

# What is digital communication?



Digital communication is an electronic transmission of information that has been encoded digitally for storage and processing data by computers. The internet, web sites, virtual meetings and emails are all part of digital communications. This report discusses the role of digital communication in cross-cultural issues such as religion, hierarchy and business ethics.

In this report, cross cultural issues and the access of digital communication is discussed. Digital communication is essential for every business. In this report I have compared Australian and Indian culture and role of digital communication in cross cultural issues of these two countries.

In today's world, communication plays an integral part to establish the business within the country or among other countries. Establishment of business depends on various aspects like religion, hierarchy and business ethics. Cost -benefit ethics are good for an organisation. Digital communications like internet, virtual meetings, email are beneficial for an organisation.

The Communication is a method of exchanging information with each other. In old times people used to communicate through phone, letters and visiting physically. Nowadays everyone is using technology to communicate locally or overseas. Digital communication plays a vital role in business. Use of Internet, websites, virtual meetings and email, videoconferencing and teleconferencing gives us more freedom to communicate anywhere in the world. But this freedom can create troubles sometimes (Robert, n. d).

Studies have shown that access to digital communication may or may not have any influence on cross cultural issues. This report has discussed the

Indian culture, the Australian culture and role of digital communication in cross-cultural issues of these countries.

## **2. 1 Indian Culture**

India has a rich and colourful culture. According to Grihault , 2003 India has given the world two greatest religions :- Hinduism and Buddhism. The Hinduism is dominant religion in India. There are other religions in India as well: – Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jain. Majority of Indians have strong belief in religion.

Indian society is based on hierarchy. Hierarchy is not only seen in families but also in businesses. Indian culture is male dominant. Although India is a political democracy, in everyday life there is little encouragement to notions of equal opportunity. In India all relationships involve hierarchies. Yousuf et al. 2007 conducted a survey in Kashmir (state of India), to evaluate the perceptions and practises of medical practitioners in matters relating to informed consent in certain hospitals. Results of the survey showed if consent was refused, medical practitioners would still proceed with the intervention without any justification for consent. Doctor’s opinion was considered the most important in clinical decision making. Results also showed that not all information was disclosed to female patients. This study highlights the male dominance, decision making process and hierarchy system in India. Here are some of the business ethics in India.

Indians prefer to do business with those they know better and build relationships upon mutual trust and respect.

Indians conduct meetings either in late mornings or early afternoon. Meeting can be cancelled in short notice or at last minute.

Indians are impressed with punctuality.

In India decision is only made by the authority.

Indian people who do business dress up in traditional garments.

Indians reserve titles; for example Professor, Doctor and Engineer and status is strong-minded by age, qualification, cast and profession. Indians also use titles such as “ sir” or “ Madam” instead of taking names.

In India business cards are exchanged after initial greetings.

## **2. 2 Australian Culture**

Australia is a multicultural society. A recent census showed that approximately 68% of Australian population were Christians, 1. 5% were Muslim and 2% Buddhists (Penney 2007). Religion is not taken very seriously by the Australian people. The number of people attending church in Australia is falling day by day.

Australia is hierarchical society in certain aspects; example Australian men earn 10% more than women. Though men and women are considered equal in Australian society, most of the upper level positions in corporate, academic and public sector are occupied by men. Australians favour equality than recognised hierarchy. Australians see hierarchy as a disruption to positive and productive social relations. In Australian workplaces there are bosses and sub-ordinates; bosses must earn the respect of their employees.

People at workplaces are called by their names rather than being greeted as “ sir” or “ madam”. Workplaces in Australia are free of language and behaviours that would degrade any individual. Here are some of the Australian business ethics:

Australians communicate in a straightforward manner and sometimes use very colourful language. They do not need long-standing relationship before doing business.

Punctuality is very important for Australians while doing business. They prefer to arrive a few minutes earlier than to keep someone waiting for you.

Appointments are important and easy to schedule.

Australians are generally relaxed people.

Australians use facts and figures in business presentations as there’s no place for feelings and emotions in Australia’s business atmosphere.

Australians do not need lengthy discussions to do business, negotiations often proceed quickly.

Australians do not like high pressure techniques in business deals. Top level management decisions are made after consulting others and hence this makes the decision making process slow.

People doing business are usually expected to dress up formally.

Australians do exchange their business cards after initial greetings, but not exchanging a business card is not considered insulting.

## **2.3 Role of digital communication in cross cultural issues of Australia and India**

In today's world the internet, websites, video conferencing and emails have become an important part of our lives. Internet is an important resource from where all sorts of information can be gathered. But use of internet varies from one country to the other.

The difference in use of the internet across various countries is called “digital divide”. Technology, economy, politics and culture contribute to this digital divide. Nath et al 2004 have studied the relationship between the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede and the Internet diffusion rate of nations. According to them cultures that avoid uncertainty and risks are resistant to the use of internet, and societies with high masculine culture tend to have lower internet diffusion rate. In such societies the culture does not favour internet use. This study showed that diffusion rate in India was <1% and in Australia was 40-50%.

Information on cross cultural differences of India and Australia is very important in doing business across these two countries. The Cultural value set given below shows the differences between Indian and Australian culture.

INDIA

AUSTRALIA

Individualism

Collectivism

Long term Orientation

Short Time Orientation

Single Group

Mixed Group

Event Oriented

Time Oriented

Internet is a useful resource of gaining such information. Kayan et al. 2006 have said that information technologies facilitate cross cultural collaboration but this may be restricted by different styles of IT use in different cultures. Access to digital communication is not only beneficial to large businesses but can also help small and medium entrepreneurs (SMEs) to grow and participate in global markets of developed as well as developing countries.

Patricia et al. 2007 conducted a study to investigate and evaluate the business environment in India, and identify factors that how small and medium sized businesses can participate in international marketplace. Several factors were identified in this study; one of major factors identified was that internationalization of SMEs in India can be achieved by increased utilization of information technology and better use of online resources.

Hornby et al. 2002 conducted a study to understand export barriers of Australia and UK's SMEs (small and medium entrepreneurs). This study also addressed the effect of E-commerce on SMEs, how internet can help to break down export barriers and focus on cultural differences depending on firm's

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export market. Results of this study showed that Australian businesses using internet, perceived lower export barriers. But SMEs in Australia did not give consideration to overcome cross cultural issues and need for foreign representation as they used ' market extension' approach for their websites.

Merryfield, 2003 conducted a study to understand the role of online technologies while teaching social studies and global education to students. Study was conducted on 92 American teachers and 22 Cultural consultants who interacted with students in graduate programs. Mode of interaction was online discussions. Results of the study showed that online technologies were the perfect tools for teaching social studies and global education to students due the availability of various resources on the internet.

### **3. 0 Conclusion**

The role of digital communication varies from one culture to the other. Above studies show that some businesses use technology to have better understanding of cross cultural issues whereas some use it simply as an essential part of business. On the basis of above literature it can be concluded that access to digital communication promotes cross cultural collaboration but it depends on the purpose of its use.

### **4. 0 Annotated references**

Armstrong, A & Francis, D. R, n. d, ' Personal Ethics in a Corporate World', ' Journal of Business Systems, Governance and Ethics', vol 3, No. 1, pp. 27-33 (Online Google).

This article has discussed about relationship between personal morality and ethical corporate behaviour. They also talked about intellectual competence

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(IQ) and emotional intelligence (EIQ), confounding issues such as the stability of moral intelligence.

Grihault, N 2003, Culture Smart India, Kuperard, Great Britain.

In this book Grihault has discussed about Indian land, people, values and attitudes, religion, communication and business briefing such as business attitudes, business culture, business communication, meeting and negotiations.

Hornby, G, Goulding, P & Poon, S 2002, ' Perceptions of Export Barriers and Cultural Issues: The SME E-commerce Experience', ' Journal of Electronic Commerce Research', vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 213-226 (Online Google Scholar).

This article is about small – and – medium – size enterprises (SMEs). This study discussed use of E-commerce in international market. This is a comparison of Australia and UK in regards of E-commerce. They highlight some of cultural issues during the process of marketing internationally across different cultures.

India a country study, viewed on 29th April, 2010.

<http://www.country-data.com/frd/cs/intoc.html>

This web site is providing information on India such as roots of Indian religion, language, ethnicity, society and culture, hierarchy, cast and class, telecommunication, foreign relations and business ethics in India.

ITIM international, viewed on 29th April, 2010.

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[http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede\\_australia.shtml](http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_australia.shtml)

This website provide information about cultural dimensions such as power distance index (PDI), individualism (IDV), masculinity (MAS), uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) and long-term orientation (LTO).

Kayan, S, Fussell, S. R & Setlock, D. L, 2006, ' Cultural differences in the use of instant messaging in Asia and North America' vol. 6, pp. 525-528 (online Google).

This article is all about different styles of Information Technology use in different cultures. They have been conducted on the use of Instant Messaging in North America and Asia. This study reflects the difference between Western individualistic, low-context cultures and Eastern collectivistic, high-context cultures. In this study they found multi-party chat, audio-video chat emotions were very famous in Asia than in North America.

Merryfield, M. 2003, ' Like a veil: Cross-cultural experiential learning online', Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education, vol. 3, pp. 146-171 (Online Google Scholar).

This article discussed about places for cross-cultural online interaction, substantive content, cross-cultural engagement, exploration of and risk-taking with sensitive topics, controversial issues and conflicting perspectives, issues of special interests'.

Nath, R & Murthy, N. R. V 2004, ' A Study of the Relationship Between Internet Diffusion and Culture', ' Relationship Internet Diffusion and Culture

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Journal of International Technology and Information Management’, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 123-132 (Online Google Scholar).

This article discussed about the adaptation and use of technology innovations. They also talked about “ digital divide”. This paper examines the relationship between the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede and the Internet adoption rate of nations.

Patric, R. T, Rajshekhar & Javalgi, G 2007, ‘ Internationalization of SMEs in India: Fostering Entrepreneurship by Leveraging Information Technology’, ‘ International Journal of Emerging Markets’, vol. 2, issue. 2, pp. 166-180 (Online Emerald).

This study is based on small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) in India. This study is to investigate and evaluate the business environment. How India is developing in international market? It is planned that the key method for development of entrepreneurship is through the utilization of technology.

Penney, B 2003, Culture Smart Australia, Kuperard, Great Britain.

This book is all about Australian people, values and attitudes, Australian English-speaking “ strine”, use of communication methods and business briefing such as the Australian way of business, women in management, work ethics, egalitarianism in the work place, business and socializing.

**The Web’s leading resource for International Business Etiquette and Manners, viewed on 29th April, 2010.**

<http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/india.htm>

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This website is a leading resource for International business etiquette and manners. This website is providing every countries business ethics such as Appearance, Behavior, Communications, and Resources and also you can get Geert Hofstede Analysis.

Tiffen, R & Gittins, R 2004, How Australia Compares, Ligare Pty Ltd, Australia.

This book is a handy reference that compares Australia with other countries such as Education, Inequality and social welfare, International relations, Telecommunications and computing, religion, values and attitudes.

West, A. B, Murphy, T. F, 2007, G'day Boss! Australian Culture and Workplace, Tribus Lingua, Australia.

This book is all about Australian culture. Such as heart of culture, characteristics, level of cultures, generalise vs. stereotyping, Australian values contrasts, beliefs and behaviours, equality vs. recognised hierarchy, informal vs. formal, connected vs. distant, work vs. leisure, individualism vs. collectivism and dealing with conflicts.

Yousuf R M, Fauzi A R M, How S H, Rasool A G, Rehana K 2007, ' Singapore Medical Journal', ' Awareness, knowledge and attitude towards informed consent among doctors in two different cultures in Asia: a cross-sectional comparative

Study in Malaysia and Kashmir, India', vol. 48, no. 3, pp. 559-565 (Online Google).

This is a Medical journal and in this study they discussed about some cultural issues. This study is about doctor's attitude and acknowledges the patient's autonomy. This is all about modern medical ethics across culture. They also talked about the cultural and religious views of the local population.