

Cultural models and cultural dimensions

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Cultural studies are not a unified theory but a diverse field of study encompassing many different approaches, methods and academic perspectives. As in any academic discipline, cultural studies academics frequently debate among themselves. Cross-cultural communication, as in many scholarly fields, is a combination of many other fields. These fields include anthropology, cultural studies, psychology and communication.

There exists no uniform evaluation system or model of cultural aspects to date. However, the variety of the available models much more illustrates how multifaceted the approach can be. Nevertheless, there are some common dimensions for the most cultural models such as concept of time and space, equal (or non-equal) rights of men and women and position of the individual in the society. The most popular cultural models come primarily from the English-speaking researches: Hall (1989), Hofstede (1991), Oksaar (1988).

Wierzbicka is famous for her work in semantics, pragmatics, and cross-cultural linguistics and has established the idea of so called Universal Human Concepts and their realisation in the language (Wierzbicka, 1992). Looking for an appropriate basis cultural model for this research a short comparison of the most known models needs to be done. The differences begin at the definition of culture or even at avoiding any definition, at the objectiveness level (e. g. amount and homogeneity of the interviewed persons) as well as at use of different cultural dimensions.

Comparing to this the cultural model of Hofstede is more representative and homogeneous. He worked on interviews of IBM-employees in over 50
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countries who therefore work in the same sector in comparable positions and have a similar social status. It is obviously that every cultural model has to be approached with great caution and an uncritical reading of cultural dimensions can lead to false conclusions. But even if Hofstede's conceptualization of culture has attracted some criticism he is though one of the most renowned and most cited experts.

The continuity of his researches can be observed over decades and the approach of his scientific school is still being applied and improved. Moreover, his research approach establishes a connection to the active prevention measures mentioned in Chapter 2. As his classification system will be used to make a comparison of the involved regions later in this chapter, it adds to the consistency of this report to explain his definition. Hofstede defines culture as “ the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (Hofstede et al. , 2010: 6).

Investigating culture is an attempt to catch general trends among a large group of people on a very general level. Therefore, the findings in this report should not be applied on an individual level, as this may lead to miscommunication or even stigmatisation. There are different levels of culture (national, regional, ethnic, religious, gender, social class or even organisational level) but regarding Transferability of Road Safety measures the national level was suggested to be the subject for further research. Strictly speaking, the concept of a common culture applies to societies, not to nations.

Based on elaborate research from 1967 to 1973, Hofstede developed a model that tries to capture "culture" through scores on four values, so-called cultural dimensions (given below). Later researches added further dimensions which cannot be fully evaluated here due to other focuses in this project. The complete description of the cultural dimensions can be found on the website (Hofstede, 2011). The four main dimensions according to Hofstede are:

- Power Distance Index (PDI): the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.

Individualism (IDV): the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups.

- Masculinity (MAS): refers to the distribution of roles and values between the genders. The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men's values and women's values.

Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI): a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. Based on the values for these dimensions of the 19 European countries for which cultural dimension scores are available, an average European score was calculated. After a comparison between Europe, India and Brazil based on the official study data from Hofstede the research for metropolitan areas of Sao Paulo and Delhi which was done for this particular project by the local partners using the questionnaire of Hofstede is being presented.

On the basis of its results the project partners awareness of the cultural differences and similarities between Brazil, India and Europe should be

sharpened in order to consider them during the transfer of European Safety measures to Emerging Economies. This allows to avoid misunderstandings and to exclude from the beginning those measures which cannot be transferred due to cultural reasons. 1. 1. 1. Comparison of Cultural Dimensions of Europe, Brazil and India

A first issue that arises when comparing the regions that are cooperating in SaferBrain is the difference in analysis levels: how should one compare the cultures of two countries (India and Brazil) with the culture of a continent (Europe)? Having some insight in the European states cultures, it is safe to say that significant differences can be noted between the European member states. Therefore an average European score was calculated based on a mathematical analysis of Hofstede's cultural dimension scores.

Even if there are in some cases crucial differences between European countries like Italy and Germany, Spain and Sweden, this average score allows comparing the cultures of Europe, India and Brazil. The next figure presents the scores on the four dimensions for these three regions. It must be stressed at this stage that it is not the authors' intention to make hard statements about cultures. As was indicated before, Hofstede's research can only be used to describe general trends in the average culture of a country. This should under no circumstances be translated to an individual level.

Figure 20: Comparison of Europe-India-Brazil on Hofstede's 4 cultural dimensions Figure 20 indicates that the power distance is relatively large in India and Brazil, compared to Europe. This could mean that individuals in these two countries operate in a more hierarchical system. Following Hofstede's definition, hierarchy in India and Brazil is not only accepted, it is <https://assignbuster.com/cultural-models-and-cultural-dimensions/>

also expected. It may be interesting to keep this in mind when analyzing the corresponding traffic systems and when designing pilots to be implemented in these two countries.

Especially concerning the enforcement of safety measures, the strong power orientation influences its exercising. It is known that Brazil and India already have many road facilities and road safety measures but they are not properly used by population. Due to that stronger enforcement measures are needed to improve the acceptance of new technologies and facilities. One can also notice that Europe appears to have a more individualist culture than India and Brazil. This tendency toward individualism can be found in several Western countries. The United States of America for example, have a score of 91 on Hofstede's scale.

Individualist cultures rely more on media and less on their social networks. Different surveys demonstrate that in an individualist culture employees are expected to act at their own responsibility and organise their work gathering their own interests with those of their employers. In a collectivist culture an employee is a part of a group and has to act according to its interest. This should be considered cooperating in pilot projects for SaferBrain. Moreover, collectivist cultures tend to have higher power distance than individualist ones.

So a strong hierarchy and acceptance of higher positioned partners can be presupposed working with India and Brazil. Considering vulnerable road users a health-care survey mentioned by Hofstede showed that individualist and collectivist cultures differently deal with disability. A special part of the survey was dedicated to disabled children. " In the individualist communities

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[...], people with disabilities tended to remain cheerful and optimistic, to resent dependency and being helped, and to plan for a future life as normal as possible.

In the collectivist communities [...], there would be more expression of grief, shame, and pessimism; family members would be asked for advice and assistance, and they would make the main decisions about the person's future" (Hofstede, 2010: 116). Translating this finding to the SaferBrain project, it can be supposed that collectivist cultures like India and Brazil would not have sophisticated facilities for disabled VRU's and these persons would not be well integrated in the society. This could be therefore a useful part of the safety measures? ransfer though the awareness of local partners cannot be assumed. The scores on the masculinity dimension show the smallest differences between the investigated regions. The scores are about 50-60 which can be interpreted as a quite balanced value between masculinity and femininity in the compared countries. However, one can notice that Europe has the highest score. A thorough look at Hofstede's full definition for this dimension could interpret it as follows: Europe has a more assertive culture overall than India and Brazil, while India and Brazil have a slightly more modest culture.

In relation to this report, it may be important to safeguard these cultures' higher need for modesty. Even if the masculinity dimensions scores are very different within Europe, the average score demonstrates the predominant masculine character. In masculine societies there is a feeling that conflicts should be resolved by a " good fight", where challenge, earnings, recognition, and advancement are important, whereas in feminine cultures

there is a preference for resolving conflicts by compromise and negotiation focused on relationships.

Since the score's difference for surveyed countries are minimal, this dimension cannot evoke critical misunderstandings within SaferBrain project. Finally, the level of Uncertainty Avoidance (UA) shows strong differences between the three regions. Though, UA is not the same as risk avoidance and these two concepts should not be mixed. Risk is focused on something specific and refers on a known and expected event. Avoiding risk we prevent something what we can foresee and not what is completely unpredictable.

Hence, it would be incorrect to conclude that showing a relatively low level of UA, a potentially higher sense for risk taking can be assumed for India. Cultures with high Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) like Brazil or to a lesser extent Europe shun ambiguous situations and try to prevent them with more laws, rules, and regulations. Brazil has more law schools than all countries in the world together. There are 1, 240 highereducationcourses for the training of lawyers in the country while the rest of the planet comes to about 1, 100 universities (CNJ, 2010).

Cultures with low UAI like India believe that many problems can be solved without formal rules and that the latter should be established only in case of absolute necessity. Paradoxically in countries with weak UA where rules are less scared they are often better followed. Translating these findings to the needs of SaferBrain even when European experts can expect hindered possibilities for Road Safety measures enforcement due to low legacy level in India they can presuppose their better acceptance. On the contrary in Brazil it is assumed that every measure would first need a legal regulation.

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However, in countries with strong UA laws can fulfil a need for security even when they are not followed. Another finding done by Hofstede that is relevant for SaferBrain shows an interesting correlation between the strength of UA and the maximum speeds allowed in the country. “ The relationship is positive: stronger uncertainty avoidance means faster driving. Faster driving, other things being equal, means more fatal accidents, thus more risk. However, this is a familiar risk, which uncertainty-avoiding cultures do not mind running.

Their emotionality provides them with a sense of stress, of urgency, which in turn leads to wanting to drive faster. The higher speed limits in stronger uncertainty-avoidance countries show, in fact, a priority of saving time over saving lives” (Hofstede, 2010: 198). 1. 1. 2. Cultural Research for metropolitan areas in Brazil and India Brazil and India are countries of contrasts concerning climate, geography, income distribution, and educational level of its people. Because of the diversity we cannot consider that knowing the country’s culture we also know cultural dimensions of its metropolitan areas.

For this reason the Hofstede’s theory of Cultural Dimensions using the interviews based on his questionnaire was applied in Sao Paulo city and Delhi – the big metropolises which can be compared in their extension and live rhythm and in which the use of western experience can be assumed. Local partners (IMR for Brazil and A+S for India) have initiated interviews of about 200 people each in Sao Paulo and Delhi to have representative scores for these metropolitan areas. Of course, analogue researches can be done for every region or city where the transfer of safety measures is planned.

The detailed information to the results of these researches can be found in Annexes 6 and 7. Though, the difficulties with the questionnaire are worth to be shortly mentioned at this point. Although questionnaires in local languages (Portuguese and Hindi) were used, the interviewees in India could not always interpret question unambiguously. It was established especially dealing with lower and lower middle class that a certain level of education is affordable for the answers. Many easy understandable issues from the European point of view needed to be explained.

In contrary, the upper-class representatives preferred to use the English version of the questionnaire. The main outcomes of the research are the differences between Individualism (IDV) and Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) scores. For Brazil also the Masculinity (MAS) score features diverse scores. Power Distance Index (PDI) remains very similar in Brazil and India for both country average and metropolitan area (Figure 21). Figure 21: Comparison PDI incl. Sao Paulo and Delhi As mentioned before countries with high PDI tend to have well-built hierarchical relations within the society and need strong enforcement.

Concerning wearing of helmets to protect two-wheelers, Error! Reference source not found. should be studied. Following the law, the motorcycle driver is wearing a helmet. At the same time more vulnerable passengers (two children and the lady) are not protected. Hence, only the stronger member of the family, having more power, is protected. Figure 22: Using helmet on motorcycle in India IDV (Figure 23) shows very high divergence between the country average and metropolitan area in both Brazil and India.

Though, the development goes in both countries in opposite directions. While the inhabitants of Sao Paulo turn out to be extremely individualistic the population in Delhi tends to more collectivism. Figure 23: Comparison IDV incl. Sao Paulo and Delhi With reference to the assumption in Chapter 4. 3. 2 according the interrelation between the individualism score and the treating of disabled following examples can be used due to motivate this assumption. Delhi roads are equipped with convenient, wide footpaths.

Though, the level of most kerbs on Delhi roads is inconveniently high (Figure 24). This prompts pedestrians to walk along the roadside especially when they have physical problems in climbing high steps. Figure 24: High kerbs in India However, in modern projects like the Rapid Bus Corridor (RBC) in Delhi a segregated and safe corridor for pedestrians and non-motorized transport is provided. Also for the VRU with disabilities special facilities like dropped kerbs, low floor buses or platform-bus adjustment are provided.

In the City of Sao Paulo, where the individuality score is very high, dropped kerbs and tactile pavements are applied on most major junctions in the consolidated part of the road system (Figure 25). Figure 25: Tactile pavements in Sao Paulo Another example for extremely low IDV in Delhi is the unspoken rule to never cross the street alone. They always wait to gather a group of some persons and cross the street in a crowd feeling safer as a part of a group and providing counterweight to motorised traffic (Figure 26).

Figure 26: Crossing the street in Delhi Traffic rules require motorists to stop once a pedestrian steps on the zebra crossing. Practically this rule is not being followed, and crossing busy roads at zebra crossings is as dangerous

for pedestrians as elsewhere. Pedestrians cross roads either in larger groups or whenever opportunity occurs. Concerning Masculinity score the research shows that Sao Paulo has a very high MAS (Figure 27), even higher than the European average. Therefore a conclusion can be drawn that the society of Sao Paulo is more oriented on financial recognition, earning and challenges.

Possessing a big and expensive car means to be more powerful and respected. For this reason VRU have to subordinate whether crossing the street or waiting for a car blocking the footpath while garage or property. However, when a pedestrian shows his power by stepping to the road and focusing directly and self-confident on the driver he will be accepted and the car will let him cross the street. Figure 27: Comparison MAS incl. Sao Paulo and Delhi In Delhi even having an expensive do not automatically means to be more powerful.

These cars can be scratched and damaged the same way as a simple rickshaw. Even animals are seen as the most vulnerable road users and are equal to others. These facts are related to the very low IDV which means that this society is relationship-oriented and tries to solve conflicts by compromise. Similar to IDV the tendency of the score for UAI develops in the opposite direction between the country average and metropolitan area (Figure 28). In Brazil it is drastically decreasing for Sao Paulo, in India it is slightly increasing for Delhi.

It can be therefore concluded that in Sao Paulo new safety measures being to a certain degree always ambiguous would be easier accepted. On the contrary, in Delhi more enforcement and education measures would be needed to promote acceptance of new safety measures. Figure 28:

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Comparison UAI incl. Sao Paulo and Delhi To sum up the research has identified several crucial differences between the countries? scores and the scores for metropolitan areas. It is important to consider it when talking about transferability of road safety measures or working on pilot projects.