

A Cross-Cultural Comparison by Individualism/Collectivism among Brazil, Russia, India and China

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Abstract

By 2039, the economics of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) will overtake and be wealthier than most of the current major economic countries, such as the G6, and the combined economics of the BRIC will eclipse the current richest countries and play a major role in the global economy. Despite the enthusiasm for increased global interaction and economic exchange, many people have found that cultural differences have hindered their ability to efficiently conduct business due to their lack of understanding of the cultural differences.

This research explores the comparison of cultural orientation. The individualistic-collectivist characteristic was a dependent variable, and the four distinct geographic regions were independent variables. The objectives provide a more comprehensive understanding of the differences and similarities of culture among Brazil, Russia, India and China. The SPSS 13.0 was utilized for the data analysis of the collected surveys for measuring the research hypothesis. The findings were a statistically significant difference between the individualist/collectivist attitudes among the BRIC.

Keywords: BRIC, Cross Culture, Individualism, Collectivism

1. Introduction and background

By 2039, the economics of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) will overtake and be wealthier than most of the current major economic countries, such as the G6 (Goldman Sachs, 2003), and the combined economics of the BRIC will eclipse the current richest countries and play a major economic role in the world (Braun, 2009; MacDonald, 2009).

The BRIC was first coined and prominently called by Jim O'Neill, one of global economists at Goldman Sachs, in 2001 for four fast-growing developing countries. The BRIC encompass over 25% of the world's land coverage and 40% of the world's population. Wu and Lin (2008) indicated that the BRIC has three common characteristics including abundant natural resources, young population and extensive land areas that will affect profoundly on the global economy. Goldman Sachs (2003) predicts that China and India will be the dominant global suppliers of manufactured goods and services while Brazil and Russia will also become similarly dominant as suppliers of raw materials respectively, and cooperation is hypothesized to be a logical next step among the BRIC because Brazil and Russia will become the logical commodity suppliers to India and China.

World Bank (2009) indicated that the GDP of the BRIC in 2008 amounts to \$8.3 trillion, of which China's GDP totals to 46.5 percent or \$3.86 trillion, and that of Russia, Brazil and India for 19.4 percent or \$1.61 trillion, 19.4 percent or \$1.61 trillion and 14.7 percent or \$1.22 trillion, respectively. The four countries rise is due to their actual

economic growth rate in 2008, which was much higher than other countries, and the GDP compared with 2007, China jumped from 4th to 3rd, while Brazil from 10th to 8th, Russia rose 11th to 9th, and India remained in 12th place (World Bank, 2009).

According to Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA), that country's major national trading partners include the China, India, Russia and Brazil. From January to August 2009, Taiwan traded with the China \$46,957 million worth of goods and services (representing about 20.41 percent, ranking the China as Taiwan's first largest trading partner); traded with India total U.S. \$2,545 million (representing about 1.10 percent, and ranking India as the 17th largest trading partner); traded with Russia total U.S. \$1,712 million (representing about 0.74 percent, and ranking Russia as the 22nd largest trading partner); and traded with Brazil total U.S. \$1,646 million (representing about 0.71 percent, and ranking Brazil as the 24th largest trading partner).

Goldman Sachs (2003) indicated that the BRIC makes it relatively easy for their aggregate wealth, and this phenomenon will affect world markets that multinational corporations will attempt to take advantage of the enormous potential markets in the BRIC by producing. Globalization and economic openness have contributed to increased international engagement of countries in business interaction in the 21st century. Both foreign investment and international trade are growing substantially, causing increasing interdependence of national economies as well as furthering the globalization of companies.

Presently, BRIC economy has an enormous influence in the world; therefore, it is imperative to understand the various cultural issues that may influence behaviors. Different countries and different regions have different cultures, so there is a need to understand the impact of cultures on international communications. The competing evaluations of the regions also highlight the role of ethnic and cultural influences in the development of business climates.

The purpose of the study is to compare the cultural differences and similarities of Brazil, Russia, India and China. An understanding of these different evolutions will help individuals adjust their strategies when conducting business in these areas. The study is imperative in that the BRIC and the international community need to make genuine strides in learning about each others. Within this increasing global economic interdependence, the topic has been identified as an area requiring further inquiry.

2. Review of the Literature

Brazil was a former colony of Portugal from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Jain (2006) indicated that Brazilian is quite capable of doing business employing the North American, Northwestern and Central European process of business negotiation. As a former colony of British in the 18th century, Indian government, financial and legal systems have developed and closely linked to the British (Jain, 2006). Since the Russian Revolution in 1917, Russian was a country of Socialism and Communism. Jain (2006) announced that the country, Russia, presently in a transition to a free market economy and a democratic form of government, and the structures of contractual obligations and accepted business processes are being created. After the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, The Marxist-Leninist doctrine spread among Mainland China's working class, which led to the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921 ("Party to", 2001). In recent history, China has been separated politically and economically, which has had a great influence on the development of the business climate of each area. Presently, China and Japan share many concepts of culture, philosophy and religion that are distinctly different from western countries (Jain, 2006). Although different culture influences Brazil, Russia, India and China respectively, each has also developed unique culture and practices relating to international business and negotiating process.

Culture is commonly defined as "a set of shared values and beliefs that characterize national, ethnic, moral and other group behavior" (Faure and Sjustedt 1993; Craig and Douglas 2006; Adapa 2008). Culture also refers to individual cultures revealed through the food, songs, and stories that are exchanged with people outside of that region (Parra 2001). One further definition of culture is a pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore to be taught to new members as the appropriate ways to perceive, think, and feel with relation to those problems (Schein 1997). Simintiras and Thomas (1998) defined culture as "accepted values and norms that influence the way in which people think, feel, and behave." Barbash and Taylor (1997) indicated that culture includes religion, gender, language, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Since sub-cultures, cultures and super-cultures merge and evolve, while being less bounded than before; the idea of culture is more porous and varied than before (Barbash and Taylor 1997). Lee and Trim (2008) indicated that a shared organizational culture can help with the management of an international partnership arrangement, and senior managers will need to possess knowledge of the national cultural value traits of the people concerned.

Culture is defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions of a society according to national, organizational, regional, ethical, religious, linguistic, and social characteristics (Chen and Staroata, 1998). Van (2009) defined

culture is as a group-level phenomenon in which beliefs, values, and beliefs, all of which impact business processes and decision-making. Culture affects the strategies that negotiators develop as well as the tactics employment (Salacuse, 1995). Each negotiator's individual culture determines his or her epistemology, values, norms and behaviors (Simintiras and Thomas 1998; Hung 1998; Woo and Pru'homme 1999; Chang 2003). D'Andrade (1984) presents a slightly more comprehensive interpretation of culture:

Learned systems of meaning, communicated by means of natural language and other symbol systems...capable of creating cultural entities and particular senses of reality. Through these systems of meaning, groups of people adapt to their environment and structure interpersonal activities.... Cultural systems can be defined as a very large diverse pool of knowledge, or shared clusters of norms, or subjectively shared, symbolically created realities. (p. 116)

Barbash and Taylor (1997) indicated that culture includes religion, gender, language, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Since sub-cultures, cultures and super-cultures merge and evolve, while being less bounded than before, the idea of culture is more porous and varied than before (Barbash & Taylor, 1997). In order to understand different cultures, Chu (1974) provided six suggestions to assist researchers investigating other cultures:

(a) beware of stereotyped views of foreign people, (b) see the common humanity of people amidst cultural diversities in the world, (c) recognize a different scale of value in a non-Western society, (d) develop human empathy and active concern for other people, (e) discern the inter-relationship between language and culture, and (f) study non-Western cultures for their intrinsic worth and thus see the richness. (p. 51)

Different cultures can generate distinct negotiation styles and perception (Van, 2009; Gulbro and Herbig, 1994). Culture may influence how negotiators conceive and function of negotiation (Guo, Lin and Wang, 2008). Differences in negotiating styles originate from the fact that every society places different degrees of importance on "relationship development, negotiating strategies, decision making methods, spatial and temporal orientations, contracting practices, and illicit behaviors such as bribery" (Acuff 1997: 19). These different styles in negotiation are the result of differences in communication, protocols, persuasion strategies, and personal characteristics, including accommodation, determination, flexibility, and adaptation (Hung 1998).

Cross-cultural negotiations are more complex than mono-cultural due to cultural factors, environments, languages, ideologies, and customs (Woo, 1999; Mintu-Wimsatt and Gassenheimer 2000; Hoffmann 2001). Because many negotiators may lack understanding of these cross cultural differences, they are often unsuccessful at reaching an agreement. Cultural aspects can be more of an obstacle than economic or legal factors (Gulbro and Herbig 1995). A successful cross-cultural negotiation requires the skill of selecting the appropriate communication strategy and tactics. Successful negotiation requires not only acquiring technical communicative abilities, but also an understanding of the context of the negotiation by both parties (Korobkin 2000).

Numerous studies have shown that culture is one of most important factors in cross-country negotiations (Salacuse 2005). An understanding of the differences and similarities of each culture by the negotiators is beneficial in facilitating communication and success in negotiation (Gannon 2001). When attempting cross-culture negotiations, the representatives need to be aware of and familiar with the different behaviors of representatives from other countries (Gulbro and Herbig 1999). During these negotiations, both parties must often change their tactics to meet the other party's style. Gulbro and Herbig (1995: 3) also indicated "when negotiating internationally, this translates into anticipating culturally related ideas that are most likely to be understood by a person of a given culture".

With the goal of helping individuals distinguish the various cultural differences of countries, Hofstede (1980) introduced his seminal theory of four cultural dimensions based on his earlier qualitative, phenomenological studies. This theory identifies four major cultural differences: power, uncertainty/avoidance, collectivism characteristics, and masculinity/femininity (Hofstede 1980 and 1994). Hofstede's major proposition is that cultural differences impact business conduct, decision making and communication. Therefore, increased cultural awareness is important for international managers (Chang 2003). Hofstede and Bond (1988) added a fifth dimension to the cultural dimension model, which they identified as "Confucian dynamism," to distinguish between Chinese and Western cultural values. The five cultural dimensions were defined by Barry (2001: 35) as:

Power difference is the perceived degree of inequality among people. Uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain situations and avoids these situations by providing stable systems with formal rules. collectivism characteristics are a social fabric in which each individual takes care of himself or herself in contrast with collectivism in which groups take care of the individual. Masculinity-Femininity reflects on whether the dominant values that are associated with the collection of money and things (masculinity) as contrasted with values associated with caring for others and quality of life (femininity). Confucian dynamism reflects whether the members of a society are short-term or long-term oriented in outlook.

3. Research Methodology

The study employed a non-experimental, quantitative research design to analyze cultural differences. The research design was used causal-comparative (exploratory) and correlational (explanatory), and was intended to examine the cultural differences in the distinct geographic regions of Brazil, Russia, India and China. The individualistic-collectivist characteristic was a dependent variable, and the four distinct geographic regions were independent variables. The objectives will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the differences and similarities of culture in Brazil, Russia, India and China.

Since the 1990s, the use of the quantitative method has become more and more common (Giovannini, MacDiarmid, Calistri, & Conte, 2004). Below are several advantages that quantitative methodology offered this study: (a) A quantitative approach has the advantage of being able to compare and contrast between cultures through different organizations (Cabrera, & Bonache, 1999); (b) The quantitative approach takes studies from longitudinal research then applied them to cross-sectional research, and defined relationships between dependent and independent variables within the population (Richards, 2001); (c) This method has the ability to predict, and produce clearer, more conclusive results for the causal observer (Labaree, 2003); (d) The quantitative method has an advantage when studies are done over a large population (Sameer, Jasmine, & Ron, 1996). The results provide a way to generalize for the survey population (Richards, 2001; Chapman, Coll, & Meech, 1999).

The primary purpose of the study is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the differences and similarities culture in Brazil, Russia, India and China. Therefore, the target population was the people who are presently working in public companies in Brazil, Russia, India and China. For this study, the accessible population was chosen from public companies listed under the Rio de Janeiro Stock Exchange and Sao Paulo Stock Exchange in Brazil, Russian Trading System Stock exchange (RTS Exchange), National Stock Exchange of India and Bombay Stock Exchange in India and Shenzhen Stock Exchange (SSE) and Shanghai Stock Exchange in China. Any companies listed on these markets had the potential to be included in this study. The research hypothesis in the study is "There is a significant difference of individualism/collectivism among CEOs, sale and purchasing managers from public companies in Brazil, Russia, India and China".

To ensure the instrument's reliability, the questionnaire was translated by the Asian Translation Link Company into Portuguese, Russian, Hindi and simplified Chinese then certified by the Translation & Attestation Association. Five versions of the survey were produced--the Portuguese version, Russian version, Hindi version, simplified Chinese version, and the English version were posted on the research website. When responding, participants selected the version that they prefer to use.

This study employed stratified random sampling, a probability-sampling plan, to select a representative research sample. In the research, data was collected using an online survey technique. Each company's CEOs and sales and purchase managers were randomly selected from listed companies of stock markets in Brazil, Russia, India and China. All information, such as the names of CEOs and sales and purchase managers, and e-mail addresses of listed companies were obtained through the website of the Rio de Janeiro Stock Exchange and Sao Paulo Stock Exchange in Brazil, Russian Trading System Stock exchange (RTS Exchange), National Stock Exchange of India and Bombay Stock Exchange in India and Shenzhen Stock Exchange (SSE) and Shanghai Stock Exchange in China. The survey was accessible on the Internet without direct contact with the researcher.

The CEOs and sales and purchase managers of the sample population were invited to participate via an e-mail that explained the research and included a link to the survey website. The questionnaire was posted on the website, "www.my3q.com" in English and traditional Chinese versions. The researcher asked respondents to return the surveys within 30 days by sending an e-mail to "www.my3q.com" website. Upon agreeing to participate in the study, the participants received a password provided by my3q.com to prevent unauthorized people from filling out the questionnaire. Participants were asked not to re-submit the questionnaire. For higher returning rate of online survey, therefore, a snowball sampling method was also used to recruit eligible participants from a diversity of community sites to ensure a large enough number of online survey responses were obtained. In this procedure, an invitation e-mail sent to CEOs and sales and purchase managers of public companies with the request that the e-mail be passed along to additional eligible participants (e.g., business partners, and colleagues).

The Statistics Package of Social Science (SPSS) for Windows version 13.0 was utilized for the data analysis of the collected surveys. Frequency distributions were used to illustrate socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, education and regions of birth of participants. For Research hypothesis, an one-way ANOVA was conducted to investigate individualism/collectivism degree in Brazil, Russia, India and China.

4. Data Analysis and Results

In this study, 2,400 invitations were e-mailed to public companies' CEOs and sales and purchase managers in Brazil, Russia, India and China by a stratified probability sampling plan. Overall, this method for determining a sample

population is more accurate than purely random sampling, further it allows the researcher to select a sample that accurately reflects the diverse sectors and characteristic patterns in the desired population (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). This research method is useful in that it allows a small but carefully selected data pool to provide insight into the more general trends of a larger population. The principal characteristic of probability sampling is that every member or individual has an equal probability of being selected from the population as the sample (Ary et al., 1996). This is also the reason why the researcher used a probability-sampling plan in this study that allowed, through use of inferential statistics, the researcher to evaluate the extent to which the findings were likely to be different from what they would have been as a result of investigating the whole population (Ary et al., 1996).

A hyper-link to the survey web site was provided on each invitation e-mail. Participants who chose to take part in the study were directed to the survey. All questionnaires were coded for statistical analysis with the SPSS computer software program. Data collection lasted for one month, and 569 questionnaires were returned. However, 16 questionnaires were incomplete or invalid. There were 140 usable questionnaires from Brazil, 147 usable questionnaires from Russia, 136 usable questionnaires from India and 130 from China as shown in Table 2.

Cronbach's coefficient α was used to analyze variables that are composed of several scale items. In this study, the internal consistency reliability was measured by using Cronbach's coefficient α according to the mean or average correlation of each item with every other item. The questionnaire was developed in 2005 by Tu, and revised in 2009. The Cronbach's α value for individualistic-collectivist characteristic was 0.81, and there are 5 questions for the part. For higher Cronbach's coefficient α , the value was re-conducted for the internal consistency reliability before doing the research. The Cronbach's α value was 0.92, and become 3 questions.

Among the 553 respondents, 326 (59.0%) were male and 227 (41.0%) were female. In this study, 51 respondents (9.2%) held a High School Diploma or equivalent; 40 respondents (7.2%) held a Associate's Degree; 274 respondents (49.5%) were college or university graduates; and 188 respondents (34.0%) had a graduate degree. In this study, 177 (32.0%) earned an annual income of less than US \$35,000. There were 155 (28.0%) who earned from US \$35,001 to \$50,000; 164 (29.7%) who earned from US \$50,001 to \$65,000; and 57 (10.3%) who earned more than US \$65,000. In terms of religion, 327 respondents (59.1%) were Buddhist; 140 (25.3%) were Christian; 27 (4.9%) were Muslim; and 59 (10.7%) were others. There were 117 (21.2%) respondents under 35 years old; 182 (32.9%) between 35 and 45 years old; 155 (28.0%) from 46 to 55 years old; and 99 (17.9%) who were older than 55. The frequency distribution of respondents is shown in Table 2.

An ANOVA was conducted to investigate individualism/collectivism degree in Brazil, Russia, India and China. A statistically significant difference was found in Individualism/Collectivism among four regions, $F(3, 549) = 29.770$, $p = .000$ as shown in Table 3. As shown in Table 4, a multiple comparisons of Post Hoc Tests showed that there was a significant difference between Brazil and India, and the mean difference was $-.382$, and there was a significant difference between Brazil and China, and the mean difference was $.422$. There was a significant difference between Russia and India, and the mean difference was $-.492$, and there was a significant difference between Russia and China, and the mean difference was $.312$. More over, there was a significant difference between India and China, and the mean difference was $.804$.

5. Discussion

There was a statistically significant difference between the individualist/collectivist attitude among Brazil, Russia, India and China. The descriptive statistics of socio-demographic factors in this research were consistent with the latest population statistics by public companies. Hence, this study can properly represent all public companies in Brazil, Russia, India and China.

The results showed that there was a significant difference among Brazil, Russia, India and China in individualism/collectivism attitude. It indicates that India has highest individualism attitude compared to Brazil, Russia and China. China has highest collectivism attitude compared to Brazil, Russia and India. Brazil has higher individualism attitude compared to China. Those results of the study were consistent with the findings of the prior empirical study by Hofstede (1980). From the Table 4, it also announces Russia has higher individualism attitude compared to China, and both Brazil and Russia have no significant differences in individualism/collectivism attitude.

Hofstede found that people from individualistic cultures tend to be more concerned with their own rights, benefits, and outcomes (Osman-Gani & Tan, 2002). From the point of view of communication, Gulbro & Herbig (1999) stated that high levels of individualism result in more time spent conducting direct communication. Hofstede found that people from collectivist cultures are typically more concerned with the group and social welfare (Osman-Gani & Tan, 2002). From the viewpoint of communication, Gulbro & Herbig (1999) indicated that high levels of collectivism will result in more time spent on indirect activities unrelated to the communication.

In the research, the participation was limited to the public companies, and selected only from public companies of CEOs, sale and purchasing managers. This study was constrained by person-power, financial resources and time; hence, the study adopted only a quantitative research method and employed a questionnaire to conduct the survey. However, the questionnaire is a self-reporting instrument. The researcher can not control the authenticity of the responses of the subjects. Hence, this study assumes that all of the respondents replied truthfully. This study was based on Hofstede's model of individualism-collectivism. Although Hofstede's model had been widely utilized to examine cultural issue, only one factor was examined in this study. Some important factors were not identified in this study, such as religion, power, uncertainty/avoidance, and masculinity/femininity.

Future studies could consider comparing different cultures to explore the differences and similarities of cultures in different countries, and are applied to other field, such as business negotiation. The future studies may employ a qualitative method to make up the insufficiencies in the quantitative method, and extend the study to other business groups to extensively investigate the influence of cultures.

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Table 1. The number of respondent questionnaires in Brazil, Russia, India and China

	Brazil	Russia	India	China
Invitation E-mails sent	600	600	600	600
Respondent Questionnaires	143	151	140	135
Usable Questionnaires	140	147	136	130

Table 2. Manager Profile: Frequency Distribution of Socio-Demographic Characteristics

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	326	59.0
	Female	227	41.0
Last Degree Completed	High School Diploma or Equivalent	51	9.2
	Associate's Degree	40	7.2
	Bachelor Degree	274	49.5
	Graduate Degree	188	34.0
Annual Income	Under US \$35,000	177	32.0
	US \$35,001-50,000	155	28.0
	US \$50,001-65,000	164	29.7
	More than US \$65,000	57	10.3
Religion	Buddhist	327	59.1
	Christian	140	25.3
	Muslim	27	4.9
	Other	59	10.7
Age	Under 35	117	21.2
	35-45	182	32.9
	46-55	155	28.0
	Above 55	99	17.9

Table 3. One-Way Analysis of Variance Summary Comparing Two Regions of Individualism/ Collectivism

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	44.123	3	14.708	29.770	.000
Within Groups	271.236	549	.494		
Total	315.360	552			

Table 4. Multiple Comparisons of Post Hoc Tests of Three Regions on Individualism/Collectivism

Dependent Variable	Region (I)	Region (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Individualism /Collectivism	Brazil	Russia	.109	.08301	.629
		India	-.382(*)	.08463	.000
		China	.422(*)	.08561	.000
	Russia	Brazil	-.109	.08301	.629
		India	-.492(*)	.08363	.000
		China	.312(*)	.08462	.004
	India	Brazil	.382(*)	.08463	.000
		Russia	.492(*)	.08363	.000
		China	.804(*)	.08622	.000
	China	Brazil	-.422(*)	.08561	.000
		Russia	-.312(*)	.08462	.004
		India	-.804(*)	.08622	.000

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.