

# Cultural differences and similarities between colombia and china

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



As Egger Hefted (2001) explained, cultures comprised of power distance, Individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, pragmatism, and indulgence. If we use these components to analyze the two countries from the example, we find various similarities and differences that would greatly affect a business transaction between the two. Both Colombia and China share similarities in the areas of power distance, individualism, and masculinity.

Both countries scored high in power distance, or extent to which power is unequally distributed, and masculinity, the desire to excel at a skill versus liking the actual skill (Hefted, 2001). This means that in both isosceles individuals with power are far removed from their lesser powerful counterparts. It also means individuals from these countries are motivated by success and achievement as opposed to equal status.

China and Colombia also similarly scored low in individualism meaning that both cultures are collectivist or centered on members that form an interdependent network (Hefted, 2001). As other analysts have noted, "Chinese society [in particular] is collectivist in that individuals identify with an "in-group" consisting of family, clan, and friends. Within this, cooperation is the norm. Outside it, zero-sum competition is common" (Harris, 2014, Para. 5). Thus, it is paramount to foster a loyal relationship when conducting business in these countries. Avoidance, pragmatism, and indulgence. Chinese culture scored high in pragmatism, or the need to explain as much as possible, whereas Colombia scored high in uncertainty avoidance and indulgence, or the extent to which people indulge their impulses and desires

(Hefted, 2001). As some academics have noted, uncertainty is largely reduced in relationships which is why " Latin Americans place great value on establishing long-term, close relationships with interactions on a personal, as well as professional, level" (Wardrobe, 2005, p. 3).

However, in Chinese culture, indulgence and uncertainty avoidance scored low since individuals place less importance on knowing everything and monitor ambiguity with their use of an adaptable and entrepreneurial spirit. Understanding these differences, as well as similarities, helps us set up a successful business encounter between individuals from these two. If a Colombian and Chinese person were to conduct a business transaction, it would be important to understand the application of Hofstede's cultural dimensions to ensure a successful outcome.

First, the high collectivism and power distance in their respective societies would promote a good foundation for them to establish a relationship since both individuals would most likely have high standing and authority within their companies, and strive to develop a fruitful relationship. This would begin by ensuring a correct and respectful greeting between them, which would generally involve a bow from the Chinese businessperson and a warm and stern handshake from the Colombian businessperson (Aback, 2012).

Second, because of the discrepancy in the uncertainty avoidance category, the Colombian businessperson might need better clarification on the transaction and question the Chinese individual more thoroughly; which would promote trust if the Chinese individual views the transaction from the masculinity-

oriented category of achievement instead of the feminine category associated with caring and equality. As Donald Aback (2012) elaborated, in Asia " language that avoids directly challenging a person or making that individual look bad, or seem disrespected is common" (p. 19). This means that the

Chinese businessperson would most likely not hold this against his Colombian counterpart but rather tolerate it in the interest of developing trust and a longer- lasting relationship. Lastly, the Colombian may want to indulge more time in the relationship, which would work well, since Chinese culture is characterized by a strategy to " not trust until there is enough evidence of trustworthiness" (Harris, 2014, Para. 6). If both businessperson take the time to nurture their relationship and understand each other's cultural differences and similarities, they will set themselves up for a successful and fruitful business relationship.