to-day work with the company's big goals. I guide different teams—HR, finance, marketing, sales—so they work together. I also look at how we can make our processes faster, cheaper, and easier to scale.

Interviewer: That's a wide view. What big challenges do you face?

Syeda Nabila: The first challenge is keeping things consistent. We work in the UK, Bangladesh, and the US. Each place runs differently. I try to bring them under one strategy while letting them stay flexible. Clear and steady communication helps a lot.

Another challenge is staying quick on our feet. We're growing fast. That means we need some structure. But we also want to keep the quick decision-making we had when we started. Getting that balance right is not always easy.

Interviewer: Balancing structure and speed sounds tough. How do you do it?

Syeda Nabila: We stay focused on our vision. We give each team clear goals, but we let them choose how to meet them. We don't manage every small step. If they need help, we're there. We also keep tools in place to check how things are going without slowing anyone down.

Interviewer: And when it comes to client service, how do you meet different market needs?

Syeda Nabila: No matter where the client is, they want the same thing—reliable service. But how we deliver it changes. In Eastern Europe, for example, clients like formal systems. So, we use clear timelines, contracts, and updates. We make sure teams know what each market expects and plan around that.

Interviewer: You mentioned training. How do you prepare your teams for these differences?

Syeda Nabila: We hold training sessions. We show staff how to work with clients from different cultures. That covers things like how to talk during meetings or how to handle complaints. We also ask clients for feedback. If something didn't go well, we fix it. We always try to learn and do better.

Interviewer: That's a strong approach. How do you measure success in your role?

Syeda Nabila: I look at how smooth our operations are and how happy our clients feel. We track feedback, delivery speed, and how well our systems work. I also check how fast we can adapt to new market needs. If our teams grow and our clients stay with us, we're doing things right.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing that, Ma'am. It was great speaking with you.

Bhuiyan Washek Faisal (HR Manager)

Interviewer: Mr. Bhuiyan, thank you for speaking with me today. Can you tell us about your role as HR Manager at Magpie Nest?

Bhuiyan Washek Faisal: Thank you. As HR Manager, I make sure the people side of the business works well. I manage hiring, employee support, and our HR systems. I also ensure we follow employment laws. But HR isn't just about rules. My focus is on building a strong company culture and giving our people what they need to succeed. At Magpie Nest, we operate in many regions, so it's important that our HR work matches our big-picture goals.

Interviewer: With so many teams across regions, what are your biggest challenges?

Bhuiyan Washek Faisal: The biggest challenge is hiring the right people for global work. Each region has different needs. In Eastern Europe, for example, we often need bilingual staff to help with communication. But beyond skills, we want everyone to understand our company values. Serving clients from different cultures means staff must reflect our commitment to quality and respect.

Another challenge is building one company culture across different places. Each subsidiary is unique, but we still want a shared sense of purpose. That's why we focus on diversity, inclusion, and respect. These ideas guide all of our HR work.

Interviewer: How do you make your HR practices work in different cultural contexts?

Bhuiyan Washek Faisal: We've added cultural training into our HR process. For client-facing roles, we now assess how well someone understands cultural differences. For example, teams that work with Eastern European clients need to know those clients may expect formality and clear structure. We also run workshops to teach staff about local work styles, communication habits, and expectations. This helps our people serve clients more effectively.

Interviewer: That's a smart strategy. Has this training helped your teams connect with clients?

Bhuiyan Washak Faisal: Yes, without a doubt. The training builds empathy. It helps our staff see things from the client's view. That way, they can adjust how they talk and work with each person. With Eastern European clients, for instance, we've seen that trust and formal tone really matter. Our staff now tailor their approach to match those expectations. This builds stronger, more respectful relationships.

Interviewer: Can you give an example where cultural training made a clear difference?

Bhuiyan Washak Faisal: Definitely. At first, we used a casual tone with Eastern European clients, the same way we talk to UK clients. But it didn't land well. Those clients expected formal, structured messages. After training, our team changed how they communicated—more formal, more direct. The feedback improved right away. Clients appreciated the clarity, and trust grew faster. That shift came directly from our training efforts.

Interviewer: That's a great success story. Thank you for your time, Mr. Bhuiyan.

Tanvir Shaon (Business Manager of Revolo HR)

Interviewer: Mr. Tanvir, thank you for joining me. Can you tell us about your role as Business Manager at Revolo HR?

Tanvir Shaon: Thank you for having me. As Business Manager at Revolo HR, I make sure everything related to our HR software runs smoothly. Revolo HR helps companies automate their HR tasks. I lead business development, which includes finding new clients, building partnerships, and improving how we deliver our services. My job is to make sure our software meets client needs and helps our company grow in the right direction.

Interviewer: It sounds like a busy role, especially with the tech side involved. What are your main challenges?

Tanvir Shaon: Our biggest challenge is staying innovative without losing focus on what our clients truly need. Our clients come from many industries, so our software has to be flexible. It must be advanced enough to offer great features but still easy to use for any size business.

Another challenge is staying people-focused. Some clients, especially those who care deeply about employee satisfaction, need more than just features. They want tools that help them support their teams. So we always look for ways to make our software align with their values and priorities.

Interviewer: That's a thoughtful approach. How do you build and maintain relationships with clients?

Tanvir Shaon: I believe the key is to understand each client's goals and struggles. I always take time to learn about their business before talking about our software. That helps us offer better solutions. Whether it's about managing staff or following HR rules, we listen first and then suggest what fits best.

With clients in Eastern Europe, for example, we've noticed that they value clear and direct communication. So we keep our messages simple and straight to the point. They don't like long back-and-forths, so we respond quickly and clearly. That helps build trust.

Interviewer: That's a great example of adapting to cultural needs. What kind of feedback do you get from clients?

Tanvir Shaon: The feedback is mostly very positive. Clients often say they like our clear communication and how we take time to understand their needs. They appreciate that we don't

push one standard solution. Instead, we shape the software to match their specific problems. That personal touch has helped us build long-term relationships with many clients.

Interviewer: It sounds like that custom approach really works. Do you think cultural understanding is key in business development?

Tanvir Shaon: Definitely. Cultural understanding makes a big difference. In some places, like Eastern Europe, trust and formality are essential. If you ignore that, it's hard to connect with clients. But when you show respect for their culture and communicate in the way they expect, it builds strong relationships. In the end, business is about people. When clients feel we understand and respect them, they're more likely to work with us long-term.

Interviewer: That's a strong message, Mr. Tanvir. Thank you for sharing your insights today.

Md. Raqibul Hasan Tushar (Business Operations Lead)

Interviewer: Hello Mr. Tushar, thanks for joining me today! Could you start by telling me about your role as Business Operations Lead at Magpie Nest?

Md. Raqibul Hasan Tushar: Thank you for having me. As the Business Operations Lead, I manage daily operations across all of our subsidiaries. That means making sure our systems work smoothly, reviewing and improving processes, and helping teams meet their goals. I work closely with different department heads to track performance, solve problems, and make sure we're always improving the way we operate—whether that's in the UK, the US, or Bangladesh.

Interviewer: It sounds like you're holding a lot together. What are the main challenges you face in this role?

Md. Raqibul Hasan Tushar: One of the biggest challenges is managing the needs of each subsidiary. Each one has a different setup and different market demands. For example, the way we work in the UK isn't the same as how we operate in Bangladesh or Eastern Europe. So, we have to find a way to align our operations without forcing every office into the same model. Another challenge is growth. As we scale up, we need to make sure our systems can handle that growth while keeping service quality high.

Interviewer: That's a tough balancing act. How do you keep things consistent while still allowing flexibility?

Md. Raqibul Hasan Tushar: We rely on clear and regular communication. We hold cross-department meetings where we share updates, align on goals, and discuss what's working. We set common targets across the company but give each subsidiary the space to adjust their approach based on local needs. For instance, a team working with Eastern European clients

might need to operate differently to meet cultural and market expectations. So, we encourage that flexibility, as long as everyone is working toward the same overall objectives.

Interviewer: Flexibility definitely seems important. Can you give an example of a change you made that led to good results?

Md. Raqibul Hasan Tushar: Certainly. One example is how we improved our customer support for Eastern European clients. We noticed they preferred faster, more direct communication. So, we created a dedicated team to handle support in that region. They now respond more quickly and use a more formal tone, which fits local expectations better. As a result, client satisfaction went up, and we were able to keep those clients with us longer. It was a simple change in process, but it had a big impact.

Interviewer: That's a great result. How do you measure whether a change is working?

Md. Raqibul Hasan Tushar: We use several key indicators. Client satisfaction, retention rates, and internal efficiency are the main ones. After the support change, we tracked response times and gathered client feedback. We saw that response times improved and that clients were more satisfied. That told us we were moving in the right direction. Our goal is always to match our operations with what the business needs and adjust when we see room for improvement.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing, Mr. Tushar. It's clear that your work plays a key role in keeping Magpie Nest running efficiently.

Salim Ullah (Accounts Manager)

Interviewer: Mr. Salim, thank you for joining me today! Can you start by telling me about your role as the Accounts Manager at Magpie Nest?

Salim Ullah: Thank you! As the Accounts Manager, I oversee all the financial operations of the company. This includes managing cash flow, handling accounts payable and receivable, and preparing accurate financial reports. I also work with other departments to ensure that our financial planning supports operational needs. My job is to make sure each subsidiary meets its financial targets while staying within local and international regulations.

Interviewer: It sounds like you're keeping the financial side running smoothly. What challenges do you face in your role?

Salim Ullah: One major challenge is dealing with financial regulations in different countries. For example, in the UK, we need to comply with the Financial Conduct Authority, while in Bangladesh, the requirements are very different. Staying on top of these rules takes time and effort. Another challenge is managing seasonal changes in cash flow. Some subsidiaries, like Iconic Packaging, see demand go up and down during the year. That means we need strong forecasting and flexible financial planning to keep everything balanced.

Interviewer: Balancing regulations across borders sounds complex. How do you maintain consistency between the subsidiaries?

Salim Ullah: We've created a standard financial process that every subsidiary follows. This includes using the same accounting software and following the same reporting structure. We also do regular internal audits to make sure everything is accurate and compliant with local laws. These steps help us keep financial data consistent and reliable, even if each location faces different local challenges.

Interviewer: That sounds like a strong system. How do cultural differences affect your financial interactions with clients?

Salim Ullah: Cultural differences are very important, especially in how clients deal with payments. In the UK, clients might be more flexible with payment terms, while in Eastern

Europe, people usually expect firm deadlines and clear details. So, we've made sure our invoicing is very clear, with detailed terms and payment timelines. For Eastern European clients, we keep the communication direct and precise. That helps avoid misunderstandings and builds trust.

Interviewer: That's a practical approach. Can you give an example of when adjusting to cultural expectations helped?

Salim Ullah: Absolutely. We had a Romanian client who delayed payments because our invoices didn't give enough detail. They wanted a full breakdown of each cost and clear information about when charges would apply. Once we updated our invoices to match their expectations, they started paying on time. The change wasn't difficult, but it made a big difference. It showed the client we were listening, and that built a stronger relationship.

Interviewer: That's a great example of how small changes can have a big impact. Thank you for your time, Mr. Salim.

Rakib Ahmed Ridoy (Senior Customer Relations Executive)

Interviewer: Mr. Rakib, thanks for being here. Can you start by telling us a bit about your role as the Senior Customer Relations Executive at Magpie Nest?

Rakib Ahmed Ridoy: Thank you for having me! As a Senior Customer Relations Executive, I manage client relationships and ensure that every client's needs are met quickly and efficiently. I'm often the first point of contact for any questions or concerns. I work closely with the operations and sales teams to make sure our services meet client expectations. Basically, I act as the link between the client and the company, making sure communication and service run smoothly.

Interviewer: That sounds very customer-focused! What challenges do you face when managing client relationships?

Rakib Ahmed Ridoy: One big challenge is managing different expectations. Clients communicate differently and have different needs. For example, Eastern European clients expect very direct communication, while clients in the UK often prefer a more consultative style. We have to adapt our communication based on those differences, but sometimes it takes time to fully understand what each client wants. Another challenge is handling difficult situations, like complaints or problems. In those cases, it's important to stay calm, listen carefully, and find a solution that works for both the client and our company.

Interviewer: That's a great point about managing expectations. How do you adjust your approach based on cultural differences?

Rakib Ahmed Ridoy: It comes down to communication. With Eastern European clients, being clear, concise, and direct works best. They appreciate straightforward communication, so I make sure my messages are simple and to the point. For clients from places like the UK, I take a more consultative approach, giving explanations and background where needed. The key is being flexible and understanding that what works for one client may not work for another. It's about knowing the cultural context and adjusting accordingly.

Interviewer: That's a smart strategy. Can you share an example where adjusting your communication style helped a client relationship?

Rakib Ahmed Ridoy: Absolutely! We had a Polish client who was initially frustrated because they felt our communication was too vague. Once I understood their preference for directness, I changed how I communicated — giving clear timelines, using straightforward language, and confirming everything in writing. After we adapted, the client felt much more comfortable, and

our relationship improved a lot. It really comes down to listening and being ready to change your approach.

Interviewer: That's a great example of cultural sensitivity improving customer relations. Thanks so much for sharing, Mr. Rakib!

Theme	Insight from the Interview
Cultural Alignment and Expectations	Eastern European clients value direct communication, transparency, and clear details upfront.
Communication Challenges	Misunderstandings arose from tone differences and language barriers, leading to adaptations in communication strategies.
Relationship-Building and Trust	Trust is built through consistent, reliable service and transparent communication, leading to long-term client loyalty.
Organisational Adaptation	Magpie Nest adapted its approach with clear communication, simplified services, and region-specific strategies to meet cultural expectations.

3.4.2 Thematic Analysis of Interview Data

Overview of Thematic Analysis Process

The process of thematic analysis was initiated by transcribing the interviews. Each interview was exhaustively read and reviewed to independently verify the themes and categories. I focused on identify those ideas that reappeared and addressed the research questions. These

themes were subsequently organized into categories in order to provide a better understanding of the data.

I used a structured approach to coding, where I tagged significant statements with simple labels like "trust," "communication," and "expectations." These codes helped organize the data into manageable pieces. I then grouped similar codes together to form broader themes. For instance, codes related to direct communication, clarity, and transparency were grouped under the theme of "Cultural Alignment and Expectations."

After that, the report refined the themes based on the data to assure they were representative of the interview material. I subsequently refined the themes and named them to reflect the key ideas that were identified within the data. Every theme was critically examined and related to the research purposes and questions.

This allowed the analysis to stay on track with the aims of the study. I also effectively analyzed how the culture affects the relationship between customers at Magpie Nest, by formatting the findings into different themes.

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Theme 1: Cultural Alignment and Expectations

Culture fit and empathy around the understanding of the client are important for any company. Interviews showed that the East European customers have also a very clear expectation for direct contact, transparency and formal professionalism. "Many of our Eastern European clients look for straightforward, no nonsense type of way of communicating," says Ashiqur Rahman Tanim, CEO of Magpie Nest. For example, when the company started using softer,

gentler language in emails, clients took it as being vague or evasive. The mistake taught the team that its Eastern European based clients want you to be direct and clear.

Expectations include clear contracts, specified timelines and transparent pricing, said participants including Tanvir Shaon, business manager at Revolo HR, while some clients from countries including Romania, Poland and Bulgaria are now used to dealing with such corporate dealings abroad. By contrast, the UK is used to a more relaxed style of communication. Magpie Nest adjusted to deliver against these expectations. The company steered clear of an informal and buddy-buddy tone and instead emphasized proffering concrete information and direct solutions.

Their investment in hiring bilingual staff, including Romanian speakers, shows how serious they are about cultural fit. That's not just crossing the language divide, but that's respecting the cultural differences. Finally, cultural matching at Magpie Nest has become an important mechanism to build trust at a cultural level and to break down the resistance to closer relationships for East European clients.

Theme 2: Communication Challenges

Communication is still a difficult dynamic in the cross-cultural client relationship. The interviewing process pointed up some concerns as to language, manner, and client expectations. There was one significant problem, which Faiyaz Chowdhury, the Business Pursuit Manager, pointed out were the variations in communication styles between UK and Eastern European customers. He pointed out that what is polite or friendly in English might read as passive-aggressive or uncertain in languages like Romanian. This tone mismatch has had unintended consequences, particularly when the company started working with Eastern European clients.

There were also language difficulties. As the CEO explains it, the company offered its clients some standard forms of communication, which in practice, confused and felt too formal for some of them. Misunderstandings escalated quickly, particularly when the language did not align with cultural expectations. In response, Magpie Nest began trialing all communications with native speakers before releasing them, to guarantee clarity and cultural appropriateness.

Participants also spoke about the high expectations of Eastern European clients. Many times they think that start-ups are huge companies with a lot of resources. This assumption made expectations hard to control. It was crucial to establish a good early boundary in contact to indeed manage such expectations. Finally, and most importantly, the company went on to develop a focus-based approach to ensure that they were communicating directly, clearly and in each client's cultural mindset.

Theme 3: Relationship-Building and Trust

Earning trust from Eastern European customers is key to building long-term partnerships. All the interviews stressed the importance of trust; once trust exists, clients are loyal and they are willing to do a lot of business with their business partners. Europeans from the East generally tend to be cautious when they first commence a relationship, remarked Ashiqur Rahman Tanim, CEO. They need to know where they stand in their relationships, and they need you to spell it out clear as day. And when this trust has been established, customers are more likely to stay for the long haul if their satisfactions are constantly achieved.

Several participants, including Tanvir Shaon, highlighted the importance of regular communication to maintain trust. He mentioned, "If we promise something, we deliver." It is also important to build and develop relationships by keeping up to date and acting on your commitments. Clients in Eastern Europe often appreciate attention to detail and punctuality.

If you make a promise, you had better keep it, and usually deliver before the deadline. This reliable follow-up builds trust.

One of several important trust-making considerations is how transparent the organisation is. As Faiyaz Chowdhury said, Eastern European clients tend to prefer to deal with those who are able to give clear cut and simple information from the start – be it about service offering, cost or deadlines. By providing the clearest possible picture of what clients will receive Magpie Nest reduces the potential for misunderstandings and increases client satisfaction.

Language and language support also contribute to developing relationships. With bilingual staff including those who speak Romanian Magpie Nest ensures clients know that we are listening and we are interested. This leads to a better relationship as clients feel you are a person who understands their cultural environment and patterns of communication.

Ultimately, the trust-building at Magpie Nest is based on reliability, transparency and awareness of cultural issues. "It builds solid relationships with Eastern European clients, maintaining its position to keep older, satisfied customers.

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Theme 4: Organisational Adaptation

The ability of Magpie Nest to work effectively with Eastern European clients has hinged on organisational adaptation. The company knew from the beginning that one-size-fits-all won't work out, especially working with people are from a mix of different cultures. Syeda Nabila, Chief Operating Officer noted that Adaptation is not optional it's essential for staying competitive in the global market. This perception prompted Magpie Nest to reposition its strategies to better meet the cultural needs of Eastern European clients.

One significant adaptation was the adjustment of communication strategies. As highlighted by the CEO, Magpie Nest initially relied on the same communication style used with UK clients. However, they soon discovered that customers from Eastern Europe wanted direct, no-nonsense communication. In reaction, the firm switched from one of friendly, informal voice to one of formality and precision. It wasn't just about tone, it was about clarity and transparency in all business communications.

Additionally Magpie Nest monitored the quality of the service delivery, and the latter was consistent with the clients' expectations. For one, the company streamlined its services, offering straightforward and detailed information up front. This was more in tune with the Eastern European customers way of more structured/solidly defined service packages. Additionally, the company localized its advertising by interacting locally with potential customer bases, adjusting messages to each potential client group.

Training of personnel was another important adaptation. Given that cultural nuances are important, Magpie Nest ran workshops to make sure staff were aware of the complexities of communicating with Eastern Europeans. A team of bilingual staff members, including Romanian speakers, also helped the company to adjust to the local market by providing a more localised and personal service offering that resonated with the culture of the area.

Conclusion of Thematic Analysis

Magpie Nest's ability to deal with Eastern European clients is attributed to knowledge of what is expected culturally and how to adapt business activities. The company's emphasis on transparency, trust-building, and organisational flexibility has been essential. By overcoming communication barriers, matching provision with cultural preference and tailoring engagement strategies, Magpie Nest has established an environment to help build lasting and transformative relationships. Continues adaptation to customer requirements, and a focus on

cross-cultural sensibilities, will place the company in a strong position to continue growing and overseeing market variety and ensuring loyalty of its customer base

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3.5.1 Conclusion

This chapter concludes the report by summarising the main insights gained through research and practice. It links the findings from the thematic analysis and primary sources to the research aim, objectives, and questions. It also provides practical recommendations for startups that want to strengthen client relationships with Eastern European partners.

The chapter ends with reflections on the value of the internship, the research limitations, and areas for future study.

3.5.2 Summary of Key Findings

This research explored how Magpie Nest navigates the challenges of managing customer relationships with Eastern European clients. The key findings from the thematic analysis reveal that the company's ability to adapt to cultural differences plays a central role in its success. The findings can be summarized as follows:

Cultural Alignment	Eastern European clients expect direct communication, transparency, and clear details. The company initially struggled with a softer approach, but quickly adjusted to meet these preferences
Communication Challenges	Misunderstandings occurred due to tonal differences and language barriers. Bilingual staff and the testing of communication materials helped overcome these challenges.

Trust and Relationship Building	Trust is a cornerstone of the client relationship Clients from Eastern Europe, once trust is established, are loyal and value consistent, reliable service delivery
Organisational Adaptation	Magpie Nest adapted its communication strategy, service offerings, and regional segmentation to align with the cultural expectations of Eastern European clients.

3.5.3 Linking Findings to Research Objectives

The results of the study are closely in line with the objectives of the study. Each goal is achieved by findings/insights that display how Magpie Nest has adapted its practices to manage customer relationships with Eastern European clients effectively:

Objective 1: To identify and examine cultural norms and business expectations specific to Eastern European countries.

- The study discovered Eastern European customers to value the straightforwardness of the communication, clear information presentation, formality, and establishing trust. These customers expect transparent service offerings, with a clear outline of timelines, pricing, and expectations.

Objective 2: To explore strategies that startups can use to align their customer relationship management with Eastern European cultural values.

- Magpie Nest adapted its communication approach to be more direct and clear which help in ensuring that language, tone, and service offerings matched the cultural values of Eastern European clients. Bilingual personnel were recruited to overcome language difficulties and facilitate communication flow

Objective 3: To assess the root causes of communication or relational breakdowns between startups and clients from this region.

- The study discovered that communication errors were commonly resulting from tonal difference and language barriers. There were misunderstandings because the company started with a soft and indirect communication, not appreciated by the Eastern Europeans

Objective 4: To recommend practical and culturally-informed approaches for improving customer relations with Eastern European clients in a startup environment.

- The recommendations include hiring bilingual staff, simplify service delivery and take a region-based approach to marketing strategies, as well as provide staff training to increase cultural sensitivity. In addition, the organization will also need to continue to evolve its communication approaches based on customer feedback to ensure effective relationship management.

3.5.4 Answering the Research Questions

The research questions are directly addressed by the findings of this study. Below are the answers, supported by insights gathered from the interviews:

Research Question 1: What are the key cultural factors that influence business relationships in Eastern Europe?

The study found that Eastern European business relationships are shaped by several key cultural factors:

- **Direct communication:** Clients prefer straightforward and clear exchanges without ambiguity.
- **Clear and structured service delivery:** Detailed timelines, transparent pricing, and upfront information are expected.
- **Formal professionalism:** Business interactions tend to be formal and respectful.
- **Trust-building:** Establishing trust through consistent and reliable service is essential for strong relationships.

Research Question 2: How can startups effectively adapt their customer relationship strategies to meet the cultural expectations of Eastern European clients?

Startups can improve their relationships with Eastern European clients by:

- Using **clear, direct communication** tailored to client preferences.
- Offering **culturally appropriate services** that match regional expectations.
- Ensuring marketing materials are **aligned with local norms**.
- Hiring **bilingual staff** to overcome language barriers.
- Integrating **regular client feedback** into strategy to stay relevant and responsive.

Research Question 3: What common misunderstandings arise between startups and Eastern European clients, and how can these be effectively addressed?

Misunderstandings often stem from differences in communication style:

- Tone and formality may differ, with Eastern European clients favoring formal, clear interactions.
- To address this, startups should:
 - o Have communication reviewed by **native speakers**.
 - o Avoid overly casual or ambiguous language.
 - o Provide **cultural sensitivity training** for staff.
 - o Employ **bilingual team members** to improve clarity and understanding.

Research Question 4: What role does trust play in managing customer relationships with Eastern European clients?

Trust is fundamental to building long-term client relationships:

- Clients become loyal when startups provide **consistent, transparent, and reliable service**.
- Meeting expectations promptly and maintaining **clear, honest communication** fosters trust.
- Trust serves as the foundation for lasting partnerships in the Eastern European market

3.5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made to improve customer relations with Eastern European clients at Magpie Nest:

- **Improve Staff Training on Cultural Sensitivity:** Provide staff with in-depth training on cultural diversity and communication styles so that they can better understand and appreciate Eastern European cultural values.
- **Standardise Communication Practices:** Create clear protocols for communication that are between formal and direct that clients are used to. Simple and plain language can prevent falling out.
- **Localise Customer Service:** Employ bilingual staff and establish customer service teams who speak the language and understand the culture of the region to improve communication and client support.
- **Review and Improve Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement regular feedback loops from clients to help identify what could be improved in service delivery. Leverage this information to tailor how you engage with clients and help keep your firm on the leading edge of what's happening.
- **Build Relationships Gradually:** Focus on consistent service delivery rather than rushing relationship-building efforts. Establish trust through reliability, transparency, and clear expectations.

3.5.6 Reflections on Internship Experience

After interning at Magpie Nest, I have obtained very useful knowledge of cross cultural relationship's complexities and strategies. I also got to work closely with a group of other departments, and learned what it means to adjust communication and delivery standards to the expectations of different types of clients. My departure job allowed me to witness first hand how multicultural start-up works and how necessary it is to be culturally competent in dating

business environment. It has been a great exposure for me in managing customers and adaptation to the culture which is likely to prepare me well in my future career.

On a personal level, intercultural communication, business process transformation, and client relationship management have been very helpful for me to understand how this works.

3.5.7 Research Limitations

- **Limited Data:** The study was based on interviews with a small sample of the subjects, and the diversity of opinion to the topic was limited.
- **Single Company Focus:** The study was conducted based on the experience of Magpie Nest only and may not be applicable to all start-ups that work with Eastern-European customer.
- **Subjective Insights:** The findings are based on personal experiences and perceptions of the interviewees, which may introduce bias or subjective interpretations.

3.5.8 Future Research Opportunities

Further studies could explore:

- **Broader Sample of Startups:** Future research may further widen the sample of startups in various industries doing business internationally to examine shared issues and best relationship building practices for cross culture relationship management.
- **Longitudinal Studies:** Longitudinal research could help understand how customer relationships change over time as startups increasingly refine their ability to manage cultural differences.

- **Impact of Technology on Cross-Cultural Communication:** Future research could investigate how technology and digital platforms can be used to improve communication and interpersonal trust-building among culturally diverse clients.
- **Cultural Differences Across Other Regions:** It would be valuable to investigate customer relationship management across other regions, such as Asia or Latin America to demonstrate how cultural expectations vary by markets.

3.5.9 Conclusion

This research confirms that understanding and adapting to cultural expectations is vital when dealing with Eastern European clients. The interviews' insights showed that success depends not just on offering a good product or service but also on how relationships are built and maintained.

By using structured communication, cultural awareness training, and gradual trust-building, startups can improve client satisfaction and business outcomes in these markets.

Startups should not treat culture as an afterthought. It should be part of strategic planning from the start. When a company understands its clients deeply, it not only avoids mistakes it also builds long-term success.

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Appendix