# The Impacts Of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions **On International Trade Barriers**

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ABSTRACT. Due to the advancement of communication and transportation technologies, the global economy has never been more integrated. Hence, more businesses are trying to research and penetrate new markets worldwide with superb marketing mixes. However, the one-size-fits- all approach has proved to be ineffective; the endeavors are usually hampered by cultural differences between countries reflected in the dimensions of the Hofstede Cultural Dimensions. The differences, especially in Power Distance, Long-term Orientation, and Indulgence, will play a crucial role in shaping the country's international trade barriers, corporate culture, and eventually the preferred marketing mix. Thus, attaining a comprehensive overview of a country's culture is imperative for a successful business. Therefore, this paper tries to delve deeper and scrutinize the relationship between the Hofstede Cultural Dimensions and international trade barriers.

### Keywords: culture, Hofstede Cultural Dimensions, international trade, international trade barriers

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The global economy has never been more integrated; countries are becoming more dependent upon one another to fulfill their economic needs, each becoming more specialized in specific sectors. In this kind of globalized economy, cultural sensitivity plays an essential role. As new companies proliferate and the global marketplace becomes increasingly accessible for businesses worldwide, multinational and cross- cultural companies are becoming more regular. This means that it is ever-crucial for companies to understand the culture of their foreign subsidiaries and market if they wish to succeed internationally (Twose, 2019).

Culture can be a complex subject to be understood as it constitutes several abstract dimensions modeled only recently. These cultural dimensions can be very challenging or even upsetting for businesses to consider, especially in the traditional views where they tend to only focus on practical processes of the business. However, as people become increasingly sensitive to various cultural matters, companies should not overlook the cultural aspects of the business on foreign grounds as they are essential both in internal and external environments.

Cultures have a significant role in creating certain hindrances or barriers in executing trades internationally; in fact, free trade between countries seldom exists. Countries continuously experience barriers when conducting transactions with one another, either intentionally or not. While often seen as the protection for the national interests, these barriers are the main factors of significant gaps between the development of one country with another. Many different dimensions of a nation's culture cause barriers either intentionally or not.

Countries with low technology adoption in attempts top reserve traditional values tend to have more significant international trade barriers, whether economic, technological, social, or even political. For instance, in 2017, over 1.7 billion, or 31% of the total adult population worldwide, are still unbanked, that is to say, do not have an account at a financial institution, including mobile money providers (Demirgüç-Kunt, Klapper, Singer, Ansar, & Hess, 2018). Nearly half of that number are people living in developing countries such as China, India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. A similarity between these countries, besides their high population and relatively low Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, is that these countries are categorized as eastern countries located in Asia, which are well known for preserving their traditional values.

Thus, cultural aspects are of the essence because they in fluence the overall economy of countries, including the people's tastes and preferences. Consequently, businesses should also consider cultural values and tradition, especially when it comes to the products they sell on the foreign market, as the original product may not gain as much success in the new market because of differing cultures. The most common causes of this are the language difference. When products make the entrance to new markets overseas, new advertising campaigns in the local language should be composed for them. Most of the time, companies will simply take the idea sand tagline soft he current campaign and translate them directly, sometimes without customizing and consulting resources that might have helpful cultural apprehension. This can result in crucial misinterpretations from one language to another.

A well-known example happened in 1987 when Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) opened its first outlet in Beijing; its famous slogan 'finger-lick in good' was incorrectly translated into Mandarin as 'eat your fingers off' (Schooley, 2019). Making a blunder like this could have doomed a brand; however, KFC was able to recover because it was pretty novel and relatively unknown in China at the time. After the clumsy translation was corrected, Chinese citizens who were curious about the western world grabbed up buckets of KFC chicken and licked their fingers, as the initial slogan intended. Currently, it is the most popular western fast food in China, with the largest KFC market out sidethe US at more than 1,200 franchises (Rashi, 2016).

Not only that, but KFC also faced challenges with the resources they used in China due to differences in farming cultures. In the 1980s, when KFC planned to launch itself in Hong Kong, they made use of chickens that were being fed and raised in China. However, it is observed that Chinese farmers feed fish to their chickens; thus, the taste does not match that of America's KFC. The consequences were quite severe as KFC had to shut down its operations and did not open its stores for ten years(PaulDana,2011).

Another major example is when a major Swedish-based company and one of the best companies operating in various regions successfully, IKEA, also experienced issues when first expanding its business into the United States. Yes, to the surprise of some, there was a time when IKEA was not ubiquitous in America. In fact, their initial venture at American business went pretty poorly. Despite its big name, IKEA made some mistakes and faced severe cultural challenges when making its market entry to the US in 1985 as they opened a store in King of Prussia, PA, just outside of Philadelphia (Petty,2017).

Although IKEA had simulated the existing marketing strategies, mainly promotions, to be implemented in the US, all the efforts seemed insufficient. It turned out that IKEA lagged in satisfying its US consumers with the products; their crucial blunder was that they did not consider the aspect of customization when offering products to US consumers. Every product was still measured in centimeters, and many of the sizes did not suit American tastes. For example, interestingly, the first store managed to sell tons of vases, not because people in Philadelphia got really attracted to flowers that year, but because they utilized them as drinking glasses instead. Indeed, unfortunately, the actual glasses were much too small since IKEA did not anticipate the high demand for iced beverages in the US (Dass & Vinnakota, 2019).

Moreover, the consumers also put forward their demands for larger furniture. For example, they demanded bigger closets and beds, not to mention the curtains launched also did not meet the needs of American households as they were very small in size. Similarly, Americans also prefer comfortable sofa sets, as the sofa sets launched by IKEA in the US were quite hard that the Americans were unable to sit comfortably. IKEA

marketers may not have done enough research on the US before entering this region. Nevertheless, they tried to follow the same marketing mix, which led to the biggest failure (Petty,2017).

Regardingthismatter, aformerexecutive of IK EAtoldFortune, "Wethoughteverything was going to be easy, and it was hell" (Kowitt, 2015). According to The New York Times, in 1992, IKEA considered pulling the plug on American efforts altogether. However, luckily, they decided instead to delve into intense market research to really uncover what went wrong and increase their understanding of the market. Now, IKEA emphasizes and even places a high premium on market research when expanding into new territory (Gillies, 2017). Head of IKEA research Mikael Y dholm said in Fortune, "The [farther] away we go from our culture, themore we need to understand, learn, and adapt" (Kowitt, 2015). With this new method of analyzing cultural differences and needs, IKEA has been able to open stores worldwide.

With globalization reaching its new peak every year, immense opportunities emerge for businesses to expand their operations beyond host nations (Hung, et al., 2011). However, as stated by De Mooij (2018), understanding one's culture is vital for firms to avoid hassles in the countries of operation. Thus, the subsequent sections of this paper try to explain the influence of culture, further elaborated Hofstede using the Cultural Dimensions, on international trade barriers which will heavily affect business operations across countries.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture has been expounded in many ways; Hofstede (2011) defines it as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others. Culture is always a collective phenomenon; it can be connected to different collectives, and within each collective, there is a variety of individuals. In a business context, culture relates to the values or behaviors expected and accepted professionally in one location compared to another. What may be acceptable business practices in one country may differ from the approach used by businesses overseas. Therefore, studying the cultural characteristics of each country becomes achieving amore essential in sustainable partnership and a successful business ahead as culture acts as a key factor that shapes the ethics of an employee in the workplace that could potentially influence the management activities of the business(Solomon,2015).

Recognizing how culture can affect international business should be understood to avoid misunderstandings between business partners, colleagues, and clients and ensure that companies present themselves to their new market in the best way possible (Twose, 2019). Misunderstandings caused by differences in cultural background, lingual factors, as well as environmental conditions can easily develop into conflicts in the workplace (Jassawalla, Trugila, & Garvey, 2016).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

A study must use research strategies and methods so that the matter being studied can be justified and achieve the stated goals. This chapter contains the research method, which underlines the steps for performing research as shown in the figure below. Beginning with problem identification, where the background details of the topic are discussed up to conclusions and recommendations where the results will then be presented and analyzed thoroughly.

This research begins with a problem and continues with preliminary research and topic definition up to the conclusion and recommendation, where the results will be discussed. The illustration below shows every process in conducting this research.

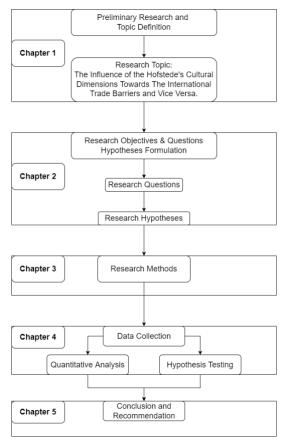


Figure 1. Research Process Illustration

## 4. RESULT

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#### Table 1: SPSS Test Description

#### Descriptives

	Notes		
Output Created		03-JUN-2022 15:56:36	
Comments			
Input	Active Dataset	DataSet1	
	Filter	<none></none>	
	Weight	<none></none>	
	Split File	<none></none>	
	N of Rows in Working Data File	271	
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User defined missing values are treated as missing.	
	Cases Used	All non-missing data are used.	
Syntax		DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=PowDist LT_ORTINDLG INDV MASCL UNCAV SOCTB ECTB POLTB TECHTB /SAVE /STATISTICS=MEAN STDDEV VARIANCE RANGE MIN MAX SEMEAN KURTOSIS SKEWNESS.	
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	Elapsed Time	00:00:00	

After the participants were given a set of questions concerning the sub-variables, the statistical data was then analyzed using SPSS (student version). The reliability analysis on the data indicates that out of 271 respondents in the studies, about 100% (one hundred percent) of the data are considered valid, as shown in the case processing summary table below. Below are the case processing summary and descriptive statistics results for 271 respondents that participate in the research:

#### Scale: ALL VARIABLES

#### **Case Processing Summary**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	271	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	271	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

### 5. CONCLUSION

This chapter will conclude the research question, and hypotheses further based on the previous chapter. Furthermore, summarize all the findings, as well as the recommendations will be discussed thoroughly below: Based on the results generated by AMOS stated in chapter 4, the path diagram shows that Hofstede Cultural Dimensions has a significant positive relationship towards international trade barriers with value of coefficient correlation of 1.00, it shows that Hofstede Cultural Dimensions plays an important role in a country's international trade barriers. It is true because trade barriers are usually are flection of a country's culture that might differ one another. When a country tends to have a more extreme cultural dimensions, trade barriers tend to increase as well. As seen from the results, all aspects of the Hofstede Cultural Dimensions also correlate significantly with each other.

Furthermore, according to the quantitative data collected and analyzed by AMOS, the international trade barriers variable, when seen as an independent variable, also shows a significant impact toward Hofstede Cultural Dimensions, showing a standardized coefficient correlation value of 1.00. That means international trade barriers variable has a positive and high influence towards the Hofstede Cultural Dimensions. Within the international trade barriers, all the aspects of political, social, economic, and technological barriers play a significant role in making up a country's international trade barriers.

Hence, while the global economy has never been more integrated due to the advancement of communication and transportation technologies, the one-size-fits-all approach has proved to be ineffective; the endeavors are usually hampered by cultural differences between countries reflected in the dimensions of the Hofstede Cultural

Dimensions. The differences in the cultural dimensions will play a crucial role in shaping the country's international trade barriers and eventually the preferred marketing mix. Thus, attaining a comprehensive overview of a country's culture is imperative for a successful businessandinternationaltradebetweencountriesofd ifferingcultures.

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