

Comparison of uk and indian cultures



Introduction

In this era of globalization in business environment, companies are expanding their business all over the world, i. e. in different countries and each of them with different cultures. One area in particular of growing importance is intercultural management skills. Culture in international business nowadays is recognized to have a major role to play in the international sales, marketing, recruitment, management and mergers.

“ In short, culture is behind everything we do or say.”

(www. kwintessential. co. uk)

Therefore, in the international and multi-cultural business community, there are very much possibilities of misunderstandings which can have a negative effect on the people which will intern affect the productivity of the organization. This complexity requires a manager to adapt in order to offer modern solutions to these problems. (www. kwintessential. co. uk)

Culture is:

- Something shared by all or almost all members of some social group.
- Something older members of a group try to pass to younger members.
- Something (as in the case of morals, laws, and customs) that shapes behavior, or structures one’s perception of he world.”

Therefore culture is all that one needs to know in order to be accepted in a society or an organisation which is a sum total of all the beliefs, values and norms shared by a group of people who have been brought up in a society to think, feel, interpret and react in a particular manner. Or it is a human need
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of adapting to circumstances and transmitting these skills and knowledge to the next generations. It can also be said as culture as mental programming is also crystallization of history in the hands, minds and hearts of the present generation. (Hofstede, 2001).

This essay will talk about the cultural difference between India which is my home culture and UK which is the counterpart. I have chosen UK because I have been to UK for my Supervised Work Experience (SWE) and during my stay in UK I never paid attention towards the UK culture dimensions and would now like to analyze with respect to the different models. But before that lets have a look at some customs or values that are followed in these countries:

India – Hinduism

- Social freedom amongst the sexes is not appreciated.
- Use of first name to address people is avoided.
- The method of greeting depends on the social status of the person you are meeting i. e. if a son is meeting his father usually he greets him by bowing down and touching his feet. Where as educated people, in business meeting shake hands to welcome or greet each other.
- If invited for dinner one may only have the dinner with the business partner and not the whole family and do not get upset if you host asks you several times to have some more food. It is Indian custom to make sure that the guest does not get up hungry from the table. Also at the table one should use the right hand in passing food as Indian consider left hand as impure.

UK:

- British people are formal, sophisticated, value privacy and are sensitive.
- Within UK controlled business environment, maintain decorum and avoid casualness in dress and conversation, loudness and shouting is too taboo.
- Family names and first name are preferred.
- British people are good negotiators as they are tolerant and good listeners.
- Fine manners and good etiquette are expected at all social occasions.
- Gift giving is not a normal custom in UK.

(Harris, 2004 & Rodrigues, 2001)

Hofstede Model

Cross-cultural study to find out the differences in national cultures, this was done by Hofstede across 60 different countries which included matched samples of business employees. These studies together identified four independent dimensions of national culture differences. The dimensions explored were *Power distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism verses collectivism and Masculinity verses femininity.*

The first of four dimensions discovered by Hofstede is called power distance. Power distance is the extent to which the less powerful member of an organization or an institution accept and expect that the power is distributed unequally (*Hofstede, 2001*). The basic problem which is prevalent here is to what extent in a culture the degree of inequality between a less powerful

individual and a high powerful individual is expected and accepted. India stands at the 10/11 position in the survey with a score of 77 whereas Great Britain is on the 42/44 position with a score of only 35. (see appendices-)

For example – During my SWE the service operation head of the whole hotel chain was very friendly, who was also the head of my department. I used to share my personal problems with her and even go out for dinner. This example would be further analyzed in the competencies.

The second dimension is labeled as uncertainty avoidance (UA). It refers to the extent a culture or organization prepares its members to feel comfortable or uncomfortable in an unstructured situation (Hofstede, 2001). The issue involved here is the level to which a culture or society would accept strict laws and regulations over uncertainty and risk. Countries or cultures scoring high on UA have long history and the population is homogeneous. Risks even calculated are avoided and new ideas and concepts are difficult to introduce whereas countries on low UA scores are completely opposite. Although there is not much of a difference in the ranks given by Hofstede but still India scores a higher rank than Great Britain, also this dimension does not have a major role in the core competencies.(see appendices-)

The third is individualism and collectivism which is the degree to which a culture stress on that right of an individual as compared to those of a group. Countries scoring high on individualism live in the “ I” culture and strive for personal goals and achievements. In such countries it is acceptable to pursue personal goals at the expense of other. Whereas a country scoring

low in individualism has the “ we” culture. Individual desires and goal could be suppressed for the good of the group.

For Example – In UK culture people always consider themselves as an Individual, they are more bothered about themselves even if they belong to same family, whereas in India people consider each other as a part of a group and that’s the reason joint families still exist in Indian society.

The last one is masculinity and femininity which refers to the distribution of role between the two genders i. e. male and female. Countries with high masculinity are observed to have the following characteristics i. e. Priorities in life for people are achievement, wealth and expansion. Usually people settle conflicts through aggressive means. Women and men have different roles in society. Often Professionals in these countries work for longer hours and short vacations. Whereas in counties which are low in masculinity the following is observed. Priorities are the family, relationships and quality of life. Conflicts are usually solved though negotiation. Men and women share equal positions in society.

Masculinity/Femininity are equally powerful but in respect to Hofstede, 2006 research both India and UK share common Masculinity culture as in both of these cultures social gender roles are clearly distinct.(see appendices)

Hall’s Model

The vital distinction is made by the anthropologist Edward Hall between high and low- context cultures and how these contexts have an effect on communication. In High Context cultures high context communication: information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person with <https://assignbuster.com/comparison-of-uk-and-indian-cultures/>

little communication in the explicit words or message and on the other hand a low context culture communication most information is contained in explicit codes, such as words (Harris, 2004).

High context cultures depend heavily on the external environment, situations, and non-verbal behavior in creating and interpreting communications. In high context cultures when individuals communicate they try to find out how much the listener knows about what is being discussed. People in high context cultures emphasize on interpersonal relationships, also developing trust is very important factor or step which should be made before starting a business. People are collectivist and work on their intuition rather than on reasons and are more indirect as well as formal. India is high context culture.

Whereas in Low Context cultures the environment is less important, and non-verbal behavior is often ignored. While communication is going on the listener knows nothing or little and need to be told about what is being discussed. People in low context cultures emphasize legal documents rather than inter personal relationships or trust. People are individualistic and work based on logical reasoning and not on intuition, also they are direct and informal. UK is a low context culture.

For example – During my SWE I was asked by my colleague to help her with the work load. Instead of saying I can not, I said it would be difficult. The example would be analyzed in the competencies areas.

The second concept given by Hall was to do with the how different cultures structure or manage their time i. e. polychronic verses the monochronic time

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orientation. The polychronic cultures believe in doing many things at one time and the monochronic cultures believe in doing one task at given point of time and time is subordinate to interpersonal relationships. UK belongs to monochromic culture and India is a polychronic culture.

Stereotyping

Another important factor or variable that the managers in the organization need to keep in mind is stereotyping. “ *Stereotypes are set of attitudes that causes us to attribute qualities and characteristics to a person based on the group to which that individual belongs.*” (Harris, 2004)

It basically involves categorizing and making perceptions about people based on one’s experiences and it guides one’s behavior towards that group of people in a particular way.

Teamwork

A team is a number of persons associated in same joint action, while teamwork is described as cooperative or coordinated effort on the part of persons working together towards the actualization of a goal (Harris, 2004). A hotel firm can only survive if the employees are ready to work and produce an effective team. As each and every operation in the hospitality industry is interrelated to each other. For example front office is depended upon housekeeping department for clean rooms and restaurant is dependent on kitchen for cooking food. Thus in order to have a successful multicultural team member should have complimentary skills and should think in favor of the team.(example see appendices-)

Communication

All activities involve communication. In the global era different managerial activities like motivating, leading, negotiation exchanging information etc are all based on the manager of one culture to communicate effectively and successfully to people of other cultures. Communication can not only verbal or written but also non-verbal i. e. body language, expressions etc (*Adler, 1997*). In international Hospitality and Tourism industries language plays a very important role, as both of these industries include direct guest contact; good language and communication skills can either make or break the impression of the organization – especially hotels.(example see appendices)

Conflict and Negotiation

Conflict- “ A state of disharmony between incompatible or antithetical persons, ideas, or interests; a clash”

(www. ANSWER. COM)

Causes of conflict

- communication failure
- personality conflict
- value differences
- goal differences
- methodological differences
- substandard performance
- lack of cooperation
- differences regarding authority

- differences regarding responsibility
- competition over resources
- non-compliance with rules

(www.geocities.com)

These are some of the factors which causes conflict in an working environment of an organization which needed to be resolved through various modes and means

- Force
- Negotiate
- Bargain
- Avoid
- Accommodation and Appease

(Mead 1998: 2005)

The most important tool is negotiation which's is used to resolve conflict

“ Negotiation is a process in which two or more entities come together to discuss common and conflicting interests in order to reach an agreement of mutual benefit” (*Harris, 2004*) . In international business negotiation, there can be misunderstanding due the difference in the culture to culture in language, cultural conditioning, negotiation style, approach to problem solving etc. Negotiation plays a very important role in Hospitality and Tourism Industries, such as negotiation on room rate with guests and travel agents in different countries etc. As India belongs to polychromic culture, while taking decisions people from India tend to involve other people (colleagues) into the negotiation process which makes the process longer.

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This also confirms the stereotype associated with them. This also happens as India a collectivist and high PDI country. Whereas UK which is monochronic culture they see time as an asset and quantity to be scheduled, they emphasize on making agendas and finish the work or taking the decision in time. Negotiation can also be effected by the communication style of the country i. e. as explained earlier the concept of high and low context cultures i. e. misunderstanding due to lack of clarity amongst the two cultures thus leading to unsatisfactory results of negotiation.

Evaluating myself- Me, As a manager

After completing my reflective practice assignment and following up the tasks given to us. After doing the Hofstede's measuring cultural differences approach model or exercise and I found that I measured masculinity more than femininity which clarifies that the job which is given or I undertake is done to get personal sense of accomplishment and I look for new and challenging opportunities for a high success . I would describe my self as low power distance human being as I would like to work with those managers which makes decision by considering all the employees view points rather making their own personal decision I would focused more on collectivism rather on Individualism as I look for more opportunities to improve upon my skills and develop new skills by adapting to new working conditions (see appendices-)

Cultures are normally attributed to groups of people but, within group each individual has his/her own individual characters which make the person stand out from others. I would describe my self as a good listener, good observer, cooperative with employees, Flexible and competitive (see <https://assignbuster.com/comparison-of-uk-and-indian-cultures/>)

appendices-). These individual characteristics make me stand out from other members of different cultures. The results of CCAI indicate that my strongest are is Personal Autonomy and my weakest area is Flexibility/Openness. While scores in Emotional Resilience and Perceptual Activity almost the same.(see appendices-) The area in which I lack the most is communication among different cultures; while I can easily handle situations in which things do not go as per plan or situations and in which stress and tolerance occurs. I lack in area where I am expected to communicate among different cultures, despite of the fact that, I would love to spend some time with people from different cultures. By improving my intercultural skills such as communication i. e. how to react on different ideas, people and experiences and I should not focus on what other people are saying and doing rather make my own decisions. This will make me a better person while I am in different culture and in my own culture. Also I should learn to appreciate different people and expenses.

In the next six months by following up the action plan I would improve on my communication skill by reading novels and newspapers and also at the same time try interact and discuss on different issues with people in college whom I normally don't interact with, as it will also help me in appreciating different people as well. Completing this exercise would help me in dealing with different people at my future work place and also communicating effectively with them.(see appendices-)

Conclusion and Recommendations

The main focus of this essay was to analyze similarities and dissimilarities among Indian and UK cultures. This was done though use of two models of <https://assignbuster.com/comparison-of-uk-and-indian-cultures/>

cultural analysis done by Hofstede and Hall. It was realized that both the cultures are too different from each other. As hospitality and tourism industry are growing at a rapid scale and due to globalization of the business, the demand for multicultural employees is increasing, but managing employees from totally different cultures like in India or UK would be great challenge faced by the managers in the industry. Also international visitors often expect that service providers should understand and respect their customs, beliefs and cultures, if not it may lead to cross cultural conflicts. Following are the recommendations for UK and India based managers:

- Cross cultural training should be provided to the employees so that they can adjust in new cultures. Information about other cultures should be provided which will lead to better understanding amongst the employees and enhanced teamwork.
- While communicating with Britishers, Indian people should use simple words which are grammatically correct should be used and direct communication should take place as British people belong to a low context culture and prefer messages/communication to be structured directly, that they get immediate to the point and state conclusions and bottom line.
- Proper understanding of other cultures and choosing appropriate negotiation process can produce effective and useful negotiation. A manager must find out the common and the uncommon values of his and counterparts culture in order to conduct effective and successful negotiation. While negotiating between UK and Indian cultures,

managers should take care of the body languages, Gestures and use of grammatically correct language for communications should be used also, importance of time should be taken into consideration.

- Cross cultural training should be provided to the employees so that they can adjust in new cultures. Information about other cultures should be provided which will lead to better understanding amongst the employees and enhanced teamwork.
- Another consideration for global managers is that they should have/develop good listening skill.

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