

Evaluation of culture background of germany, japan, and ireland essay sample

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Evaluation of culture background of Germany, Japan, and Ireland through Hofstede Cultural Dimension As professor Geert Hofstede put, " Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster." Therefore, understanding different cultures in different countries is a significant issue for multinational enterprises, especially for the inevitable trend of globalization. As our project aims at analyzing the international expansion of German, Japanese, and Irish enterprises, I would like to depict the culture background of these three countries through the method of Hofstede Culture Dimensions. First of all, I want to introduce the Hofstede Cultural Dimensions briefly. This theory classified the characteristics of different cultures into five aspects, which are so-called cultural dimensions. They are Power Distance (PD), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), and Long-Term Orientation (LTO). Hofstede analyzed large database of cultural statistics of various countries, and found clear patterns of similarity and difference in the five dimensions. His research is regarded as one of the most effective method to evaluate different culture backgrounds.

(geert-hostede. com, 2003)

What are those cultural dimensions stand for respectively?

Firstly, Power Distance (PD) is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. Countries of high level of power distance often have a centralized structure and the people are willingly to obey superiors. But for those of low power distance, the structure is more decentralized. Secondly, Individualism (IDV) versus its opposite, collectivism,

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that is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. People in highly individualistic countries are usually wealthier and have greater individual initiative.

Oppositely, collectivism means less support of protestant work ethic, less individual initiative. Then, Masculinity (MAS) also versus its opposite, femininity, refers to the distribution of roles between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society to which a range of solutions are found. As for Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), it deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity; it ultimately refers to man's search for Truth. In countries have high level of uncertainty avoidance, most people do not like changes and have high need for security. They also strongly believe in expertise. Lastly, Long-Term Orientation (LTO) associated with Short Term Orientation. If people are long-term oriented, they might hold the value of thrift and perseverance. On the opposite side, short-term oriented values include respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's 'face'. (geert-hostede. com, 2003)

Though the method of Hofstede Cultural Dimensions, we can get a deep understanding of German, Japanese, and Irish culture, especially how it influences the way they do business. Starting with Germany, the index of the five Hofstede dimensions is shown in the chart below. (geert-hostede. com, 2003)

According to the graph, the IDV, MAS, and UAI figures of Germany are around 70. On the other hand, the index of PDI is relatively low, which is about 40. Compared to Arab countries where the power distance is very high

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(80) and Austria where it very low (11), German is in the middle. (clearlycultural. com, 2011) It seems that German society is more individualistic and masculine. It also has a high level of uncertainty avoidance and the people are more short-term oriented. How do these dimension figures reflect in German people's real life? In other word, what are the special values that Germans hold? Germans are sometimes described as people who make things difficult, not only for them self, but for others also. German people usually give others the impression of being very mechanical and precise or specific. Process is a really strict concept for German people. They would examine every link or segment very carefully. Traditionally, Germans held a strong view towards authoritarianism, which is a form of social control characterized by strict obedience to the authority of a state or organization and is strongly hierarchical. (internationalbusiness. wikia, 2011)

People from U. S. might find that the German relationship of managers and common employees cold and distant, which is because that people prefer to socialize with peer group. Nowadays, an increasingly number of women are making their ways into more and more important position in many Germany companies. However the ratio of women in the business field is still fairly low compared with many other European countries. This might due to the situation that people at the senior position in German companies are usually engineers, but there is a lack of women studying this kind of majors. Additionally, Germans have low tolerance of uncertainty. They do not like surprises. Sudden changes in business transactions, even if they may improve the outcome, are unwelcome.

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([www. cyborlink. com/besite/germany. htm](http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/germany.htm), 2011) They prefer to follow the same format and obey the rules strictly. This might be regarded as being excessively inflexible. However, it is also the reason why Germans can make products with extremely high quality.

([geert-hostede. com](http://geert-hostede.com), 2003)

As for Japan, some of the culture dimension figures are quite similar to Germany, but others are different. The PDI and IDV of Japan were reasonably low, ranging from 60 to 50, but the MAS, UAI, and LTO data was really high. LTO index was over 80, and MAS and UAI almost reached 90. Japan and Germany both are masculine societies with low tolerance to changes, except Japan's power distance level is slightly higher than Germany. Unlike Germany, Japan has a more collective society and Japanese people are often long-term oriented. Japanese society is rather conservative and men are at dominant position generally. Many women in Japan stay at home and being a full-time house wife after they get married. The Japanese are quite proud and united race. National identity and traditions are of significant importance for them. Just like in Germany, Japan is also a nation with high level of uncertainty avoidance. Japanese people prefer to do things follow the existing pattern.

For example, promotion in Japanese companies is often judged by experience rather than performance. In other words, the longer that you stay in an organization the more likely you would be promoted. With quite power distance in Japan society, Japanese companies often have a rather centralized managerial structure. Normally, important decisions need to be

approved by the top manager. Apart from that, in the Japanese are quite thrifty people. Because of the fact that Japan is a small island with the population over 127 million, Japanese are told to be aware of the scarcity of resources since they are young. Many Japanese enterprises regard thrift as their core competency. Moreover, I would like to emphasize the word 'face'. As you may know, face is crucial in some nations, and Japan is one of them. First of all, what exactly is 'face'? Face is the sign of having high social status, and it also represents self-dignity. Saving face is crucial in Japanese society. The Japanese believe that turning down someone's request causes embarrassment and loss of face to the other person. If the request cannot be agreed to, they will say, 'it's inconvenient' or 'it's under consideration'. (www. myjapanphone. com, 2011) Japanese people would try their best not to something that might make themselves or others lose face.

(geert-hostede. com, 2003)

When it comes to Ireland, the data of power distance and uncertainty avoidance was relatively low. The IDV and MAS index was slightly lower than Germany, which was just over 60. The figure of LTO was not shown on the graph, but from my point of view, Irish people are more likely to be short-term oriented. Irish people are quite friendly and easygoing, and family is really important for them. They are naturally courteous, quick-witted and will go out of their way to welcome visitors to their country. (www. ediplomat. com, 2011) The Irish place great value on individual. Even if they work very hard, people in Ireland generally prefer the kind of lifestyle which is less stressful, because they need time for family and friends, some drinks in

pubs, a cup of coffee, or just a small chat with each other. The Irish way of doing business is less formal compared with many other European countries.

Business meetings can take place in the office, restaurant, or even the pub. Professional titles are usually not used in Irish business culture, since that might be seen as arrogant. This is very different from cultures like Japan, which has a large power distance. Since the Irish are rather casual people, they normally have a relaxed sense of time and might be a little late for business meetings. What's more, Irish people tend to be creative and calm in a crisis. They prefer to improvise rather than follow a rigid plan. However, don't be misled by the easy going and amiable attitudes of the Irish. In negotiations, the Irish are astute and tenacious. ([www. ediplomat. com](http://www.ediplomat.com), 2011)

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