

THAI CULTURAL STANDARDS FROM A PORTUGUESE PERSPECTIVE

Rita Figueira do Sacramento

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Supervisor:

Prof. António Robalo, Full Professor, ISCTE Business School, Department of Marketing,
Operation and Management

Co-supervisor:

Prof. Astrid Kainzbauer, Assistant Professor, CMMU Mahidol University, Department of
Management

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Abstract

Hoje em dia, há cada vez mais indivíduos que abraçam oportunidades de trabalho no estrangeiro, o que significa que, a quantidade de interações entre pessoas de diferentes origens culturais continua a aumentar. A fim de alcançar o sucesso nestas relações, é crucial compreender os padrões culturais envolvidos para evitar erros de interpretação desnecessários. Como os povos português e tailandês não são exceções, o objetivo deste estudo é identificar as diferenças culturais que afetam o trabalho de portugueses na Tailândia. Para atingir esse fim, a metodologia utilizada, foi o Método dos Standards Culturais. Esta ferramenta baseia-se na pesquisa de informação qualitativa recolhida através de entrevistas narrativas com trabalhadores emigrados. Ao analisar situações descritas, pelos entrevistados, originadas por diferenças culturais, a identificação dos padrões culturais é feita a um nível subtil e permite a comparação com os resultados pré existentes. As conclusões deste estudo deverão ajudar a uma maior compreensão da cultura e antecipação dos comportamentos tailandeses num contexto de negócios, a fim de atingir uma colaboração mais eficaz entre as duas populações. Os padrões culturais obtidos também são essenciais na preparação de programas de formação para gestores e funcionários internacionais.

Key Words: Portugal, Thailand, Cultural Standards, Cross Cultural

JEL classification:

F22 International Migration

F23 Multinational Firms • International Business

Thai Cultural Standards from a Portuguese Perspective

Abstract

As the globalization phenomenon transforms the meaning of culture, it simultaneously brings up the remaining differences. Nowadays, there are more and more individuals embracing job opportunities abroad. This means that, the amount of interactions among people from different cultural backgrounds continues to increase. However, in order to achieve success in these relationships, it is crucial to understand the cultural standards involved to avoid unnecessary misinterpretations. As Portuguese and Thai people are not an exception, the aim of this study is to identify the cultural differences that affect Portuguese people working in Thailand. To achieve this goal the method used was the Cultural Standards Method. This tool is based on qualitative research gathering information from narrative interviews with expatriate workers. By analyzing reported critical incidents, based on the same cultural differences the identification of the cultural standard is done on a subtle level and allows the comparison with the preexisting findings. The conclusions of this study should help to anticipate and better understand the Portuguese and Thai behaviors in a business context in order to achieve a more effective collaboration among the two populations. The obtained cultural standards are key in the preparation of training programs for international managers and staff.

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Executive Summary

Esta tese de Mestrado pretende definir um conjunto de *standards* culturais tailandeses sob o ponto de vista português como o intuito de fornecer uma caracterização da comunidade empresarial tailandesa para gestores portugueses que trabalham ou virão a trabalhar naquele país.

Para tal, os conceitos fundamentais ao estudo são descritos e explicados inicialmente estando divididos em três seções principais no capítulo de revisão da literatura. Cultura e pesquisa intercultural em gestão são noções exploradas para fornecer uma base sólida à investigação, devido à relevância da correta compreensão destes conceitos para a adequada recolha e interpretação dos resultados.

A análise da literatura existente sobre diferenças culturais sob forma de dimensões, consiste na segunda parte da exposição inicial. Nesta seção, os principais autores da pesquisa intercultural são referidos sendo que as seis dimensões de Geert Hofstede pretendem estabelecer a base para posterior comparação com os padrões culturais obtidos, devido à relevância da categorização das dimensões deste autor: Distância ao Poder, Individualismo, Masculinidade, Atitude face à Incerteza, Orientação a Longo Prazo e Indulgência.

A investigação realizada por Trompenaars é explicada com referência às dimensões identificadas pelo autor, seguido da descrição das categorias reconhecidas por Gersteland.

A terceira parte deste relatório comporta as definições de *standards* culturais e do método de *standards* culturais desenvolvido por Thomas. Esta metodologia é considerada um processo inovador de pesquisa no campo dos estudos interculturais com o intuito de identificar as diferenças relativas existentes entre duas culturas particulares.

Em paralelo com as abordagens convencionais, utilizadas por autores como Hofstede, este método permite a comparação entre duas culturas semelhantes e a categorização correspondente de *standards* culturais específicos e detalhados que não possam ser objecto de reconhecimento com o uso exclusivo de metodologias de pesquisa desenvolvidas anteriormente.

Através do método desenvolvido por Thomas, tem sido provado o alcance de resultados extremamente valiosos para o estudo de uma cultura estrangeira fornecendo, desse modo, uma base para a preparação de guias de formação destinados a futuros trabalhadores emigrados.

Sendo que os resultados obtidos são válidos apenas e exclusivamente na comparação das culturas objeto de estudo que são, neste caso, tailandesa e portuguesa.

O método dos *standards* culturais baseia-se na condução de entrevistas narrativas a cidadãos portugueses atualmente residentes na Tailândia que desempenhem funções em empresas ou organizações estrangeiras. Essas entrevistas são caracterizadas por um método de pesquisa qualitativa na qual o entrevistador assume um papel passivo com o intuito de diminuir a sua influência na recolha de informações pertinentes sobre incidentes críticos vividos pelos entrevistados quando em contato com a cultura tailandesa. Pela recolha de incidentes semelhantes, o autor extrai padrões comportamentais que darão origem à identificação de *standards* culturais relativos.

A selecção dos entrevistados neste estudo é composto por quinze indivíduos oriundos de diferentes regiões de Portugal, idades e profissões com o mesmo número de elementos de ambos os géneros.

O resultado desta tese consiste na identificação de cinco *standards* culturais relativos. Respeito pela Hierarquia, sendo o primeiro *standard* identificado, resulta da experiência descrita por todos os entrevistados e representa a atenção à senioridade e às regras não escritas da estrutura da sociedade tailandesa no que toca a formas de tratamento diferenciado dadas a elementos com distintos *status* sociais. No capítulo seguinte, são esclarecidos os conceitos Salvar a Cara e a tendência para Evitar Conflitos profundamente enraizados na Tailândia percebidos como necessários para manter o funcionamento adequado das relações sociais entre pares.

O terceiro padrão identificado refere-se à Religião e Vida Espiritual e ao seu impacto contínuo nas atividades diárias da sociedade tailandesa.

A Separação entre Vida Profissional e Pessoal, bem como a Orientação para os Relacionamentos são *standards* identificados e ilustram a Tailândia como uma sociedade coletivista, devido à importância dada às relações sociais.

A identificação dos padrões culturais mencionados expõe claramente as diferenças culturais entre os dois países alvo de estudo e permite numa fase final a comparação dos resultados com os valores obtidos na pesquisa de Geert Hofstede.

A intenção do projeto prende-se com a simplificação e maximização do potencial nas interações entre ambas as culturas, permitindo a diminuição do choque cultural experimentado por expatriados portugueses que trabalham na Tailândia. O conhecimento e consciência das diferenças culturais é necessário para melhorar a qualidade da comunicação e relacionamento entre os membros de ambas as culturas.

1. Introduction

The increase of internationalization of business has in today's society a major impact. Product of globalization, more and more people experience cross cultural contact having the need to deal with individuals from different cultural backgrounds or even having to work in foreign countries.

These changes in the business environment result from the need to internationalize companies and organizations forcing management to become international management. Managers no longer need to be exclusively focused on being professional and highly qualified but also "flexible, deployable, multiskilled, multidisciplinary, and cross-cultural" (Alkhafaji, 1995: 57).

Customers are demanding intercultural sensitivity and corporations continue to expand overseas either through acquisitions, setting up foreign subsidiaries or forming alliances with geographically disperse companies, making cultural awareness a success factor for long-term competitiveness in the global market place.

According to Ferraro, "one of the most common factors contributing to failure in international business assignments is the erroneous assumption that if a person is successful in the home environment, he or she will be equally successful in applying technical expertise in a different culture" (Ferraro, 1998: 7). Supporting this statement, "failures in the overseas business setting most frequently result from an inability to understand and adapt to foreign ways of thinking and acting rather than from technical or professional incompetence" (Tung, 1988; Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall, 1992, cited in Ferraro, 1998: 7).

The inability to understand and adapt to foreign cultures impacts the life of the expatriate individual not only in a strictly professional context but also in education, personal relationships or even quotidian activities resulting in one of the most common causes of the failure of assignments abroad. Language, social norms and behaviors or even religion, cultural differences, in the adaptation to a different environment, are a main challenge to international business due to the possible impact as for example, replacing a manager is costly and a set back to the company.

This challenge is clearly revealed when individuals are forced to face another culture exposing cultural dissimilarities and can be addressed by the increase of knowledge regarding other cultures and their characteristics.

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Cross-cultural research has focused on this topic developing specific methodologies to identify cultural differences and standards and exploring cultural frameworks. Through the study of intercultural realities and the development of cross cultural competences the potential of interactions between members of different societies can be maximized.

The reason of choice of this particular topic was due to the interest of collecting more information regarding Thailand, this Asian country which has never been colonized unlike the other countries in the Southeast Asian region. Representing therefore, a culture with strong rooted cultural values. With little information available for the Portuguese expatriates moving to this country, the lack of intercultural research on the topic was the main motivation for the author.

Therefore, the aim of this study relies on the identification of cultural differences between Portuguese and Thai people focused on business environment using a qualitative approach. These differences assume the form of relative Thai cultural standards from a Portuguese perspective through the application of the cultural standards method. This methodology collects experiences reported by Portuguese working and living in Thailand that refer to unexpected behavior by the local colleagues.

Extremely important to bear in mind, is the fact that the outcomes of this study are relative and only applicable when comparing these two specific cultures. Cultural standards are not intended to lead to cultural stigmatization or preconception but instead, should be used in the preparation of intercultural training to be provided to expatriates prior to their assignment in Thailand. This thesis may be used as a guide for assistance for those wishing to grasp a deeper understanding of the different facets of intercultural communication.

The preparation prior to departure is key to prepare professionals to overcome the stereotypes diminishing cultural shock and boosting cooperation between these and their future colleagues as well as raising awareness for the impact of the application of western management and leadership theories.

This report consists of a theoretical part and an empirical part. The Literature Review chapter provides an overview of the theoretical background of this independent study. Starting by a solid definition of culture and cross cultural research in management, also explores the main cultural dimensions.

These dimensions refer to the ones identified by Hofstede, Trompenaars and Gesteland. These three authors are the ones who contributed with the deepest insight on the topic allowing the

identification of cultural differences among countries including the ones in study, Portugal and Thailand.

For Hofstede and Trompenaars each country as an absolute value for the identified cultural dimensions in which they are ranked providing a model that allows a possible comparison between whichever countries.

On top of that, a brief introduction on Thailand concerning its main social and economic indicators as well as the history of cultural relations between both countries is presented.

The difference between the mentioned cross cultural models and the cultural standards method, methodology used to build this study, is explored in the third chapter: Methodology and Research Framework. This section includes an introduction to qualitative research and provides information on the concept of cultural standards as well as a description of the methodology used explaining how the process of data gathering should be applied. The cultural standards method was developed by Thomas and represents the backbone of this study. The method, provides a different perspective for the intercultural analysis allowing the possibility to study the differences between cultures that may be relatively closed.

The fourth chapter, Results, consists in the main part of the study presenting the outcome of the research and its analysis. This section categorizes and provides examples of the five identified cultural standards as well as recommendations for Portuguese working in Thailand to minimize the impact of the explored cultural differences. Finally, the findings and Hofstede's cultural dimensions are compared by placing each Relative Cultural Standard in comparison with one or more dimensions and verifying if they are coincident.

The last and fifth chapter concludes the report by providing a summary of the presented findings and giving recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Culture

There are more than 160 definitions of culture.

The word culture was the most searched term during the year of 2014 for the Merriam- Webster and Oxford online dictionaries. However, there are many definitions available for the term, and these are very diverse depending on the author and date.

Originally, the word "culture" derives from the Latin *colere*, which means to tend to the earth and grow, or cultivation and nurture and its first known use goes back to the 15th century.

In the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, culture is defined as “the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs”.

For Cuche, 2004, culture is a set of knowledge, practices and norms, beliefs and values that are transmitted within a social group. It is the product of a set of elements in constant interaction, which form a coherent whole. And therefore, a system of meanings learned and shared by members of a group. According to the author, culture is transmitted, continually, as a matter of course.

N. Adler, 1991, stated, “individuals express culture and its normative qualities through the values they carry for life and the world around them. These values in turn affect their attitudes about the form of behavior regarded as the most appropriate and effective in a given situation”. For Adler, understanding each person’s background is all the information needed to comprehend the idea of that individual self.

As for Schein, culture is: “A pattern of shared assumptions/invented discovered and shared by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be valid, and, therefore, is to be taught to new members of the group as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 1992: 12).

According to Herbig and Duphy, “the function of culture is to establish modes of conduct, standards of performance, and ways of dealing with interpersonal and environmental relations that will reduce uncertainty, increase predictability, and thereby promote survival and growth”.

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This researcher believes that “all cultures arise out of interactions between people in their efforts to adjust to one another and to their environment” (Herbig and Dunphy, 1978: 13).

For these author, there are some transversal characteristics to all cultures: (1) culture is functional; (2) culture is social; (3) culture is prescriptive; (4) culture is learned; (5) culture is arbitrary; (6) culture is value-laden; (7) culture is cumulative; and (8) culture is adaptive.

Whereas for Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1998), “One culture can be distinguished from another by the specific solution it chooses for specific problems.”

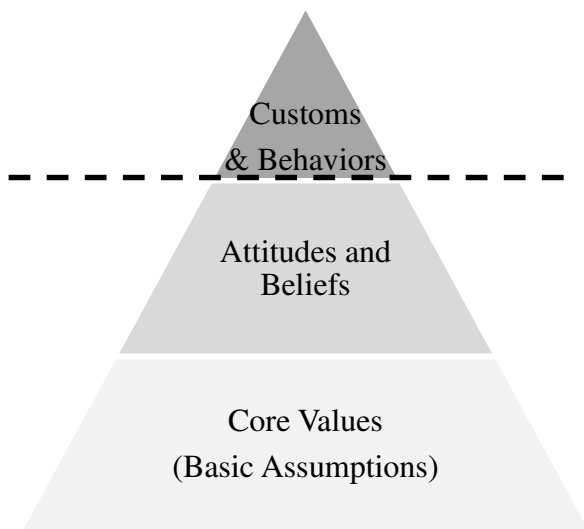


Figure 1 - Iceberg model
Source: Adapted from Edgar Schein, 1985

To better understand this concept, the iceberg as a model of culture developed by Edgar Schein defines three levels of culture. The level above surface incorporates the cultural features that are tangible expressions such as literature, food and music.

However, the first level is only the outcome of the deep levels of culture. Attitudes and beliefs are transmitted throughout social notions and conventions whereas the core values are linked with the thought patterns and ways of thinking and therefore the perspectives of the world and

interpretations.

Despite of all the significative differences, some aspects are transversal to all cultures such as the beliefs regarding good or bad behavior in a group or society as well as the values ingrained in us that influence our behavior – behavior that could be interpreted differently by other cultures.

Nevertheless, every culture is evolving and although a significant amount of features remain similar across time, the contact between societies trough wars, technological progress or even the internationalization of companies and brands, provokes an increase of the common characteristics.

Concluding, with Alexander Thomas (2003), “Culture is a universal phenomenon. All human beings live within a specific culture and contribute to its development. Culture creates a structured environment within which a population can function.”

2.2. Cultural Differences

The Article 1 – Cultural diversity: the common heritage of humanity, of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity states: “Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations.”.

However, the opinions differ as according to Hofstede (2010), "Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster.". For Thomas, “The culture-specific system of orientation with its sense-giving function and the tools required for adaptation that have been acquired during the course of an individual’s socialization process do not apply if the interaction partner comes from another country, organization or group. This condition leads to a so-called critical interaction, in which either one of the partners, but most often both partners, are confronted by unexpected behavior and reactions, the meaning of which is not clear to them and which cannot be deciphered on the basis of their respective and familiar cultural system of orientation.”.

In order to better understand cultural differences, Pr. Edward T. Hall, 1990, describes two different types of cultures: high context and low context.

High context cultures are characterized by long lasting relationships, fast and efficient communication, strong use of non-verbal communication and emotions, managers personally responsible for their employees and spoken agreements.

Low context cultures, on the other hand, use precise and explicit communication which translates in low use of non-verbal communication and emotions. It is also given personal importance to authority being generalized the importance of written rules and agreements.

In a different approach, Pr. Lewis, 1992 divides cultures into: monochronic cultures and polychronic cultures. The main differences have to do with the perception of time.

In monochronic cultures, daily life is organised on time which means that there is only one task scheduled per time, punctuality is extremely valued and there is a clear separation between working and personal time.

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Regarding polychronic cultures, time is viewed as flexible and relative considering that appointments are not strictly booked and personal and working times overlap.

In order to provide a better understanding of how countries resemble with each other culturally regarding language, religion and geographical characteristics, Ronen and Shenkar developed “Clustering countries on attitudinal dimensions: A review and synthesis” (1985).

This clustering model was reviewed in 2013 concluding that there are very few differences when compared with the original version.

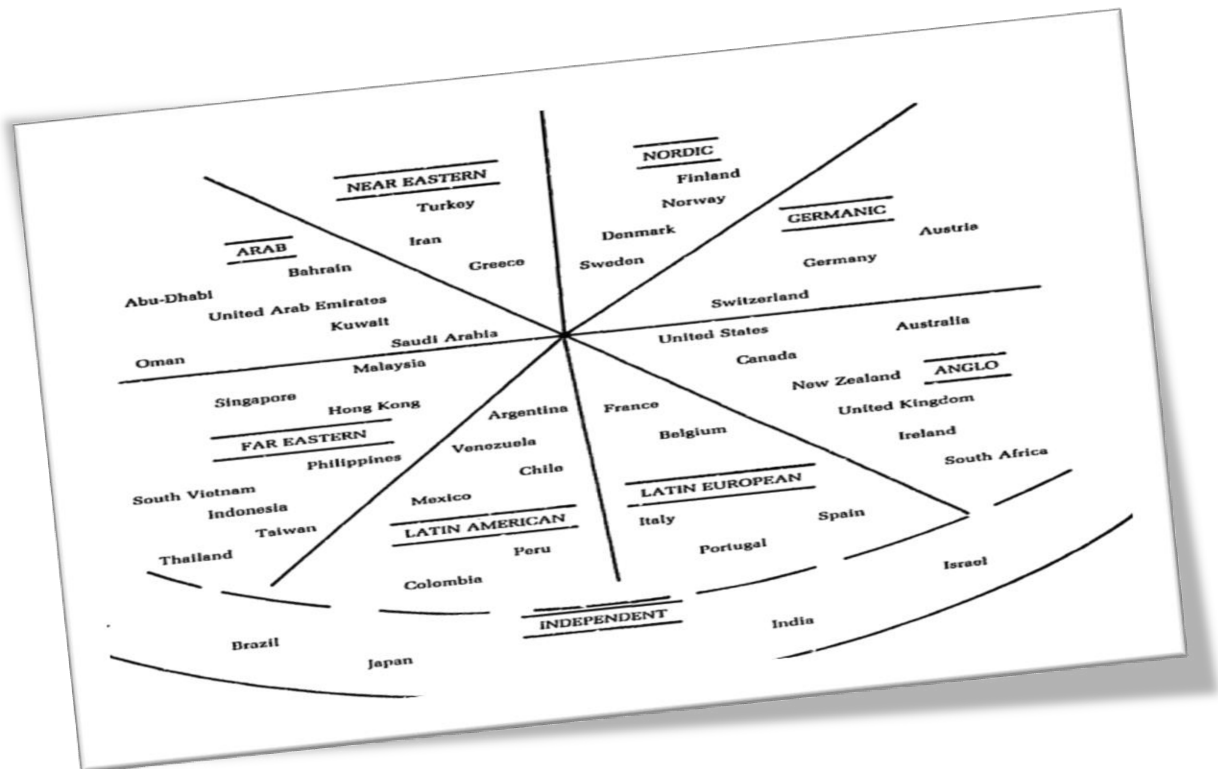


Figure 2 - Clustering Model

Source: Ronen & Shenkar, Clustering countries on attitudinal dimensions: A review and synthesis, 1985

Understanding cultural differences is key when working for global companies and when being part of teams with elements from different backgrounds due to the fact, it enables the forecast of possible reactions. On top of that, this tool is used by international organizations when designing their structure or internationalization strategies.

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In the figure below, adapted from *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior*, N. J. Adler (1991) it is obvious that multicultural teams can reach higher levels of effectiveness. Therefore, people should be trained and prepared to succeed in these types of groups to optimize their potential.

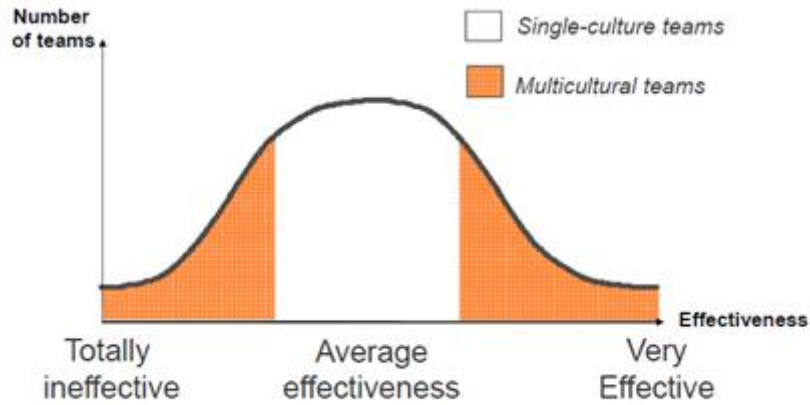


Figure 3 - Multicultural teams' effectiveness

Source: *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior*, N.J. Adler, PWS-Kent, 1991

2.3. Cross Cultural Research in Management

According to Adler (1983) cross cultural management can be described as *“the study of the behavior of the people in organizations located in cultures and nations around the world. It focuses on the description of organizational behavior within countries and cultures, on the comparison of organizational behavior across countries and cultures, and, perhaps most importantly, on the interaction of people from different countries working within the same organization or within the same work environment.”*

The studies referred by the author can focus on a single culture or focus in two or more cultures to compare them in terms of management styles.

In the era of globalization where multiculturalism gains critical importance, is key for expatriate workers to be prepared to adapt to different cultural realities. Especially in management positions, the adoption of a non-ethnocentric perspective on cultural differences may be the basis for a successful professional life. Therefore, cross cultural management aims to understand the impact of national cultures in management practices by identifying the differences and similarities across cultures, in those practices, leveraging the overall effectiveness in global management.

Adler (1984) categorized what she defines as being six types of research methods for cross cultural management.

1. Parochial Research

This type of study is based on one culture by individuals belonging to that specific culture. The majority of the research that has been done in the field of management is led by Americans in the United States and belongs to the parochial line of research. In these studies, the outcomes are considered universal, valid regardless of country or culture they refer to, considering that there is an universal “one best way”. Assumes that the results can be applied to many cultures even though only a single culture has been object of study.

2. Ethnocentric research

Ethnocentric studies focus on proving theories of management developed based on one country can also be used effectively in others. Usually, this is done by replicating the research in foreign cultures.

However, ethnocentric studies have dismissed the differences found in the research classifying them often as examples of the inferiority of the second culture.

3. Polycentric research

This style excludes universality seeking to analyze the theories and models of management in different countries using the culture of each of them as a reference. Nevertheless, the results are descriptive which means that in practice they do not clearly point out the similarities or differences between cultures having limited applicability.

4. Comparative research

Rejecting the existence of a dominant culture, comparative studies identify differences and similarities between them. Identifying then which theories hold across cultures and which ones do not. As this process focuses on the investigation of the contrasts between cultures, the tendency of the researcher to be bias may impact the data collection and its interpretation.

5. Geocentric studies

The aim of geocentric studies is to identify similarities among cultures so that multinational organizations are able to apply the same management models in several of the countries where they operate. Allowing companies to adopt unified policies and yet keep the autonomy of the local sites to adapt them when necessary due to cultural factors.

6. Synergistic studies

The sixth category aims to identify universal similarities and culturally specific differences in organizational theory and management practices. Seeking to understand the new multicultural realities and the contexts of interaction among elements from different cultures in order to find an equilibrium among transcultural forms, valid for all while maintaining a certain degree of specificity for each culture (Robalo, 2004).

2.3.1. Research about Cultural Dimensions

The study of cultural dimensions consists in the identification and categorization of the characteristics of different cultures.

However, this analysis is done in a generic level not enabling the actual comparison between two specific cultures.

Geert Hofstede started examining this type of cross cultural research in the 196's and up until today he is still the most significant and quoted author.

Other authors developed their own research such as Fons Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner in the 1990's followed by Richard Gesteland.

Although there are overlaps in the identified dimensions, there are significant differences regarding the research methodology as both Hofstede and Trompenaars appealed to field investigation enquiring citizens from diverse parts, the third author built his on his own experience.

The dimensions identified by these authors will be analyzed into deeper detail in a following chapter.

2.3.2. Research about Cultural Standards

The concept of cultural standards was firstly based on top of research done by Jean Paul Piaget (1962) and Ernst Boesch (1980) regarding developmental psychology and cultural psychology.

The cultural standards method is a major trend in cross cultural research used to identify categories of relative differences between two specific cultures.

The method developed by Alexander Thomas focuses on observed, experienced and perceived behavior enabling a deeper and more specific comparison analysis among two cultures.

The application of this method will be described in more detail in the following chapter.

2.3.3. Comparison between Cultural Dimensions and Cultural Standards

As referred previously, the analysis of cultural differences can be done through two main methodologies: the classification of behavior into cultural dimensions and the identification of cultural standards.

Both approaches can be used when studying the dissimilarities between people with different cultural background.

However, cultural dimensions developed by authors as Hofstede, Trompenaars or Gesteland provide general classification of the main differences among cultures. Whenever the aim of the study is to compare two specific cultures, this parsing is incomplete. Therefore, the use of cultural standards allows a deeper study by identifying the specific gaps found regarding the direct interaction of members of these two cultures namely in a business related encounter.

2.4. Cultural Dimensions

2.4.1. Hofstede: Cultural Dimensions

The most well-known author in the research field of Comparative Management, is Geert Hofstede. In 2000, the author was included in the group of the most cited, according to the SSCI – Social Sciences Citation Index, which comprises areas of Anthropology, Economy, Political Science, Psychology, Law, Sociology and Business Science (Robalo, 2004).

Hofstede analyzed data from two different surveys he conducted during 1967-69 and 1971-73 with members of IBM subsidiaries in 72 countries and 20 different languages, resulting in a total of 116 000 individual answers covering more than 30 topics. Initially, the results were obtained based on information gathered in the 40 largest countries and later expanded to 50 countries. From the initial results Hofstede developed a model that identifies four dimensions, which were determined after the study of the gathered data, and later a fifth and sixth dimensions were added to his framework.

The fifth and sixth dimensions of cultural differences arised later due to a right bias of researchers from time to insight more westernized cultural differences. Thus, the fifth dimension results from a study carried out by Michael Harris Bond on people from several countries from a questionnaire built for Eastern cultures, in this case Chinese.

With his study he was the first to identify and isolate cultural dimensions and to demonstrate that differences between national cultures as measured by the cultural dimensions could help to explain differences in behavior, organizational structures and management systems in organizations in different countries (Robalo, 2004). And eventually, form a basis for the planning and the prevention of conflicts.

In the 2010 edition of the book *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov), scores on the dimensions are listed for 76 countries, based on replications and extensions of the IBM study on different international populations. The results can be found in Annex I.

1. Power Distance Index (PDI)

The intention of the author is to measure the level of inequality in a particular culture given the implicit dominance of behavior contained in human nature. These definitions extend to all fundamental institutions of society such as family, school, and community.

In countries where the power distance is low, there is an interdependence boss and subordinate and people relate with each other as equals despite of the formal position. In countries where the rate is high, there is an accepted inequality of power distribution both by the followers and the leaders.

2. Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV)

The second dimension focuses on individualism and collectivism as two opposite poles. On one hand, individualist societies are the ones where the individuals must take care of themselves and their closest family first as ties between people are not so strong.

Collectivism, on the other hand, characterizes societies in which people are integrated from birth in strong and cohesive groups, which protect them for life in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

In business, people from individualistic cultures, value mostly personal fulfillment and personal time whereas people from collectivist cultures, are more focused on the working conditions and the use of skills.

Hofstede established a direct correlation between national wealth of a country and the degree of individualism of its culture, as countries with higher levels of individualism tend to be richer in comparison.

3. Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)

This dimension has to do with features associated to each gender. Masculinity societies value competitiveness and material possessions whereas in Feminine societies, people (male or female) give more importance to the relationships and the quality of life.

4. Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)

“A basic fact of life is that time goes only one way. We are caught in a present that it’s just an infinitesimal borderline between past and future that moves away as fast as we try to approach it, but onto which we project our present hopes and fears. In other word, we are living with an uncertainty of which we are conscious” – Hofstede (2001).

This index analyzes how comfortable society members feel regarding uncertainty and ambiguity.

To deal with uncertainty, cultures with high avoidance index, are more emotional and have strict rules and legislation as well as faith in an absolute truth.

On the other side of the spectrum, in uncertainty accepting cultures, people tend to be more tolerant giving less importance to the rules and believe that different religious currents can live in harmony.

5. Long Term Orientation versus Short Term Normative Orientation (LTO)

This dimension has not been identified by Hofstede, even though the investigation was supported by him, but rather isolated based on responses to a different questionnaire, developed by M. Bond and Chinese researchers and, this analysis was initially only valid for Asian cultures.

Based on the Confucian thinking, reflects an orientation to long-term versus short-term, contrasting most dynamic values such as perseverance, austerity, respect for the status of each in the social relations and more static values as dignity (save face), respect for tradition, personal strength and stability and reciprocal favors.

In short term oriented societies, people value the past and the present acting in order to achieve immediate stability and protect their own face.

6. Indulgence versus Restraint (IND)

The sixth dimension of national culture is based on extensive research done by Professor Geert Hofstede, Geert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov and their research teams.

It classifies cultures according to their perception towards the way people try to control their desires and impulses. Societies with high scores represent weaker control giving more value to freedom of speech, enjoying their lives and having fun.

In restraint societies, people tend to feel helplessness about their personal destiny, to be more cynic and pessimist.

2.4.2. Trompenaars: Cultural Dimensions

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner defined a set of seven cultural dichotomies during their cross-cultural studies.

Using a database containing almost 50.000 survey results gathered during 10 years, Trompenaars' data covered much of the active business world of today, including Eastern Europe, Russia, and China. These areas were not considered in Hofstede's classification due to the fact that IBM had not yet penetrated them at the time.

The following classification was based on preferred behavior in a number of both work and leisure situations according to the respondents. However, in all the identified dimensions, both extremes of the dilemmas can always, in a way be found in the same person.

1. Universalism versus particularism

What is more important, rules or relationship?

For the first dimension identified, Universalism is based on the belief that what is right and good can be defined and applied universally and therefore, the main focus is on rules. In particularistic cultures, however, circumstances can determine what is right and wrong and exceptions are perceived as natural considering that specific situations have new requirements.

2. Individualism versus Communitarianism

Do we function in a group or as individuals?

It concerns the way people plan their actions with reference to individual benefits, as ways to achieve their own objectives. Or, according to group interests: improvements to individual capacities are understood as a step towards the group prosperity.

This is the only dimension that was named the same in both Hofstede and Trompenaars's research.

3. Neutral versus affective/emotional

Do we display our emotions?

In neutral cultures, emotions should be hidden and disguised, as it is important to maintain a semblance of control. During business meetings, it is key to be prepared and to look carefully for small clues showing that the person is angry or pleased.

While in affective cultures is natural to express emotions and greater importance is given to affectivity and body language.

4. Specific versus diffuse

How far do we get involved?

This dimension refers to the degree to which individuals are willing to allow the access of others to their personal sphere. In specific oriented cultures, people separate the private and public parts of their lives and have a completely different relation of authority in each social group. In diffuse cultures these spheres overlap, meaning that the authority level has repercussions in all scopes of the individual's life. This perspective is in many countries held as necessary for business development.

5. Achievement versus ascription

Do we have to prove ourselves to receive status or is it given to us?

Trompenaars's fifth dimension reflects how the status and power are determined. An achievement oriented perspective is based on what the person does and achieves whereas in an assigned status of society is based on who the person is considering the family and social class to which it belongs, age, social relations, educational record, etc.

6. Sequential Time versus Synchronous Time

Do we do things one at a time or several things at once?

This dimension contemplates two different divisions: the way past, present and future are seen in addition to its importance and also the way the passage of time is perceived.

People in past-oriented cultures tend to show respect for ancestors and older people frequently putting things in a traditional or historical context. Present-oriented are mainly focused on present relationships while future-oriented cultures are motivated by future achievements.

The passage of time may be seen as linear and sequential way or as holistic, in synchronized manner, integrating the past and the present with the future possibilities.

7. Internal versus outer direction

Do we control our environment or work with it?

In some cultures individuals look to themselves as main influence in their lives bearing in mind that motivations and values are derived from within. However, for others abroad, the environment, is something too powerful for what can or should be modified according to the will of the individual and it should be feared.

2.4.3. Gesteland: Cultural Dimensions

Richard Gesteland in his theory - *Cross-cultural business behavior: marketing, negotiating and managing across cultures* establish four cultural dimensions. This work is specially characterized by its pragmatically applied basis, not relying on statistic research by the contrary of authors such as Hofstede and Trompenaars. Essentially, the author based the followings negotiation profiles on his professional experience as a manager in different countries and cultures.

1. Deal focus versus Relationship focus

This is the fundamental division between cultures according to Gesteland. People belonging to the first group are task oriented while in the second category are more people oriented. Individuals fitting the first group see the second as vague and dilatory while they consider their interlocutors as cold, aggressive and offensive. Therefore, when dealing with relationship focused individuals it is relevant to gain trust and avoid conflict.

2. Informal versus Formal Cultures

Problems arise when business people from informal and egalitarian cultures interact with formal partners of hierarchical cultures. The simplistic informality offends people mindful of their status stemmed from hierarchical cultures observable in the prefix used when dealing with someone or even the existence of numerous protocols and formalities.

3. Rigid time versus Fluid time Cultures

Some cultures are extremely focused on time and calendar whereas others are much more relaxed and flexible with schedules, paying more attention to the people. Rigid time individuals face the others as lazy and undisciplined.

In the daily life the differences can be observed regarding the flexibility of deadlines, the importance of punctuality and the amount of times a business meeting is interrupted, for example.

4. Expressive versus Reserved Cultures

Expressive and reserved people communicate in radically different ways considering three types of communication. Verbal communication entitles the words and correspondent meaning. The second type includes the tone, volume and emphasis that is given to certain words, the meaning of the silence and talk at the same time or interrupt others.

Expressive cultures tend to rely on verbal communication and body language keeping direct and frequent eye contact, exuberant facial expressions and regular physical contact.

Reserved cultures use the more subtle changes on the tone and volume of the words pronounced speaking in a more soft way, being more comfortable with silence and reducing physical and eye contact.

2.4.4. Applicability of cultural dimensions to the present study

The cultural dimensions established by Hofstede, Trompenaars or Gesteland cannot be applied in a general mode regarding the differences between countries. These categories should only be used as an explanation of behavioral differences or for the definition of expected behaviors in different cultures.

When comparing two cultures in particular, there is a multitude of factors that may be relevant which are not evidenced in these categories as they do not highlight the differences between two particular countries. For example, according to Hofstede Portugal and Thailand have very similar scores regarding power distance although from the Portuguese point of view, Thai culture has much higher levels of hierarchy.

On top of that, different meanings can be associated with the results of cultural dimensions as for example, in some collectivistic countries the importance of extended family may be high whereas in other countries the score can be linked to network in society.

There are several authors who criticized cultural dimensions theories due to the considerations that there is a western influence in the participants, data collection limitations, the particularities among national cultures are not taken into account and that there are significant differences in reality in countries with similar scores.

Nevertheless, these reports are an important basis for the study of an intercultural reality and should be completed with the “Method of Cultural Standards” whenever the focus is in the relative differences between two specific cultures.

2.5. Thailand and Portugal: History framework

2.5.1. Thailand - General Information

Thailand, officially the Kingdom of Thailand, was formerly known as Siam. The country is located at the center of the Indochinese peninsula in Mainland Southeast Asia. The terrestrial borders of Thailand are shared with Myanmar and Laos to the north, with Laos and Cambodia to the east, with Malaysia to the south and with the Andaman Sea to the west. The maritime borders include Vietnam, Indonesia and India.

Due to the geographical proximity with several other Asian cultures and religions, its influence in Thai culture is noticeable.

Thailand is a monarchy and has the longest reigning monarch in the world: King Bhumibol Adulyadej, ruling since 1946. However, since 2014, it is governed by the National Council for Peace and Order, a military junta.

The king is extremely respected in Thailand and therefore, every symbol such as any type of national currency cannot be dropped or stepped on as it includes a picture of the monarch.

With an area of more than 500 thousands of square km, it is the 51st largest country and the 20th largest in terms of population with more than 66 million inhabitants.

The capital, largest city and political, commercial and cultural hub is Bangkok.

Theravada Buddhism is the main religion and is practiced by around 95% of the population. Religion is supported and supervised by the government receiving funds and benefits. Buddhism in Thailand is strongly influenced by traditional beliefs which have been incorporated into Buddhist beliefs. An example are the spirit houses found outside of the most Thai residences and in public places where the believers present offerings.

Thai is the official language of the country and is effectively the spoken and written dialect of the kingdom. It is usual to end sentences with *kráp* (if the speaker is male) or *kâ* (for women). The country's economy experienced rapid growth in the latest decades of last century relying mostly on manufacturing, agriculture and tourism. The industrialization was due to the major exporter role of the country. The economic development and the large amount of population pushed Thailand to the third position in quality of life among the ASEAN countries.

For foreigners having contact with Thais, it is important to bear in mind that public displays of affection are not common in Thai society. The usual greeting includes a prayer-like gesture with the hands and a slight bow of the head.

Touching someone on the head or pointing the feet to someone or to the image of the Buddha is considered rude and disrespectful as the head is the most respected part of the body and the feet are considered the dirtiest.

In Asian cultures in general, saving face is crucial and Thailand is no exception. For that reason, conflict is avoided and displays of anger are not well perceived. All disagreements should be avoided and handled with a smile. The concept of *sanuk*, the idea that life should be pleasant and fun drives Thais to display positive emotions and to have a playful attitude.

2.5.2. History of Cultural Relations between Thailand and Portugal

Portugal was the first western nation, which came in contact and developed friendly relations with Ayutthaya and it is likely that the designation of Siam came from the contact with the first Europeans, the Portuguese.

In 1511, the Portuguese sent a diplomatic mission to Ayutthaya which became one of the most prosperous cities in Southeast Asia. During the 17th century, it is estimated to actually have been the largest city in the world with 1 million inhabitants. After that, the Portuguese settled in the city covering half square meter with 3 thousand people. Three catholic churches were built.

The relationship between the kingdom and the Portuguese was so respectable that these fought together and earned various commercial and residential privileges included the guarantee of official residence.

The settlement was destroyed during the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767.

A small community of Portuguese descended can still be found in Thailand recognized by family names such as 'Na Silawan' (da Silva) or 'Yesu' (de Jesus) and the Portuguese presence and its influence can still be found in culinary or vocabulary.

The relation of Portugal and Thailand is unique due to the existence of these communities of 'Luso-Thais' dating from the 16th century, who married, lived and died in Thailand.

3. Methodology and Research Framework

3.1. Introduction to Qualitative Research

Research consists in a systematic and methodical process of enquiry and investigation which aims to increase knowledge by creating a new theory and therefore facilitate the solution of practical problems.

There are two types of research: qualitative and quantitative. The word *qualitative* implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. In contrast, quantitative studies emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes. (Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 2011)

Qualitative research, broadly defined, means "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 17).

This type of research focuses in developing explanations of social phenomena by analyzing unstructured information. Seeking out the reasons why these phenomena occur, requires more than statistic information which is the focal point in quantitative research. Qualitative research is used to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviors, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyles. It is used to inform business decisions, policy formation, communication and research.

The key ways of collecting qualitative data include observation, in-depth interviews, group interviews, collection of relevant information, photographs and videos, customer feedback forms or reports.

The researcher bias is the strength and weakness of this type of research. As the skills and training of the author may have such a big influence on the outcome of the study, the quality of the researcher regarding insight and experience has to be taken into account.

The analysis of this type of data implies mandatorily three main steps: identification, coding and the categorization of the patterns found.



Figure 4 - A model of qualitative research design

3.2. The concept of Cultural Standards

“Culture standards can be seen as the socially shared and accepted norms and values that are used by the individuals living within a particular culture to evaluate the behavior of each other.” (Thomas, 1999)

More deeply, cultural standards, according to Thomas, can be defined as following:

- Cultural standards are forms of perception, thought patterns, judgment and interaction that are shared by a majority of the members of a specific culture who regard their behavior as normal, typical and binding.
- Own and other unfamiliar behavior is directed, regulated and judged on the basis of this cultural standard.
- Cultural standards provide a regulatory function for mastering a given situation and dealing with people.
- The individual and group-specific way of applying cultural standards to adjust behavior can fluctuate within a range of tolerance.
- Forms of behavior that exceed this specific range are not accepted or sanctioned by the respective collective.

On top of these indicators, they function as implicit theories or rules and are internalized by the individual during the process of socialization. (Schroll-Machl, 2005)

Cultural standards are not static, but constantly undergoing change which means that existing cultural standards can be gradually and incompletely repressed and replaced by more recent developments whenever older elements prove unsuitable and restrictive in the present context. (Dinzelbacher, 1993).

However, “mentality is what changes the slowest” (Le Goff, 1974) the rhythm of the rise and fall of cultural standards is therefore measured in generations and centuries.

Although cultural standards are shared by the majority, they do not have the same strength in each member of a society or culture. (Schroll-Machl, 2005)

In spite of the fact that, cultural standards can be used as a valuable tool, they have certain limitations which need to be considered. By describing a simple version of each culture, cultural standards are also incomplete and undetailed (Schroll-Machl, 2006). Therefore, it can

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promote stereotypes even though there is not one person who thinks, feels and acts totally according to the respective norm. Different factors have to be taken into account when analyzing the adaptation process in a cross cultural context such as personality, conditions of the contract or even the status of group members.

Cultural standards are relative and bilateral and therefore not applicable to the comparison with a third culture.

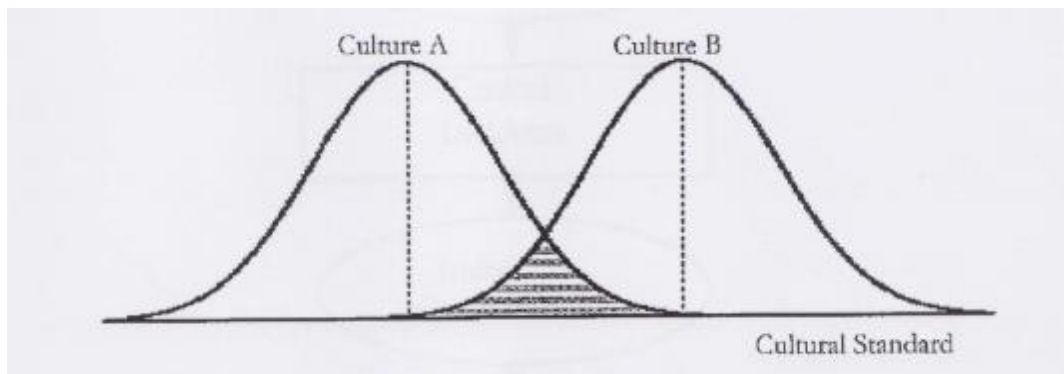


Figure 5 - Culture Standard
Source: Brueck & Kainzbauer, 2002: 5

The statistical mean of this normal distribution is the “most frequent interpretation of a culture standard. It can be interpreted as a tendency of most group members to act according to this standard. (Brueck and Kainzbauer, 2002)

According to the same authors, “an interesting aspect of cultural standards is that they can only be identified in a cross-cultural context. We are not aware of how much they determine our actions in our familiar cultural environment, but as soon as we come into contact with people from a different culture, whose behavior is based on a different set of cultural standards, we are able to consciously experience their existence.” (2002)

The unfamiliar situations which take place during the interaction between members of different cultures are described in the culture standard concept as “critical incidents” and are vital element for developing culture standards. (Mayrhofer et.al., 2001)

Nevertheless, as pointed out in Fig. 5 as the common area between two cultures, there may be cultural standards which are no longer identified due to the increase of similarities caused by the globalization phenomena.

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Fink, Neyer & Foilling (2006) state that Thomas developed “cultural standards” as a way to generate more cultural specific and actionable knowledge.

This knowledge is implemented through cultural training programs focuses on the integration and general familiarization with the foreign culture, problem solving, effective negotiation, do’s and don’ts.

To identify cultural standards, the method used is the cultural standards method which aims to analyze real experiences lived in a cross cultural environment providing a base for the development of intercultural competences.

3.3. The Cultural Standards Method

The proposed method focuses on the identification of cultural standards, i.e. socially shared and accepted norms and values.

The methodology used is based on the technique of narrative interviews to collect critical incidents which are then grouped and validated with reference to the scientific literature on both home and counterpart culture to identify underlying cultural standards and their impact on actual behavior.

The Cultural Standards Method leans on relative differences that are valid only in the comparison between the two specific cultures. This distinctive characteristic allows the possibility of comparing cultures that are relatively close.

The research methodology of this independent study is based on Thomas' cultural standard research and follows the structure below:

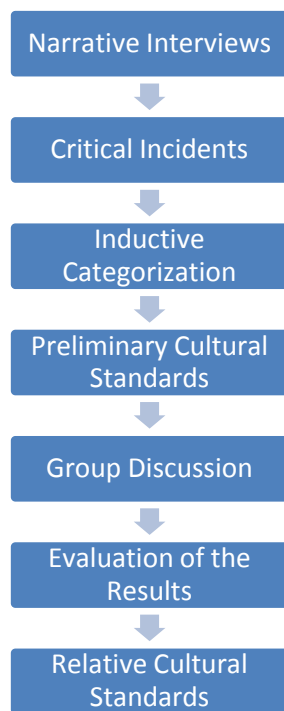


Figure 6 - Cultural Standard Methodology
Source: Brueck et. Al., 2002: 8

The first phase of action are the narrative interviews which have the singularity of being very flexible having no directive questions, allowing data collection without restrictions based on presumptions. These interviews usually take between 30 to 60 minutes and should always be taped.

The interviewee is asked simply to share examples of short stories regarding critical incidents in intercultural interaction which members from the partner culture. These incidents should refer to unexpected behavior in management and business contexts.

As the interviewee's tendency when describing a unexpected behavior is to include reflections on personal opinion on the referred situations including prejudices and stereotypes, - which will be disregarded - the interviewer's role includes the use of questions such as "How do you explain that?", "How did you cope with the problem?" and "What was your reaction?" to clarify the

information given and make sure to guide the interviewee to be as objective in the description as possible.

In order to gather valuable information during the interviews, the collected materials, according to Muller & Thomas, 1991, should represent typical recurring behaviors for the nation and be

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confusing for the interviewee, having likely led to false interpretation of the named actions. These behaviors should be afterwards clearly explained by corresponding cultural background knowledge.

Aiming to avoid cultural bias, both the interviewer and interviewee individuals should speak the same native language and have similar cultural background to have approximately the same cultural standards. These factors are extremely important to build trust and for the correct understanding of the shared content. In this case, the interviews were conducted in Portuguese.

The next step of the process is the transcription of all the narrative interviews allowing a more consistent interpretation of the collected data. Then, the actual qualitative content analysis starts by ordering typical reported incidents with similar underlying behavior in the same category (Lamnek, 1995: 208). This classification originates preliminary cultural standards. All the cases which are not consistent with the majority and that could lead to a distortion of the outcome should be excluded.

In order to validate the initial results, these should be discussed with cultural experts to minimize all the interpretation errors created by the interviewer/researcher as well as compared with preexisting studies developed by renowned specialists. Subsequently, a list of relative bilateral cultural standards is obtained having significance exclusively in the Portuguese- Thai context.

4. Results

4.1. Selection of Population and Subjects

This independent study targeted Portuguese expatriates currently living in Thailand for more than six months and from different professional fields. In order to find Portuguese people who are working in Thailand, different channels were used such as the social media networks *Facebook* and *LinkedIn* as well as other online platforms for expatriates. The subjects have been contacted by email or other online messaging system. To all subjects was explained during the first contact the purpose of the study, the method used to collect data: narrative interviews and the type of information requested.

Overview of the Sample Group and Interviews

This master thesis counted with the active participation of 15 Portuguese expatriates living in Thailand who shared their experience of working and living in this country. For this research, the suitable profile of an interviewee was considered to be an individual born and raised in Portugal currently living in Thailand for at least 6 months.

Ideally, the sample group should consist in people who moved directly from Portugal to Thailand not having experienced leaving in a third country and should have managing positions.

However, these criteria were not possible to follow due to limited amount of people available to participate in the study.

All candidates were contacted through social media including groups on Facebook, other online platforms for expatriate people or even personal contacts obtain during the research process. The primary communication via electronic message thoroughly introduced the topic of the thesis, the nature of the interview and the author's contact information.

The interviews were elapsed between January and June 2015, according to the interviewees' availability and took place in interviewees' homes or offices and cafes/restaurants. Having an average duration time of one hour, were all recorded with digital audio support.

Even though the current master thesis is written in English, all the interviews were conducted in Portuguese – native language of both the interviewer and the interviewees.

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The author tried to avoid asking questions and leading the interview as much as possible, but nevertheless some people needed more guidance to speak than others. Some general assisting questions were developed in order to encourage speaking and recalling incidents.

Finally, the sample group of this master thesis has 15 people and consists of 7 men and 8 women.

They form an heterogeneous sample, representing different regions Portugal, same amount of participants from both genders, diverse age range and professional experience from different areas. The sample group includes managers, specialists, consultants, teachers and students.

Table 2 provides the interviewees' profiles; in order to maintain confidentiality their real names do not appear and company names are not published.

After analyzing and interpreting the interviews, the author compiled 5 different cultural standards, which could be distinguished from the interviews.

Gender	Female		Male	
	8		7	
Age	< 30	31 – 49	> 50	
	6	6	3	
Expectations before coming to Thailand	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
	6	8	1	
Duration of Stay in Thailand	< 2 years	2 – 5 years	> 5 years	
	5	9	1	
For how long have they been in Thailand	< 2 years	2 – 5 years	> 5 years	
	7	8	0	
Reasons to Stay in Thailand	Work	Private	Study	
	9	2	4	
Work Experience Abroad before coming to Thailand	Yes		No	
	7		8	

Table 1 - Interviewees' Profiles

4.2. Thai Cultural Standards

Thailand is a country with a complex cultural fabric and set of codes for appropriate social behavior. To the average western visitor, this can present an interactive environment that is diversely different from what they might be used to at home.

The purpose of this independent study is the identification of relative Thai cultural standards from the perspective of Portuguese managers working in Thailand based on the Cultural Standards Method. Therefore, a total of five cultural standards are explained in this chapter including a summary brief of the definition of the concept, examples of critical incidents referred by the interviewees and recommendations for future situations which may occur and be related with the specific topic.

The five Thai cultural standards from a Portuguese perspective will be further analyzed in this chapter and are the following:

- Respect for Hierarchy
- Saving Face and Conflict Avoidance
- Religion and Spiritual Life
- Separation of Private and Professional Life
- Relationship Orientation

4.2.1. Respect for hierarchy

As in most Asian countries, the principles of seniority and hierarchy has strong roots in Thai society. Which translate to the attentiveness to the hierarchical system of their social environment. Allowing the determination of vertical positions within their group of peers, friends and colleagues. Social relationships are defined as having always one person superior to the other as for example: parents are superior to their children, teachers to their students and bosses to their subordinates.

With seniority, according to the Thais, come wisdom and competence. This rank is determined according to the age, the amount of years and the position a person holds in the organization.

This standard had origin with the *Sakdi Na*, definition of Thai society by attributing a numerical rank to each citizen according to the amount of land possessed. This system was implemented

by the king Trailok in the fifteenth century and its impact is still visible in the perception that responsibilities and power come with a certain ranked position.

The system relies on the responsibility of the senior to protect the juniors while these, on the other hand, have to follow and support their seniors. The failure to comply is “unjustified discrimination against the older and more experienced employee disturbing the overall harmony in the company” (Pudelko, 2006: 278).

This principle can be observed in the top-management positions in Thailand which are usually reached in a late age preventing young talents from demonstrating their potential due to the key factors for internal promotions: social status, age and years of experience in the company.

This principle originates a specific communication method considering that upward communication is almost non-existent inhibiting the creativity and critical thinking of the members of the structure.

When the Portuguese expatriate is younger than his or her colleagues or subordinates it is important to clarify and demonstrate the potential of the experience brought to the organization. The background gained in different locations or prior professional practices has to be seen as an advantage for the team despite of the age. Nevertheless, the significance attributed to this factor is still extremely high in Thailand as described in the statement below of one interviewee: “Imagine that we both have the same position and I am 20 years younger than you, it is clear that the employee of the company will demonstrate more respect for you which is not linked to the depth of your knowledge but to your age. Seniority is so important in Thai culture that when I took my role I was advised, by my manager, to hide my age for three months when I started. Even today, after I have proved my value, if I make a mistake the responsibility is attributed to my young age.

In Thailand the importance of seniority is so that they refer to people in three different ways: *kun*, *pee* and *nóng*. In Portugal we have different modes to address to others. However, when calling someone we do not use adjectives to demonstrate respect to that individual. In regards to the *farangs* (foreigners of European ancestry), Thais will use *kun*, which is the basic and you can use for everyone when you want to maintain a certain distance. You should address to them the same way except if a person explicitly asks you to use another denomination which happened to me with members of my team as they were older and felt disrespected.”

Nowadays, in western countries is more and more usual for people to call each other by their first names. Even though in Portugal is still standard to refer to someone, when the relationship is of professional nature, using a prefix reference to his or her academic degree (Dr., Eng., etc.).

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In Thailand, people usually refer to each other by the first name or nickname always accompanied by an honorific. Many honorifics used with names either describe a certain status achieved or a relationship between both parties. Due to the importance given to the age in relationships, its difference usually determine what type of title is used.

The most common of these honorifics is *คุณ* /*kun*/ (Sir or Madam). This term was originally a royal title bestowed to show respect. It can also be used together with another designation to express more honor. *น้อง* /*nóng* is utilized in dialogs with younger members of Thai society. The third term of the most used is *พี่* /*pêe* is used when referring to an older person.

When encountering opposition among co-works the possibility of asking a senior manager to stand in as an intermediary could smooth the process of adaptation as experienced by one of the interviewees:

“The big difference in terms of hierarchy is that it all depends on the higher position, I think the Thais are very used to have a foreigner boss just not colleagues. Here what the boss says is law, everybody follows very strictly the rules established and respect hierarchical higher positions. Being a foreign colleague, which was my situation when I arrived, especially someone coming here to give advice, to act like a consultant - which was my role - share my experience, say 'it's in this direction that you should go' for me was frustrating at the beginning. There were a lot of people who did not understand the recommendations I was giving. We are accustomed to another way of working as around here, people are used to have someone with authority to tell them where to go. In my case I was a person without authority regarding my job position. So, the only solution was, telling my European boss the information and he would pass the word down to my colleagues during the first months. Until they started be forced to work with people from different cultural backgrounds as Chinese, Korean, Indian or Japanese, realizing the diverse methods and behaviors. Only then, my colleagues understood the importance of multilateral communication to ensure proper service and the success of the projects.”

Critical incidents which originated the identification of this standard were mentioned in all the performed interviews. The challenge is to integrate western management approach into Thai operations without ignoring seniority and hierarchy related issues which are part of Thailand's business life and cannot be neglected.

4.2.2. Saving Face and Conflict Avoidance

Saving Face is one of the cultural standards revealed by this research study and some critical incidents reported by the interviewees were selected to illustrate it as following.

“At the office, I realized that one of my employees made a mistake which had high impact in the business as it was negatively perceived by one major customer. Therefore, I decided to bring the team together to understand what happened and who the responsible person was. By then, one of the staff members came forward and assumed herself as accountable. So I explained why it was an incorrect action in a polite and soft manner telling her not to worry as we would be able to fix the situation. Just like that, this person, burst into tears and left. I was looking for her for 10 minutes until I found her crying and locked in the pantry! That was the moment when I understood how much saving face is so important in Thai culture. From that moment on, every time I give feedback to one of the members of my team, I always do it in private in such a way that none of the others notice even that I am calling them for a specific reason.

From my experience, is not what you say but how you do it and who is listening to the conversation.

Another example that I come across often is, regularly we all have to do certain online tests. I forward them to my team and ask them to complete within the time limit scheduled. If they know how to do it, they we'll do it right away but if they are not sure, instead of asking they ignore my request but answer me they will do it. So at some point I have no idea why they don't complete the action just that they begin to reject all orders without giving me a justification.”

“Examples of saving face are present in our daily life here in Thailand, I remember the day I arrived and needed to go to University but ended up getting lost. I was asking for direction to the people in the street. In fact they would stop to look at the address I had in the paper, smile and give me a direction to follow. Only after talking with some people, I realized they had no idea where the place was but instead of saying that, they chose to point a random direction. By then I was completely lost going the opposite way.

When working in teams, people are opened to suggestion but they do not like to debate opinions. For my experience, group work here is synonym of working by yourself and putting it together in the end. In fact, what more often than not happened to me was: I would give an

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input, my colleagues would listen and then move on with what they were doing without giving any feedback whether because they were not familiar with the concepts of my suggestions or just not to tell me face to face that they didn't agree."

Relationships are a vital part of Thai society. Social behaviors are aligned to keep existing relationships intact. Thais do so by "putting tremendous emphasis on preserving one-another's face" (Komin, 1990) which is nowadays the most important social rule.

Komin (1990) identified ego orientation as the value cluster ranked in the first place and has strongest impact in practice. Ego orientation "is the root value underlying various key values of the Thai, such as 'face-saving', 'criticism-avoidance', and the 'kreng jai' attitude" (Komin, 1990: 133).

According to this author, the "face-saving" value is an expression of the top concern for "ego" (Komin, 1990):

"Whenever there is any problem to be solved that would directly or indirectly involve persons, the first criterion to consider is saving the 'face' - - the 'ego' - - of the persons involved. The Thai would usually find indirect ways to soften a negative message. Most important is to avoid public confrontation, regardless of whether it involves an inferior, an equal or worse still, a superior. To make a person lose 'face', regardless of rank, is to be avoided at all cost" (Komin, 1990, p. 160). As in the rest of the countries of South East Asia, "saving face" concept relies on self-respect and hierarchy.

The best way to describe face as it applies to Thailand is to link it to what in the west would be called reputation, prestige, honor and social standing. Face is all about being polite, considerate, inoffensive and unobtrusive. Underlying to this concept is the value "kreng jai" which is deeply rooted in Thai culture. Considered to be a complex value for foreigners to grasp, "kreng jai concept underlies a significant portion of everyday interpersonal behavioral patterns of the Thai" (Komin, 1990, p.161).

"Its closest meaning is 'to be considerate, to feel reluctant to impose upon another person, to take another person's feelings (and 'ego') into account, or to take every measure not to cause discomfort or inconvenience for another person'. Kreng jai refers to such attitude predisposing to one's resulting behavior towards someone else. Kreng jai behavior is to be observed by all, superior, equals, and inferiors, including intimate relationships like husband-wife, and close friends, with differences in degree..." (Komin, 1990, p. 161-162).

It is perceived that, adhering to these social codes is what allows Thai society to function smoothly and to offer less conflict and episodes of violence. Buddhist beliefs contribute significantly to what is considered acceptable behavior in Thai society, contributing to a solid set of social mores that are followed by the majority of its members. Conservatism and discretion are at the heart of these mores, dictating that individuals shy away from extremes of behavior, less risk offending others.

In a daily basis, the reasons which cause the dreaded loss of face are linked to the display of anger or annoyance in public, appear not to know or understand something or even appear to have failed or made a mistake.

Regarding the “criticism-avoidance” value associated with the previous example, Komin explains that “the Thai are very ‘ego’ oriented, to the extent that it is very difficult for the Thai to dissociate one’s idea and opinion from the ‘ego’ self. This is why strong criticism to the expressed idea is often automatically taken as criticism to the person holding those ideas” (Komin, 1990, p. 160).

Therefore, Thais endeavor to achieve the aimed result by a compromise avoiding at any cost to damage the relationships. Furthermore, in case of the communication of a negative message, problem or a contrary opinion the speaker will soften it not to disturb the senior person as illustrated by the following example:

“One member of my team was performing poorly during an extended period of time revealing to represent no added value for the business. Instead of being dismissed, this individual was sent to the warehouse performing low impact activities as my boss didn’t even consider the option of rebuking or letting her go.

In Thailand, the action of firing an employee is rarely seen especially if the person has been working for the company for more than five years or if he/she is of a more advanced age.”

Criticism-avoidance linked with the strong respect for the seniority/hierarchy translates to a lack of proactivity and reduces the bilateral communication: “a meeting implies a very large group arranged in rows, convened to receive information, or policy from the chairman. As members their duties are to listen, not to exchange views”. (Holmes et.al., 1997)

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In Thai society, the subordinates are not supposed to question their bosses but instead be guided and informed of their tasks. When in contact with elements from lower context cultures during the elapse of a business meeting, for example, Thais tend to feel uncomfortable and disrespected as misunderstandings occur due to the differences on the expectations regarding the communication process (Gesteland, 2005). That awareness is an important requirement encouraging the mutual understanding between both parties to take appropriate action.

Edward Hall (Missana, 2004) developed a cultural framework that can be used to compare how cultures communicate. Portugal and Thailand are both classified as high context cultures. Meaning, according to the author, that communication relies mostly on unwritten rules, such as *Kreng Jai*, which is necessary for maintaining good relationships. However, it is more notorious in Thai culture as individuals do not express strong negative emotions. It may lead to misunderstandings and difficulty of the Portuguese to interpret the reactions of the colleagues.

Due to that fact, conversions tend to take longer due to the lack of straightforwardness and open communication as in:

“My Thai colleagues are only satisfied when they are sure the conversation is clarified and that both parties understood the points of view of each side even if sometimes it means having the conversation twice but always in a placid way.”

Thailand is popularly known as the Land of Smiles. However, for the Portuguese people, smiling is interpreted as a manifestation of happiness or contentment. For the Thais, the smiley facial expression is used in all types of situations including uncomfortable, in doubt or critical situations.

According to Holmes and Tangtongtavy (2000) the Thais possess an elaborate range of facial expressions included yim (smile) category. Redmond (1999) elaborates that Thai smiles can convey many meanings besides satisfaction such as, yim haeng which literally means dry smile manifested when a person feels a little guilty. He may sport this type of nervous smile without saying a word. However, members of this culture, understand that it is a sign of remorse. A list of these smiles is available in Annex 2.

4.2.3. Religion and Spiritual Life

Buddhism, a philosophical framework free of dogma and of flexible moral gained large acceptance in Thailand after its introduction in the region around 218 Buddhist Era, due to the correspondence to the tolerance and sense of inner freedom traditional in Thai culture.

The tolerance regarding others and their options refer to the notion that each person is responsible and should be the sole concern of himself regarding matters of religion or any other element of life.

Tolerance is not only preached but practiced in the religious cult itself encouraging followers to make their own analysis of other religions and practices.

Constituting the main pillar of Thai culture and having inspired the actions which preserved its independence, Theravada Buddhists constitute 90% of the country population. Despite of that, Thais embrace the ideal of religious freedom which is guaranteed by the constitution. However, the document predetermines that Thai king must be Buddhists while monarchs are entitled as "Upholder of All Religions". For that matter, the government annually allocates funds to finance religious education and to construct, maintain, and restore monasteries, mosques, and churches.

It is expected of the eighteen years old boys to enter the monkhood receiving monastic training as novices in a temple for a certain period. This training contemplates the history and philosophy of Buddhism, the principles of meditation and guidance to the enlightened path. Other forms of bringing merit to the families include giving money to the less fortunate and providing food to the monks.

Buddhist monks take on a key role in Thai society as they are involved in daily activities as blessing new houses or cares, marriages and funerals.

Thais believe in reincarnation as in Buddhism the concept of life is not confined to the period between birth and death but instead a cycle driven by the karma of prior existences. Karma is the law of cause and effect. Being deeply connected to the relationship between selfish acts and suffering, the elimination of individual desire or individualistic philosophy is the only way to break this cycle achieving the ultimate aim of non-existence or nirvana. This state represents the extinction of the ego itself.

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Nowadays, Buddhism is deeply rooted in Thai life and culture as its influence is detected in the life-style, traditions, arts or language. As an example, the denomination as Land of Smiles is deeply linked to the religion.

“In Thailand, Buddhism is part of everything, even in art. Signs of it is seen in most of the exhibitions and art galleries. This reflects that, while in Portugal, plastic expression is more activist with regard to certain issues that are sensitive, we try to make our political advocacy using art also. Here because of the King's adoration and respect for dictatorships they had, it's hard to see a painting or a sculpture shock. It is an education in which they enter in the rules and respect them.

Buddhism is what is accepted and I live with it. Is karma. A whole collection of elements and model factors they accept because it is their karma.

The Buddhism thought to be so, any negative thoughts I have about someone comes to fold to me so that no one envies, no one complains, no one notices no one, no one is criticizing the other. Every day in the morning people give food and pray to the spirits and light candles to calm them so that the spirits do not bring negative energies. In terms of social acceptance, more in big cities than in small villages and see if people in gender transformation both from woman to man and from man to woman to work in supermarkets, banks, agencies, as doctors at the hospital. Have all kinds of positions that would be impossible in Portugal would be highly discriminated against and never accepted. This openness, both to see which trivializes, why talk about a common thing so it's better to accept. It is not tolerance, is acceptance. So that it is also a cultural aspect, accept the other as he is. It also has to do with karma as they believe that it was bad karma for a woman to come a man's body that is entitled to correct, the notion that it is a sin and that if God has given us our body or our characteristics, we have to live with it. It does not exist, this is all relative to karma and therefore is a way to fix the karma for the person to come to eternal happiness, nirvana which is what life revolves around. On Sunday is the day to go with the whole family (they work 6 in 7 days) to the temple spend all day there. Pray, eat, have a picnic, make money, make offerings. And thank you, that in Buddhism as well.”

“In Thailand, when going to the Buddha, people don't ask for anything, only show appreciation and thank giving offerings to show their gratitude. While us, in Portugal, walk to Fatima to ask, just to ask and ask.

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Here you give thanks every day, for wellbeing, for your family being healthy, for the food you have on the table, for having spent another day, thank constantly to the Buddha. And even if there is a problem, accept this reality as karma, as a sign. So that there is always a positive in the negative.

Often the foreigners say that Thai smile is fake. In fact, it is not. Thais smile at us and make the effort so that we're good because this happiness always comes back to them. If the other is alright, I'm fine.”

4.2.4. Separation of Professional and Private Life

This relative cultural standard identifies a clear distinction between what is private life and what is business life for the Thais. A posture that can difficult the adaptation of a Portuguese expatriate as typically this segregation is not observed.

In Portugal it is usual to meet work colleagues in informal contexts as more often than not co-workers became friends outside of the office or at least have occasional gatherings. It is perceived that those occasions motivate the teams creating bonds between its elements that are beneficial for the daily operations of the business itself.

Being the professional relationships the ones that have more significance in the life of a recently expatriate due to the lack of contacts in the second culture, critical incidents supporting this standard were mentioned by all the interviewees.

The perception of this behavior is automatically connected to a notion of the difficulty felt as it relates to the construction of friendships between members of both cultures.

However, considering the value the Thais associate with their closed circle of family and friends it is not a matter of rudeness or not being welcoming. It is in fact the respect to those who are closer to the person in question.

“Having interpersonal relationships with Thais, out of work is very difficult. I can talk to all my colleagues at work, do not have any problems with anyone, regardless of position, everyone turns and talks and relies on me. What we are accustomed in Portugal is that you end up developing deep friendships with co-workers having affinity for a lot of people by often share simple moments as going for a drink after work or having lunch or dinner together. In Portugal we are used to opening the door of our home and invite people to come over to share a meal just to be together and have a talk, while in Thailand it does not occur. Usually relationships between co-workers do not mix with personal relationships outside of the office. I can open the door of my house ten times to a Thai colleague that he will not open his to me. It is part of the culture, is his home for his family as it represents space of union where several generations get together. It's not the same thing for us, nowadays, it's rare to find a house in Portugal which has three generations under the same roof.”

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For example, I have a colleague with whom I developed a very good relationship. Is the closest relationship I have with a Thai person, and he considers me a friend for life but I've never been to his house and we've never spent an evening together or agreed for our families to meet. For them those are separated concepts, there are the friends, there is work and there family nothing mixed, for us, we mix everything: my coworker is my friend, my kids play together with his kids and in the end, they are an extension of our family.”

4.2.5. Relationship Orientation

Thai culture is relationship oriented attributing great value to personal ties and trust. Relating to business contacts is considered to be more important than doing business in Thailand. In the business context, respectful relationships with stakeholders are key for the success of negotiation processes. Those relationships do not develop quickly and between meetings the processes can be lengthy building a strong base for future partnerships.

According to the Transparency International Organization Corruption Perception Index from 2015, classifies Thailand as the 76th/168 most corrupt countries in the world and Portugal as 26th/168. Corruption is defined, by this organization, as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain”. The classification evidences the influence of relationships in business as in relationship-based cultures due to the time and effort required to build a bond there is a superior inducement to shorten the process.

The acceptance as true that building relationships helps to achieve tasks, moves the focus from achievement orientation. Task oriented behaviors are perceived as selfish as also the overload and stress prevents Thais to achieve the wanted connections and therefore is not desirable.

The level of impact of this standard is different depending on the social class as in lower levels people incline towards a more achievement orientation behavior. A difference can also be identified between the Thais and the Chinese ancestry Thais (representing around 14% of the total population of the country in 2012, according to the World Fact Book published by the Central Intelligence Agency) which reside mainly in the capital of Bangkok as the second are more task oriented not valuing *Sanuk* (pleasure) and relationships as much.

Considering the Hofstede’s index of cultural dimensions, stands out that both Portuguese and Thai are collectivistic societies. Thailand having a slightly higher score in this variable. Thus Portuguese tend to establish tight social networks, highly value personal and professional relationships.

Regarding social interactions should be noted, as it was mentioned during the interviews, the differences regarding physical contact and interpersonal space between both cultures. In the Portuguese culture, physical contact, including between genders, is commonly accepted whereas in Thailand it is not well perceived but on the other hand, Thais require very little interpersonal space. The interviewees referred, as example, the different way of nonverbal greetings between the two countries. While in Portugal it is common to greet each other with two kisses on the cheeks or a hand shake, in Thailand the typical form of greeting, called *Wai*,

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is usually confined to a gesture involving pressing both palms together and slight bowing of the head.

Examples of Relationship Orientation:

“In Portugal and in Europe people are much more individualistic. Everyone lives their lives, co-workers have lunch sometimes because someone's birthday. But here is amazing, it's like a family. Each brings his food but not only for himself, puts it on the table and each person takes a little and tries everything.

To me they gave me every day different things to try. And they stay long at the table talking and talking. For me it's like every day a celebration. They share everything! Sometimes even too much. Once, there was a colleague to whom I told what I have been doing for that weekend. Suddenly at lunch time, she told everybody exactly what I told her.”

“Thai culture is very collectivistic, they think about the others and enjoy sharing with those around them. My colleagues, arrive here at the office in the morning bringing what they just bought placing it on the table to distribute between all. One day, one foreign colleague from India came and asked how much she should pay for the candy. That is an offense as it is not a matter of money but instead a way to demonstrate the interest on the common good of all. So if you want to eat, eat but you will not take it to your private office as the intention is to share. It is this constant sharing that also defines Thailand.”

4.3. Hofstede Cultural Dimensions: Portugal and Thailand

In order to analyze the differences between Portugal and Thailand regarding Hofstede dimensions, the table below shows the corresponded values.

Cultural Dimensions	Portugal	Thailand	Difference
Power Distance (higher = more hierarchy)	63	64	Thailand + 1
Individualism (higher = more individualistic)	27	20	Portugal + 7
Masculinity (higher = more masculine)	31	34	Thailand + 3
Uncertainty avoidance (higher = more uncertainty avoidance)	99	64	Portugal + 35
Long-term orientation (higher = a more long term orientation)	28	32	Thailand + 4
Indulgence	33	45	Thailand + 12

Table 2 - Portuguese and Thai scores in Hofstede's cultural dimensions
Source: Adapted from www.geert-hofstede.com

According to the table, both Portugal and Thailand have a high Power Distance index reflecting the predisposition to accept the inequality and hierarchy. However, in comparison between the two countries, it appears that Thailand tolerates inequality and hierarchy (getting a score of 64) slightly more than Portugal (which has 63).

As regarding the comparison of the two countries on Individualism index, it appears that Thailand has a lower score than Portugal (27 to 20), therefore, the Portuguese are more individualistic than the Thais. The study by Hofstede shows that there is a positive relationship between the national wealth of a country and the degree of individualism of their culture, in this case Portugal being compared with Thailand, a country with a higher level of wealth is naturally more individualistic.

Concerning the third dimension (masculinity index), it is observed that as the scores increase, more masculine is the country. However, contrary to what was stated regarding the degree of individualism, masculinity index is not associated to the level of economic development of a

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country. This is noticeable through the analysis of the indexes for both countries that can be considered feminine when Portugal is richer compared to Thailand.

Uncertainty avoidance index is the dimension where the biggest difference is observed between both countries. In this case, Portugal has an extremely high score and Thailand a medium one. The scores regarding long term orientation indexes reveal that both cultures are normative and pragmatic taking seriously the traditions and not focusing so much in the future.

Thailand shows an intermediate score concerning Indulgence index of 45 whereas Portugal scores a low score of 33 meaning a restrictive culture present in the cynicism and pessimism.

However, the results are not sufficient to establish a reliable comparison between both cultures without the application of the Cultural Standards Method.

4.4. Comparison between the cultural standards and Hofstede dimensions

This chapter aims to seek the correlation between the identified cultural standards and Hofstede's six dimensions.

As the values of the six variables have been explained in the previous chapter for both Portugal and Thailand, in this section the focus is exclusively the understanding of the observed standards, which are more specific and context related. It is important to bear in mind that Hofstede's dimensions do not intend to do a comparison of two specific cultures but instead establish the influence of a society's culture in the values of its members.

Power distance, Hofstede's first dimension, has a direct relation to the identified standard Respect for Hierarchy. Characterized by the unequal distribution of power and the formality of the relationships, Thai society was described as very hierarchical illustrating a more accentuated difference between cultures that the one point that separates the values of the study done with IBM employees.

The high Power Distance Index (64), but yet slightly lower than average Asian countries (71), is visible in the accentuated division of social classes and influence according to social factors such as age, academic background or family of birth. These divisions or ranks establish the privileges and protocols of life in society as explained in the previous chapter.

As for the second dimension, individualism, Thailand is classified as a collectivist country. Similarly to Portugal, the importance given to social relationships considering the role of family and friends comparing with the individual's life leave no doubt regarding the link to the standard Relationship Orientation. On top of that, Thailand is, as presented in chapter 3, a high-context society, characteristic of collectivistic cultures which tend to avoid conflict to protect the relationships among members.

The standard Saving Face and Conflict Avoidance originated by an indirect communication style is linked to the collectivism of Thai society and therefore, in accordance to the second dimension of Hofstede.

Masculinity is observed in competition driven societies which value success as key indicator of achievement. Both Thailand and Portugal have relatively low index values being classified as feminine cultures. Feminine countries, value consensus, caring for those around them and quality of life which represents the best success indicator.

This classification is explicitly identified in the standard Saving Face and Conflict Avoidance. Considering that Thailand has, the lowest Masculinity score of all Asian countries, the tendency to maintain conflict avoidance behaviors and traditional roles in society is observed.

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In general, in masculine societies the motivation is to be the best instead of liking what people do – feminine cultures.

Regarding the fourth dimension of Hofstede, uncertainty avoidance, defined as the degree of anxiety associated with unknown situations, the biggest difference between Portugal and Thailand is observed. Even though Portugal scores 99 against 64 of Thailand, the results of the research are not in accordance to this difference.

According to the definition of Hofstede, cultures with high uncertainty index tend to avoid ambiguous situations, looking for structure in the organizations in order to predict possible events and control the risk associated with them.

Thailand, according to the standard Respect for Hierarchy, shows that there is limited room for relativism and that concepts acquired early in the familiar education such as this, contribute for the decrease of uncertainty. Society is not readily open to changes basing the way of life in a set of principles and rules in order to protect the best situation for the group.

The fifth dimension, long-term orientation, registers a low score (32) for Thailand. Being present in society through normative values such as respect for traditions and the importance of religion – shown by the identified standard Religion and Spiritual Life.

In these societies, short-term oriented, values such as austerity, sense of shame and importance of unwritten rules which guide social relations are present and can be also related to both Respect for Hierarchy and Saving Face and Conflict Avoidance as found to be representative of Thai culture.

Therefore, in this case, the research corresponds to the scores of this cultural dimension, however, the perception of the interviewees is that Thai score should be higher than the Portuguese one.

Finally, the last dimension, indulgence, refers to how people control their immediate impulses. Thailand has an intermediate score of 45 which does not allow further conclusions and does not relate to the cultural standards identified.

The Separation between Professional and Private Life, acknowledged cultural standard, cannot be directly linked to any of Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Nonetheless, all the other relative cultural standards identified have a direct link with Hofstede's cultural dimensions scores.

4.5. Final Recommendations

The final recommendations of this study relate to the consciousness of own culture:

“A fish discovers its need for water only when it is no longer in it. Our own culture is like water to a fish. It sustains us. We live and breathe through it. What one culture may regard as essential, a certain level of material wealth for example, may not be so vital to other cultures” (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998, 20).

Therefore, managers must take into account the cultural dimensions when practicing management in different cultures. In order to be successful in managing business organization in Thailand expatriate managers must understand their own and Thai cultures.

Applying Western management theories in Thailand is usually conducted in a radical way. This is due to the fact that most management education and training are conducted using Western management theories. On top of that, the adaptation and transition of Portuguese managers is done without proper planning and adequate training.

The results of application of Western culture to Thai society and organizations can be as follows: (1) in the case where both cultures are in consistent, problems may not occur since such cultures are in line and are acceptable to both parties; (2) in the case of explicit conflict between the two cultures, the alternatives may be sacrifice by either side or compromise by both parties in order to temporarily avoiding the conflicts; and (3) in the case where each side insists on maintaining one’s own culture, severe conflicts can occur. (Jamnean Joungrakul, 2003: 21)

The concept of conflict being defined as “the perceived divergence of interests, or a belief that parties’ current aspiration cannot be achieved simultaneously “ (Pruit and Rubin, 1986).

Portuguese managers should, in order to avoid this mismatch, collect qualitative information in regards to Thai and Asian cultures and seek personal contacts or other expatriates that may be helpful in the clarification of certain misunderstandings or even capable of providing suggestions and support during the integration process.

5. Conclusion

Through the interview process was possible to verify that the expatriates recognize the existence of great cultural differences between Thailand and Portugal. The informations provided by the interviewees allowed the categorization of those differences and therefore the election of five cultural standards that most represent the dissimilarities between cultures. The descriptions which originated these were referred by the majority or by all the interviewees.

The outcome of this research does not intent to be interpreted as an unconditional and total description of Thai culture but instead, represent a tendency of most members of society to behave accordingly.

The awareness and understanding of these behaviors will enable the development of intercultural skills and boost the success of interactions between members of both cultures. The accomplishment of better and faster integration of expatriates or Portuguese people who cooperate with Thais in a business context can be enhanced by greater multicultural education or cross cultural training which can use this thesis as basis of reference.

In order to achieve a more complete analysis of the topic exposed, it is recommended the request to an expert to provide feedback regarding the cultural standards identified. Moreover, the exploration of the reverse viewpoint: “Portuguese Cultural Standards from a Thai perspective” should complete the research obtained and contribute for a better understanding of the cultural differences and limitations in the communication between both cultures. Therefore, another study should be performed based on the Cultural Standards Method and the realization of interviews to Thai managers working in Portugal or with Portuguese people.

This thesis was developed focusing on the analysis of Thai behavior in professional or business context. Therefore, it does not provide a complete characterization of Thai attitudes and believes.

The complexity of each culture, and in this case Thai culture, requires an extended period of contact for better understanding as it may take several years to overcome all the stages of cultural shock.

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Thai Cultural Standards from a Portuguese Perspective

Annexes

Annex 1

Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO	IND
Africa East	64	27	41	52	32	40
Africa West	77	20	46	54	9	78
Albania					61	15
Algeria					26	32
Andorra						65
Arab countries	80	38	53	68	23	34
Argentina	49	46	56	86	20	62
Armenia					61	
Australia	38	90	61	51	21	71
Austria	11	55	79	70	60	63
Azerbaijan					61	22
Bangladesh	80	20	55	60	47	20
Belarus					81	15
Belgium	65	75	54	94	82	57
Belgium French	67	72	60	93		
Belgium Netherl	61	78	43	97		
Bosnia					70	44
Brazil	69	38	49	76	44	59
Bulgaria	70	30	40	85	69	16
Burkina Faso					27	18
Canada	39	80	52	48	36	68
Canada French	54	73	45	60		
Chile	63	23	28	86	31	68
China	80	20	66	30	87	24
Colombia	67	13	64	80	13	83
Costa Rica	35	15	21	86		
Croatia	73	33	40	80	58	33
Cyprus						70
Czech Rep	57	58	57	74	70	29
Denmark	18	74	16	23	35	70
Dominican Rep					13	54
Ecuador	78	8	63	67		
Egypt					7	4
Ethiopia						46
El Salvador	66	19	40	94	20	89
Estonia	40	60	30	60	82	16
Finland	33	63	26	59	38	57
France	68	71	43	86	63	48
Georgia					38	32
Germany	35	67	66	65	83	40
Germany East					78	34
Ghana					4	72
Great Britain	35	89	66	35	51	69
Greece	60	35	57	112	45	50
Guatemala	95	6	37	101		
Hong Kong	68	25	57	29	61	17
Hungary	46	80	88	82	58	31
Iceland					28	67

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India	77	48	56	40	51	26
Indonesia	78	14	46	48	62	38
Iran	58	41	43	59	14	40
Iraq					25	17
Ireland	28	70	68	35	24	65
Israel	13	54	47	81	38	
Italy	50	76	70	75	61	30
Jamaica	45	39	68	13		
Japan	54	46	95	92	88	42
Jordan					16	43
Korea South	60	18	39	85	100	29
Kyrgyz Rep					66	39
Latvia	44	70	9	63	69	13
Lithuania	42	60	19	65	82	16
Luxembourg	40	60	50	70	64	56
Macedonia Rep					62	35
Malaysia	104	26	50	36	41	57
Mali					20	43
Malta	56	59	47	96	47	66
Mexico	81	30	69	82	24	97
Moldova					71	19
Montenegro					75	20
Morocco	70	46	53	68	14	25
Netherlands	38	80	14	53	67	68
New Zealand	22	79	58	49	33	75
Nigeria					13	84
Norway	31	69	8	50	35	55
Pakistan	55	14	50	70	50	0
Panama	95	11	44	86		
Peru	64	16	42	87	25	46
Philippines	94	32	64	44	27	42
Poland	68	60	64	93	38	29
Portugal	63	27	31	104	28	33
Puerto Rico					0	90
Romania	90	30	42	90	52	20
Russia	93	39	36	95	81	20
Rwanda					18	37
Saudi Arabia					36	52
Serbia	86	25	43	92	52	28
Singapore	74	20	48	8	72	46
Slovak Rep	104	52	110	51	77	28
Slovenia	71	27	19	88	49	48
South Africa					34	63
South Africa white	49	65	63	49		
Spain	57	51	42	86	48	44
Suriname	85	47	37	92		
Sweden	31	71	5	29	53	78
Switzerland	34	68	70	58	74	66
Switzerland French	70	64	58	70		
Switzerland German	26	69	72	56		
Taiwan	58	17	45	69	93	49
Tanzania					34	38

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Thailand	64	20	34	64	32	45
Trinidad and Tobago	47	16	58	55	13	80
Turkey	66	37	45	85	46	49
U.S.A.	40	91	62	46	26	68
Uganda					24	52
Ukraine					86	14
Uruguay	61	36	38	100	26	53
Venezuela	81	12	73	76	16	100
Vietnam	70	20	40	30	57	35
Zambia					30	42
Zimbabwe					15	28

Table 3 - Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Values
Source: www.geert-hofstede.com

Annex 2

1. Yim thang nam taa: The “I’m-so-happy-I’m-crying” smile.
2. Yim thak thaai: The polite smile for someone you barely know.
3. Yim cheun chom: The “I-admire-you” smile.
4. Fuen Yim: The stiff smile, also known as the “I-should-laugh-at-the joke-thought it’s-not-funny” smile.
5. Yim mee lessanai: The smile which masks something wicked in your mind.
6. Yim yaw: The teasing, or “I-told-you-so” smile.
7. Yim yae-yae: The “I-know-things-look-pretty-bad-but-there’s-no-point-in-crying-over-spilt-milk” smile.
8. Yim sao: The sad smile.
9. Yim haeng: The dry smile, also known as the “I-know-I-owe-you-the-money-but-I-don’t-have-it” smile.
10. Yim thaat thaan: The “I-disagree-with-you” smile, also known as the “You-cango-ahead-and-propose-it-but-your-idea’s-no-good” smile.
11. Yim cheuat-cheuan: The “I-am-the-winner” smile, the smile given to a losing competitor.
12. Yim soo: The “smile-in-the-face-of-an-impossible-struggle” smile.
13. Yim mai awk: The “I’m-trying-to-smile-but-can’t” smile.

Figure 7 - A Baker’s dozen
Source: Holmes & Tangtongtavy, 2000: 25