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## **The Impact of Cultural Dimensions in Intercultural Negotiation: Japan and Portugal**

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Master in International Management

Supervisor:  
PhD, Pedro Miguel Ribeiro de Almeida Fontes Falcão, Assistant  
Professor,  
Iscte-Iul

October 2023

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BUSINESS  
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Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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*To Culture*



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## **Resumo**

A investigação seguinte serve o propósito de confirmar o impacto das Dimensões Culturais de Hofstede no processo de negociação e o impacto em países tão diferentes quanto Japão e Portugal. Após uma extensa análise de literatura e teoria, foi conduzida uma análise quantitativa sobre as pontuações de ambos os países em cada dimensão cultural seguindo-se por numa análise qualitativa através de entrevistas semiestruturadas. No fim, apesar de diversas pontuações não terem sido completamente aceites pela amostra de estudo, vários exemplos e histórias partilhadas e outras opiniões não sobre nenhuma dimensão em específico, ajudaram a validar o impacto de algumas destas dimensões culturais na negociação e intercâmbio entre os dois países. Como é o caso da preferência de ambos os países por uma relação mais duradoura ao invés de uma negociação isolada, reflexo do seu coletivismo interior. Finalmente, recomendações são dadas com base, não só na teoria abordada como nas experiências de cada um dos entrevistados, nomeadamente aspetos comportamentais. Para o Japão, o fator mais importante é estar aberto às diferenças culturais entre os dois países, tais como a frontalidade do português. No caso de Portugal, passa por conhecer e respeitar regras implícitas e prezar pela formalidade, respeito e eficiência acima de tudo.

Palavras-chave: negociação, intercultural, Portugal, Japão

Classificação JEL: F23 – Empresas Multinacionais • Negócios Internacionais, F53 – Acordos Internacionais e Cumprimento • Organizações Internacionais





## **Abstract**

The following research serves the purpose to confirm the impact of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in the Negotiation Process and the impact on countries as different as Japan and Portugal. After a thorough theoretical literature review, a qualitative analysis on the Cultural Dimensions of both countries was developed, and then followed by Qualitative semi-structured interviews. In the end, although many scores in these dimensions were not fully agreed upon by the research sample, several examples and stories shared, and other opinions not directly given about any specific dimension helped validate the impact of some of these cultural dimensions in the Negotiation and exchange between the countries. For example, the preference for Relationship building of both countries over a one-time negotiation, a reflection of their inner collectivism. Finally, recommendations are given based on, not only theory, but also on the experiences of each interviewee, namely behavioural aspects. For Japan, the most important fact is to be open to the cultural differences between both countries, such as the frontality of the Portuguese. In Portugal's case, the importance lies in understanding and respecting implicit rules and maintain formality, respect, and efficiency above all.

**Keywords:** negotiation, intercultural, Portugal, Japan

**JEL Codes:** F23 - Multinational Firms • International Business, F53 - International Agreements and Observance • International Organizations



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# 1. Introduction

We are all clearly aware of how difficult the Negotiation process is when done in what we would consider the most unbiased, fair conditions. Namely, a domestic negotiation. We understand how the other party works, what they think and can expect a very similar behaviour to the one we are used to.

With the recent globalisation, however, the need for Intercultural Negotiations is becoming more and more evident. When faced with the addition of different cultural beliefs and behaviours to the already tricky process of negotiation, it becomes even more difficult for a negotiator to reach a favourable outcome for him/herself, let alone to all parties.

To minimise the risk of entering a very unsuccessful negotiation in this context, it is extremely important to understand how the other culture behaves. After years of research, it has become more and more evident that cultural awareness is an unavoidable necessity and several best practices have been passed on from generation to generation of negotiators.

The objective of this work is to have a better understanding of how Portugal and Japan, two seemingly very different cultures, can hold more successful, long-lasting negotiations. To reach the best conclusion, the work will approach the cultural dimensions' studies and the implications in negotiation these have for both countries.

This work is structured as follows. Next, the Literature Review is presented, followed by a brief explanation of the methodology used. Following, the results are presented in detail, while juxtaposing them with previously learnt theory on the topic. Subsequently, a compilation of these results and discussion is given as conclusions in the form of answers to the Research Questions, and recommendations for both cultures based on theory and experience. Lastly, some limitations to the study at hand and possible future research is shared.





## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Negotiation

Negotiation can be defined as an integrated strategy composed of a defined behaviour (Gökmen, 2019) and back-and-forth communication designed to reach an agreement between two or more parties with shared and conflicting interests (Patton, 2005). For a good negotiation and good outcome for both parties, several elements must be in place: Interests, Legitimacy, Relationship, Alternatives, Commitments and, lastly, Communication (Patton, 2005).

This complex process has been researched exhaustively from several viewpoints, with Adair and Brett (2005) coming to terms with 4 major stages: Relational Positioning, Identification of the Problem, Approaches to Reach Solutions and, lastly, the stage of Reaching an Agreement.

1. Relational Positioning: Parties define their strategy, be it relationship building or competitive posturing. (Adair & Brett, 2005) It is also during this stage that one can observe how the influence is exerted with status and power (Schoen, 2020).
2. Problem Identification: Building trust (Adair & Brett, 2005), one of the most important elements of each negotiation (Gunia et al., 2012). Trusting factors can also be external to the relationship of the parties, such as legal systems and law enforcement (Metcalf et al., 2007).
3. Generating Solutions: The party to first propose a solution for the negotiation is easily predicted to be the greatest benefited. (Galinsky & Mussweiler, 2001) Also in this stage, different approaches and strategies to the negotiation process are visible: Competition versus Cooperation, Problem-solving and Power Persuasion (Schoen, 2020).
4. Reaching an Agreement: The final agreement is prepared, and it lies then with both parties to either accept or veto it. (Schoen, 2020) The capacity to deal with deadlines and decision-making of each party will become very evident in this last stage.

### 2.2. Intercultural Negotiation

Because differences in context, personalities, knowledge, and skills make every negotiation to some extent unique, there is no “right way” to negotiate (Patton, 2005), especially so when it comes to International Negotiation.

For International Negotiation, two contexts are believed to have influence: Environmental, forces not controlled by the negotiators; and Immediate, factors over which negotiators do seem to have control to some extent. (Patton, 2005) Taking a closer look at the Environmental Context, Salacuse (1988, as cited in: Lewicki et al., 2016, p. 244) identified six factors that difficult International Negotiation: Political and Legal Pluralism, International Economics, Foreign Governments and Bureaucracies, Instability, Ideology, and, lastly, Culture.

Regular negotiation is already a quite complicated task with both perspectives having to be taken into consideration, however this hassle is greatly enhanced when an Intercultural Negotiation is encountered due to the cultural believes and patterns by which each party behaves, thus creating additional struggles - the clear driver for failed outcomes (Gökmen, 2019; Gulbro & Herbig, 1994, Weiss & Stripp, 1998, as cited in: Schoen, 2020). The differences in values and thought processes of the two sides of the intercultural negotiation will have a very significant, direct impact on the results (Li & Houchun, 2010, as cited in: Chen, 2022) as in the negotiation strategies (Chen, 2022) and ultimately the entire process. To better research this topic, Robert Janosik (1987) identified four ways that culture has been conceptualised in International Negotiation: as a Learnt Behaviour, in Context, as Dialectic, and as Shared Values (Janosik, 1987, as cited in: Lewicki et al., 2016, p.249).

The culture as shared values approach works around understanding the model around which each culture is built and how these intrinsic values and beliefs influence negotiations within the culture. (Faure, 1999, Sebenius, 2002a; as cited in Lewicki et al., 2016, p.250). Even though there are several behavioural differences within one culture as seen above, so are there between cultures (Rubin & Sander, 1991, as cited in Lewicki et al., 2016, p.249), which is why cross-cultural negotiations are so difficult and hard to establish (Lewicki et al., 2016, p.252), seeing as these cultural values so greatly influence the negotiation processes themselves (Hofstede et al., 2019). As Ketipearachchi (2021) wisely states, the more an overseas business fully understands their host's culture, and changes their strategy to suit them, the greater the competitive advantage from said country becomes, thus bringing great results to their business. As the most frequent approach to cross-cultural comparison, several cultural models have been drafted and cited for several deeper analyses of Intercultural Negotiation (Schoen, 2020).

### **2.2.1. Studies around Cultural Dimensions**

As confirmed by the deep analysis of Schoen (2020), until 2017, a total of 476 publications were identified to be linking Cultural Dimensions' models, namely Hofstede's 6 Dimensions and GLOBE's study, to better study Cross-Cultural Negotiation Approaches.

Even though the most quoted, repeated and validated (e.g. Beugelsdijk et al., 2015, as cited in Wursten, 2019) model so far can easily be identified as Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions, since the earlier 60s several researches have been produced and studied (Hall & Hall, 1990, Hofstede, 2001, House et al., 2002, Opler et al., 1961, Schwartz, 1992 , Trompenaars, 1993, as cited in Fink et al., 2005, pp. 6-8), all with the same purpose: explaining visible cultural variances, grouping them under several “Dimensions” (Wursten, 2019).

<b>Researchers (Sources)</b>	<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Sample Context</b>
Kluckhohn/ Strodtbeck (1961)	Human Problem Solutions	Five Dimensions	Quantitative questionnaire Qualitative report	5 local cultures in the USA
Hall/Hall (1990)	Communication at work	Four Dimensions	Qualitative open interviews	180 employees and managers in the field of economy
Hofstede (1980, 1991, 2010)	National cultural difference within one organisation	Six Dimensions	Quantitative Questionnaire	76 countries
Trompenaars (1993)	Management relevant problem solutions	Seven Dimensions	Quantitative questionnaire with scales	15,000 employees in companies
Schwartz (1992)	Present and future in society	Eleven Dimensions	Quantitative questionnaire with 9-point Likert scales	200 teachers and 200 students in 20 countries
Javidan, M., House, R. et al (GLOBE) (2002)	Business leadership present and future	Nine Dimensions	Quantitative questionnaire and analysis of qualitative data	17,000 middle managers in 61 countries

Main source: Fink et al., 2004, as cited in Fink and Neyer, 2005, pp. 6-8

Figure 2.1: Overview of Culture Dimensions Research

### 2.3. Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions

The overview of existing literature about Cross-Cultural Negotiation shows that most of the publications refer to Hofstede as a cultural model of reference (Schoen, 2020), with great analysis of the implications of each dimension to the negotiation practices witnessed all around the globe. Despite being one of the most acclaimed scholars in his field, his warnings on cultural implications in the business world are still hugely neglected (The Economist, 2008, as cited in Wursten, 2019). Regardless the amount of scrutiny and several studies to prove him wrong

(Beugelsdijk et al., 2015, as cited in Wursten, 2019), they have yet to be successful in proving wrong the actuality of his studies.

Of course, Hofstede does not assume culture to be static, seeing his model as something to use while taking relativity as key (Wursten, 2019). With modernisation, countries grow richer, and people's values change as well. As Beugelsdijk et al.'s (2015) findings dictate, the average changes lead to increases in dimensions such as Individualism and Indulgence versus Restraint and decreases in Power Distance. These changes, however, do not alter the relative position in each dimension of each country.

### **2.3.1. Introduction to the 6 Dimensions Model**

As Coene and Jacobs (2017) cleverly pointed out, we can very easily explain the cultural dimensions with the help of RGB colouring. Just like each colour is created with a certain amount of Red, Green, and Blue on a range from 0 to 255, similarly, Hofstede's model breaks down a national culture into six dimensions on a scale of 0 to 100. Like one can describe a certain colour by using the three numbers, one can also describe any culture in six numbers, one for each dimension (Coene & Jacobs, 2017). These can be recognised as Power Distance Index (PDI), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), Long-term Orientation (LTO) and lastly, Indulgence versus Restraint (IDR).

### **2.3.2. Implications of the Cultural Dimensions in the Negotiation Process**

Although Venaik and Brewer (2008, as cited in: Stefanidis et al., 2021) have pointed out the limitations of the correlation between Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions on a National level and the negotiation, due to the lack of explanation at a societal-level and context-related negotiation tactics, through various studies conducted so far, it is clearly visible that there are correlations between the differences in the previously established Cultural Dimensions (Hofstede et al., 2010) and Negotiation practices in each culture (Hofstede, Jonker, et al., 2010; Hofstede et al., 2012, Verwaart, 2011, as cited in: Hofstede et al. 2019). Throughout the past decades, several scholars (e.g., Liu, 2018, Liu et al., 2019, Schoen, 2020, Usinier, 2019) have identified clear connections between each negotiation stage (Adair & Brett, 2005) and even the behaviour and style – competitive versus collaborative – towards said negotiation (Imai & Gelfand, 2010, as cited in Caputo et al., 2019) and each cultural dimension.

### **2.3.2.1. Power Distance Index (PDI):**

Although high power distant countries seem to be related to the first offers in a Negotiation (Adair et al., 2007, as cited in Schoen, 2020), there is also a very high tendency for a lengthy process when such cultures are involved (Hurn, 2007, as cited in Gonzalez, 2021; Lewicki et al., 2016, p. 251). There is also a positive correlation between a High PDI and a Competitive negotiation style (Caputo et al., 2019).

Power Distance can affect greatly the influence the negotiator's status has on the negotiation process and outcome (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.40, as cited in Hofstede et al., 2019). Even though there is a positive effects of a negotiation between two countries with compatible culture schemes and expectations when it comes to hierarchy and Power Distance (Liu, 2018), when in a negotiation between two parties with different status and different views on status, the negotiation can prove to be either very difficult for the lower-status, low-power distant negotiator and his/her high-status, high-power distant counterpart (Liu et al., 2019).

### **2.3.2.2. Individualism (IDV):**

As cross-cultural-research has already gathered, there are differences in the decision-making process of a culture, especially along the Individualism scale (Hofstede, 2001, as cited in Schoen, 2020) seeing as a collectivistic society will tend to take decisions based on the effect on the group and the opposite for an individualistic society. Nonetheless, the Individualism dimension is also very closely connected to the second stage of a negotiation (Adair & Brett, 2005) in terms of information exchange (Schoen, 2020). Not only due to the low-context versus high-context dynamic involved in each society (Adair & Brett 2004, as cited in Schoen 2020; Coene & Jacobs, 2017; Gonzalez, 2021) that can easily hinder a negotiation (Baber & Ojala, 2015, as cited in Schoen, 2020), but also due to the building of trust, with an Individualistic culture preferring external sources of trust (Metcalf 2007, as cited in Schoen, 2020) as opposed to the collectivistic counterpart. Research has also identified a significant relationship between collectivism and a cooperative negotiation style (Caputo et al., 2019).

A collectivistic culture sees a prior relationship between the parties as an absolute must for the negotiation (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.400, as cited in: Hofstede et al., 2019), with this process being the lengthier of the negotiation itself (Gonzalez, 2021). When in search for the outcome, the well-being of the group is sought after more than that of the individual, thus in some cases the individual of these societies taking the less beneficial option for himself (Hurn, 2007, as cited in: Gonzalez, 2021). In fact, this preference for the group over the individual is

so deeply rooted in the negotiation that even the speech is sought to be led in plural (Liu & Zhang, 2021).

#### **2.3.2.3. Masculinity (MAS):**

Masculinity versus Femininity, or tough versus tender as the dimension is more recently characterised in the business world (Coene & Jacobs, 2017; Hofstede, Minkov, et al., 2010) is a balance for performance versus cooperation (Hofstede et al., 2006, as cited in: Hofstede, Jonker, et al., 2010). Caputo et al. (2019) were able to confirm this, with results showing a positive correlation between Masculinity and a competitive negotiation style as opposed to a negative correlation with a cooperative style, characteristic of a Feminine society. In negotiations with a masculine society, the conflict and discussion exist in order to reach a winner, and consequently a loser, other than to reach a beneficial agreement for both parties (Dahlen, 2014, as cited in: Gonzalez, 2021), opposite to a negotiation with a feminine society where a discussion should be held politely and with respect for both parties (Gonzalez, 2021).

#### **2.3.2.4. Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI):**

Uncertainty Avoidance is a dimension very closely related with the flow and structure of the negotiation (Lewicki et al., 2016, p.252) as opposed to a specific stage. The Uncertainty Avoidant party is expected to engage in a more emotional style of negotiation (Hofstede et al., 2008b, as cited in: Hofstede, Jonker, et al., 2010), with a tendency for a cooperative negotiation style (Caputo, 2019), as opposed to a more relaxed negotiation hosted by cultures scoring lower on this dimension (Hofstede et al., 2008b, as cited in Hofstede et al., 2010). This dimension is also very connected to the establishing and building of trust as cultures with higher scores will require facts and reliability before any relationship is established (Usinier, 2019) and thoroughly calculate the risks before any important decision (Liu & Zhang, 2021). Oppositely, a culture with weaker uncertainty avoidance, will be more willing to try new challenges (Liu & Zhang, 2021).

#### **2.3.2.5. Long-Term Orientation (LTO):**

Just as this dimension classifies the culture's perception of time (Coene & Jacobs, 2017, Hofstede, Minkov, et al., 2010), so does it have a close connection with the deadlines and any other important timings involved in the negotiation (Schoen, 2020). The tendency for a country to be long-term or short-term oriented however did not prove to have any connection with the negotiation styles as per Caputo et al.'s (2019) research.

### **2.3.2.6. Indulgence vs. Restraint (IDR):**

As the last to be added to Hofstede's research (Hofstede, Minkov, et al., 2010), there is a lack of research on this Dimension. In the business world, indulgent employees can more easily voice their opinions and give feedback to peers, but, similar to an individualistic country, in negotiation this can translate into a quicker forming of opinions and decisions based on the individual goal, as opposed to that of the organisation (Gonzalez, 2021). On the other hand, a restraint negotiator will take longer to reach a conclusion and base their decisions on organisation goals rather than the individual's (Gonzalez, 2021). Additionally, a restraint culture prefers a tighter schedule and will avoid any sort of leisure time, unless closely correlated with the negotiation process itself, for example the relationship building (Gonzalez, 2021). In the workplace, restraint countries can tend to remain in the same job for longer than their indulgent counterpart that will more easily change when unsatisfied (Gonzalez, 2021), which may worry even the negotiation partner about the future of said negotiation and business relation, especially when in a culture that deeply values relationship building and maintaining.

Exactly as several authors have hypothesised (Inman et al., 2013, Kirkman et al., 2006, Bazerman et al., 2000, Leung, 1997, as cited in Schoen, 2020; Leonavičienė & Burinskienė, 2021) and later confirmed by Schoen (2020), the Individualism Dimension is the most used when it comes to Cross-Cultural-Negotiation research. In fact, research is lacking pluralism also quite evident by the lack of information relating negotiation and dimensions like MAS and UAI, in existing literature (Schoen, 2020), and especially in the last added Dimension, Indulgence (Leonavičienė & Burinskienė, 2021).

The influence of several cultural dimensions in the negotiation process is however under some controversy. Exactly as what Schoen (2020) saw in his extensive research, most steps of the negotiation process cannot be explained by a single dimension. In fact, Cross-Cultural-Negotiation can only be explained by a combination of two or more cultural dimensions. Be it the combination of Individualism and Long-Term Orientation for the approach towards the negotiation (Baber & Ojala, 2015, as cited in Schoen, 2020), or the combination of the first and Power Distance, two of the most researched dimensions, related to the view of each party in the first offers' stage (Adair et al., 2007, as cited in Schoen, 2020). The suggestion to group several dimensions to better justify certain behaviours and patterns in the negotiation then arises (Brett & Okumura, 1998, as cited in Schoen, 2020; Hofstede, Jonker, et al., 2010; Schoen, 2020; Wursten, 2019).

The first steps towards this realisation were made by Professor Owen Jones Stevens along with Hofstede by combining two dimensions. According to their research, a combination of PDI and UAI scores would create four different mental representations of organisations (Hofstede, Minkov, et al., 2010).

### **2.3.3. The 7 Mental Images of National Culture**

The complexity of the negotiation and lack of explanation driven by the sole of individual dimensions led to deeper research by Wursten (2019) in developing what would be called as “7 Mental Images of National Culture”. These mindsets were born of the combination of the first 4 dimensions and relative scores of each country, then grouped in different clusters, most coincidentally with some sort of historical or geographical relation (Wursten, 2019).

These are: Contest, Network, Well-Oiled Machine, Solar System, Pyramid, Family, and lastly, the Seventh Mental Image (Japan).

### **2.3.4. The 7 Mindsets and the Implications in Intercultural Negotiation**

Just like the dimensions themselves, so do these clusters have a clear relation with the negotiation process. It was based on these that Coene and Jacobs (2017) developed further into the “7 Mindsets of International Negotiation” and understood the correlation between these cultural clusters (Wursten, 2019) and their negotiation behaviours (Coene & Jacobs, 2017). These are: Contest – Competitor, Network – Connected, Oiled Machine – Organiser, Solar System – Diplomat, Pyramid – Reciprocator, Family – Marathonian, and Japan – Craftsman.



### 3. Methodology

Knowledge and understanding are actively constructed with the help of several factors. Even though several authors emphasise that knowledge construction is based on individual experience – Empiricism (Locke, 1999; Berkeley, 2006; Hume, 2019) - the social context where one is inserted is as valuable, if not more. As Piaget (1954) and Vygotsky (1978)'s works gathered, in fact, individuals, from a young age, actively construct knowledge and understanding within their social contexts. This interaction with society is what constructs everyone's patterns and beliefs – also known as Social Constructivism. Taking this into consideration, even though experience in certain areas, in this case experience with Negotiation is immensely valuable, it ends up becoming more irrelevant when the study goes from actual experience and examples one has from their own Business Negotiation Experience to the actuality of the cultures and its effects and representation in the societies' day-to-day.

To further understand the implications of the previously studied Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in these two countries, I started by conducting a quantitative analysis of each country's scoring in all 6 Dimensions (Hofstede Insights, 2022). This way it would be quicker to identify the expected view of the culture about Negotiation Practices based on previously discussed influences of these dimensions and further verify the theory with concrete opinions based on experience.

To better understand the experiences and insights of those with experience in business Negotiation, and the general understanding and experiences of those without concrete Business Negotiation, I further developed the study with the help of a Qualitative Analysis, in order to better understand and verify the complex findings in the literature, cross-checking with the interviewees' stories (Creswell, 2007). More particularly, Semi-structured interviews, which provide the participants with the opportunity to construct and share their personal narratives and social realities.

In general, qualitative research methods help the researcher look at events over time and look for relations between causes and consequences and behavioural patterns (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In sum, "Qualitative Interviewers listen to hear the meaning of what interviewees tell them" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

As introduced by Bernard (2018), a semi-structured interview is a hybrid between a freewheeling unstructured interview and a structured interview. It still allows the researcher a more fluid process, than the rigid structured interview, but still allowing for concrete and

comparable data to be gathered in each moment. Additionally, it helps bring a sense of minor control using an interview guide with questions or even just instructions allowing the interviewer to not lose focus of what is needed from that question and not to lose themselves in the very interesting stories interviewees may bring (Bernard, 2018).

These semi-structured interviews are also great tools when in presence of higher-level members of community as to better control their scarce and very valuable time (Bernard, 2018). These are also used when the researcher has a particular topic to study and learn more about, preparing a limited number of questions in advance, and planning to do follow-up questions based on the interviewee's answers (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In these interviews, similar to an unstructured interview, the researcher will encourage the interviewee to answer fully and in detail (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Any interview can also be labelled as Topic and Cultural interviews, depending on the objective of the study. Topic Interviews to aid the researcher identify specific facts and description of events that will help answer a particular research question; and Cultural Interviews more focused on the understanding of norms and values underlying people's behaviours and sense of ethics. (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In the interview process for this dissertation, the majority of the questions were thought as per cultural interviews, though it is undeniable that, like in many interviews, I opted for a mix of both, as to try and infer the best conclusions possible on the topic. Interviews are also structured around three types of questions: Main Question, Probes and Follow-up Questions. (Rubin & Rubin, 2012)

Semi-structured interviews are extremely important when looking for opinions and narratives based on the individuals' cultural and social contexts, being particularly useful for exploring how societal influences shape perceptions and beliefs. Being a one-to-one interview, also allows for better and more specific information gathering (Goldie & Pritchard, 1981).

Although Qualitative Methods allow for further research in deep topics, the analysis is quite complicated (Creswell, 2007). In addition, not only is the explaining of theory behind some questions complicated in terms of timing for the researcher, but also for the interviewee since retaining this much information in such a short time is difficult. It is also complicated for the researcher to balance the roles of facilitator and observer, ensuring in every interview one remains aware of their own biases and avoids imposing their own interpretations on the participants' narratives. Lastly, depending on the topic at hand, there may be some misunderstandings in researcher vs. participant interpretation of questions and data presented, if that is the case, leading to different responses across all interviewees.

For the analysis itself, when it comes to a qualitative research, analyses are usually classified as: Focused on Meaning, Focused on Language and General Analyses (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

For this research, the most appropriate method which I used was the Bricolage, under General Analyses, which adapts a mix of technical discourses, incorporating different analytical techniques. With Bricolage, one uses Ad Hoc methods, known to be less structured than many other more systematic analyses such as categorisation and conversation analyses (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Some Bricolage Ad Hoc Tactics used in the interview analysis in the dissertation are mostly Plausibility and Relativity between variables (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additionally, due to the length of the interviewees and nature of responses (many times in the form of examples and stories) I also used Meaning condensation in order to better group the answers of each participant (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).



# 4. Results and Discussion

## 4.1. Overview of the empirical research

### 4.1.1. Demographic data

The research' target audience consists of Portuguese nationals with experience with the Japanese culture and Japanese nationals with experience with Portugal and the Portuguese culture. The sample group is composed of 12 participants, with and without experience with Negotiation. The selection of participants was non-random, based on availability after initial contact.

As Figure 4.1 illustrates, the sample of this research is majorly composed of Portuguese nationals (75% with 9 individuals), with lower participation on the Japanese side (25% with 3 individuals). In terms of gender (Figure 4.2), equally there is a clear difference with the majority of the sample being female (8 answers). Lastly, I divided the participants into five age groups (Figure 4.3): 20-30 years old, 30-40 years old, 40-50 years old, 50-60 years old and lastly over 60 years old. The most representative group is 20-30 years old with 42% of total responses, though all Portuguese Nationals. Followed by the 31-40 years old age group with 4 participants, and the remaining groups with only one respondent.

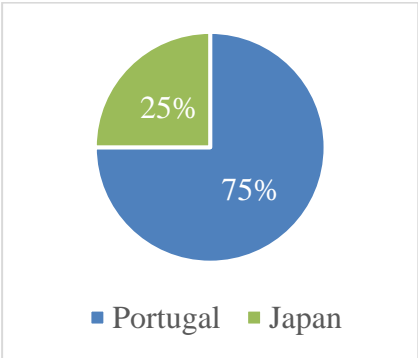


Figure 4.1 – Percentage of sample by nationality

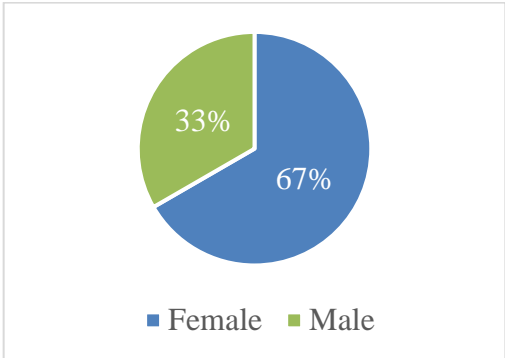


Figure 4.2 – Percentage of sample by gender

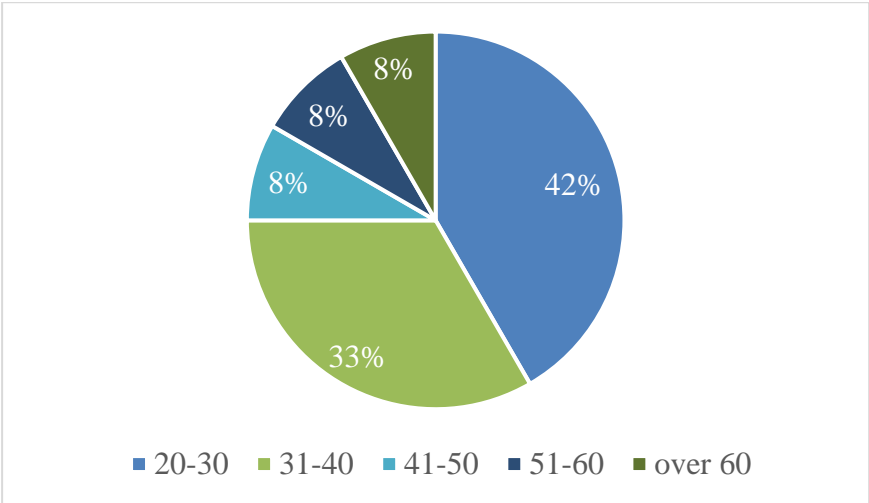


Figure 4.3 – Percentage of sample by age group

Taking a closer look at the division between genders and age groups in both nationalities, the distribution is not very equal. All three Japanese participants were female (Figure 4.4) and aside from one participant, the remaining two are part of age groups with no other participant (Figure 4.5).

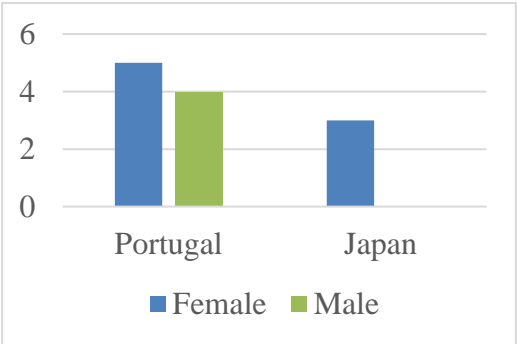


Figure 4.4 – Percentage of sample by nationality and gender

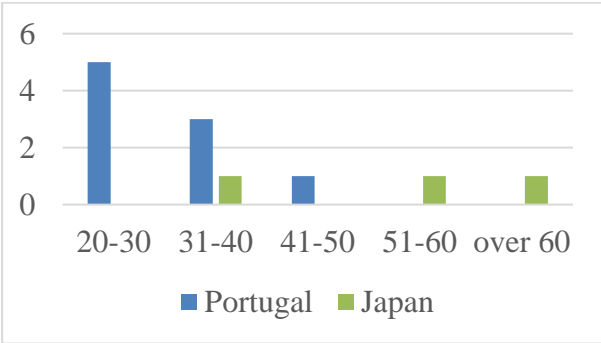


Figure 4.5 – Percentage of sample by nationality and age groups

**4.1.2. Contact gathering and interview process.**

Initially, I contacted 11 institutions from embassies to international companies from each country, with experience in the other market, as this was the requisite. Additionally, I contacted a total of 23 individuals whose contacts I had gathered either through personal relationships with my previous academic studies or through common acquaintances. Out of the 3 answers received from the contacted Entities, I was able to schedule 1 interview, and the remaining responses were from 11 out of the 21 answers I received. In sum, many of the first yeses received ended up not being fruitful due to busy schedules and personal problems. For this reason, the sample size ended up amounting to only 12 answers and unfortunately quite uneven in terms of nationalities, something I had tried to keep as similar as possible. Also, out of the 12 responses, 3 were able to only answer through a questionnaire like form with my interview questions and topics due to their limited work schedule and time zone constraints.

To every participant interested, I sent the questions beforehand, in order to also aid in understanding whether or not they would be able to participate. In this stage I believe I may have lost some interested respondents due to the complicated nature of the topic and long list

of questions/topics planned. Additionally, seeing as the main topic was around negotiation and many respondents were not heavily involved with business negotiation on a day-to-day basis, some preferred to decline the questioning out of fear of not being the best people to answer (mostly seen with the Japanese inquiries). I tried to help understand that I was also after the opinion of those not experienced with business negotiation, however this was a big pain point for the research.

The chosen interview type was a qualitative semi-structured interview, chosen to help gather more valuable insights on the topic, with the help of occasional examples and stories from the participants. Each interview was quite long, lasting from 1h to 2h depending on the participants' responses and insights. Initially, the interview would start by explaining the main topic concerning the research: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions. Depending on the age and awareness of the topic, this part took longer than expected.

Due to the complicated nature of the topic, it took some time when gathering answers to the questions such as "Now that you have heard about the Cultural Dimensions and how your country scores, do you have any comments?". In fact, this question alone would take almost half of the interview time, though extremely insightful. When it came to more concrete questions surrounding examples of difficulties the interviewees may have had during their contact with other culture or what their opinions were surrounding more common knowledge topics such as "difficulties in intercultural negotiation", almost all participants were more than happy to share their opinions and experiences with me.

For most interviews I was able to record, though for some, I was not able to do any recording online. In any case, even for those I was able to record, I made sure to take thorough notes and rewrite them neatly right after every interview as to not lose any important topic. After collecting each answer, I gathered all information regarding Demography in order to keep track of my sample size and traits (nationality, gender and age groups) while I was gathering more and more answers. Sadly, the sample size reached ultimately was not as optimal as hoped.

After gathering all answers and researching more deeply on some of the topics raised by some interviewees, I compared the opinions of each participant to the theory researched before to draw some conclusions and gathered some recommendations on how to negotiate successfully with Japan and Portugal. Not only from theory, but also clear recommendations of the participants. The interview process started with one test interview conducted on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July, and after some adaptations to the questions, I obtained every answer between the 14<sup>th</sup> of September and the 9<sup>th</sup> of October.

#	Nationality	Gender	Age	Previous knowledge of culture	Fluency foreign language	Negotiation Experience	Time with culture	Contact with country	Work Sector
1	Portuguese	Female	26	Yes	Advanced	None	3 years	Studies & Work	Education
2	Portuguese	Male	30	Yes	Basic	Yes	1 year	Work	International Sales
3	Portuguese	Male	24	Yes	Intermediate	None	1 Year	Studies & Work	Temporary Work (at the time)
4	Portuguese	Female	33	Yes	Intermediate	None	4 Years	Work	Education
5	Japanese	Female	52	None	Higher Intermediate	None	10 Years	Work	Education
6	Portuguese	Male	45	None	No special knowledge	Yes	15 Years	Work	IT
7	Portuguese	Female	25	Yes	Intermediate	None	1 Year	Studies & Work	Hospitality (at the time)
8	Portuguese	Female	38	Yes	Intermediate	Yes	10 Years	Work	Tourism Education Consulting
9	Japanese	Female	65	None	Higher Intermediate	None	Over 30 Years	Work	Education
10	Japanese	Female	36	Yes	Intermediate	None	Vaguely	Work	Insurance
11	Portuguese	Male	30	Yes	Intermediate	None	13 Years 7 Years	Studies Work	Education
12	Portuguese	Female	31	Yes	Lower Intermediate	None	1 Year	Studies & Work	Hospitality (at the time)

Figure 4.6 – List of sample group by main characteristics

#### 4.2. Theoretical concept – Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions

Before the start of the interviews, I conducted more thorough research on the scorings and their implications of both Portugal and Japan with Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions. Taking a closer look at these two cultures of different parts of the world it is interesting to see in what way the cultural dimensions of each country are related to what is felt to be the negotiation behaviour and culture of each. With Portugal being the first European country to establish contact with the Asian country in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and even though there are still some evident influences in



both the language and gastronomy (Costa, 2015), as in fact was common during the maritime discoveries, are these cultures similar enough to establish a good negotiation no matter what the situation?

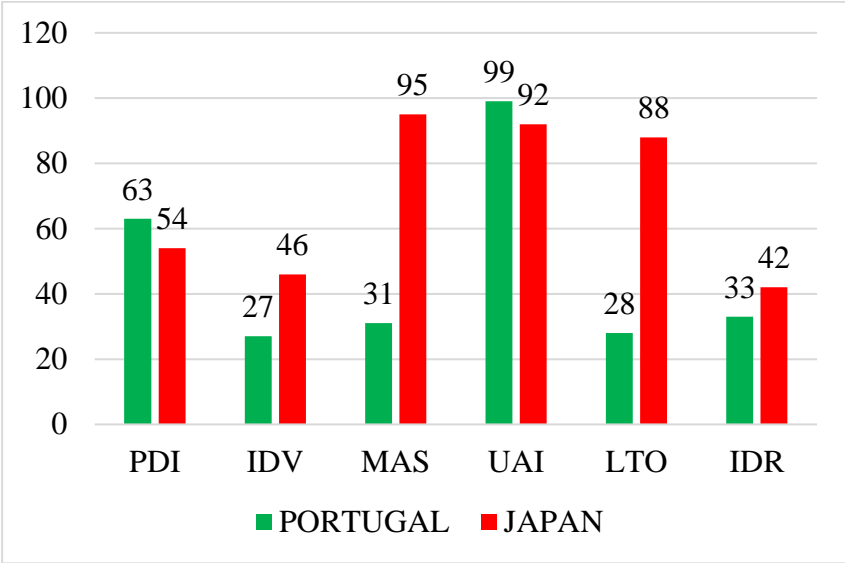


Figure 4.7: Hofstede Insights – Culture Dimensions country comparison between Portugal and Japan (Hofstede Insights, 2022)

**Power Distance (PDI):**

Due to the high score of 63, Portugal is evidently a hierarchical country and power distance between social classes is acknowledged. The communication and information flow are expected to take place vertically. (Hofstede Insights, 2022) On an organisational level there is a noted fearful respect towards one’s superiors and their decisions (Santos, 2021), this also being one reason why the Negotiation process with the Portuguese is quite slow, in addition to them not appreciating any rushed decisions. (Katz, 2008)

With a score of 54, Japan is perceived as a borderline hierarchical and meritocratic society in both daily and business contexts. Nonetheless, it is not as hierarchical as most of the other Asian cultures like China or South Korea. (Hofstede Insights, 2022) In the workplace, there is a tendency towards a management style involving mentorships and the respect for towards the superior is more open than that of the Portuguese (Santos, 2021). In fact, the Japanese dislike the bold use of power and try to avoid these kinds of situations in both daily life and business world. (Zandt, 1970) Foreigners, however, experience Japan as an extremely hierarchical society due to the slow decision-making process, characteristic of a hierarchically strong culture (Hofstede Insights, 2022), caused by their decision-making process known as *Ringi* (稟議), based on the principle that decisions should be made in group with every proposal passed

upward and horizontally, confirming both the Power Distance Scoring and Collectivistic trait. (Zandt, 1970)

### **Individualism (IDV):**

In comparison with the most European countries, Portugal is a collectivist country, scoring 27 on this dimension. (Hofstede Insights, 2022) Individuals are expected to have a sense of belonging to their group, although still leaving quite some room for individual preferences. (Katz, 2008) The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group.

As a mid-collectivistic society, with a score of 46, the Japanese put harmony of the group above the expression of individual opinions. This aspect of the culture is translated into a team-negotiation approach in the business world (Katz, 2008, as cited in: Yi & Chen, 2021). This is also quite evident in the corporate life with the average Japanese's lifelong loyalty to the company. (Hofstede Insights, 2022) For negotiations with the Japanese, the relationships between parties are more important than the concrete facts on the subject. In fact, it is advised for a foreigner to deepen the relations outside of the meeting room to help reach faster agreements. (Zandt, 1970)

### **Masculinism (MAS):**

For Portugal, a feminine society with a score of 31, the key word is consensus. Both in daily lives and business, people value quality of life and equality. Any conflict is resolved by negotiation and compromise. (Hofstede Insights, 2022) Never mind being a low Masculinity society, Portugal's business world is still quite heavily run by men. In fact, this country can still be accused of some Machismo attitudes when dealing with Businesswomen and the latter's acceptable behaviour towards others (Katz, 2008). Even though nowadays' rise in literacy has been driving a slightly more aggressive corporate ladder climbing in the Iberian people, this is not in their core culture as it is in a more masculine society (Santos, 2021).

With a score of 95, Japan is one of the most masculine countries to be included in Hofstede's research. However, in combination with their mild collectivism, assertive and competitive individual behaviours, characteristics of a Masculine culture are not evident. The famous Japanese workaholicism is another expression of the society's Masculinity (Hofstede Insights, 2022), with a more aggressive and characteristic social and by consequence corporate ladder climbing since a young age (Santos, 2021).

### **Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI):**

Countries showing high Uncertainty Avoidance scores like Portugal, 99, have rigid moral codes and emotional need for behavioural rules, being intolerant of any unorthodox practices.

The fact that the Portuguese do not like to be rushed when in negotiations, (Katz, 2008) is also a sign of caution when in a negotiation. Seeing as the culture sees the negotiation as a very risky process, they make sure they are aware of all details in entailed as to not be taken by surprise, something the cultures ranking high in this dimension do not tolerate, thus making their negotiation process so slow most times (Hofstede Insights, 2022). Although to many the scoring of the quite laid-back country can appear out of place, truthfully several historical incidents may be root to the Portuguese mentality about uncertainty. Starting with the implications the dictatorship may have had in the population during the time Hofstede conducted most of his research in the 1960s and 70s, seeing as said dictatorship ended later in 1974 (Udam, 2008). It is also said to be reflecting the phenomenon of *Sebastianismo*, in honour of a previous king disappeared in combat, as a constant remembering of the past as something memorable and the future with pessimistically (Santos, 2021).

Like Portugal, Japan is also one of the most Uncertainty Avoidant countries with a slightly lower scoring of 92. This is often attributed to the fact that Japan is not only a highly traditional society, as it is constantly threatened by natural disasters from earthquakes to volcano eruptions (Santos, 2021). Under these circumstances the Japanese have learnt to prepare themselves for any uncertain situation (Hofstede Insights, 2022). In the business world, a plenty of time and effort is put into feasibility studies, analysing all the risks before any project can start (Hofstede Insights, 2022). In fact, due to this special care being so important, the Japanese may be sceptical in negotiating with Western cultures that are not as well prepared, leaving the former with a sense of discomfort and uncertainty (Zandt, 1970). To aid the Japanese companies dealing with uncertainty, management is shaped into achieving the absolute best outcome and careers are all structured to be long-term (Chen, 2022).

#### **Long-time Orientation (LTO):**

The Portuguese, as a Short-term oriented society with a score of 28, prefer normative though over pragmatic. They have a great respect for traditions and focus on short-lived and quick achievements (Hofstede Insights, 2022). Being short-term oriented also implies they tend to not carry out detailed plannings directed to the long-term, known for their ease at quickly solving problems at hand instead (Santos, 2021).

With a score of 88, Japan is seen as one of the most Long-term Oriented societies, once again showing the extreme particularities of the country. The Japanese see their life as a very brief chapter in the book on mankind. In the business world, there is a high rate of investment in research and development even in economically tougher times, putting a greater priority in the growth of the market versus a quarterly profit, for example (Hofstede Insights, 2022). Their

extensive consideration and planning across all areas, a clear sign of their long-term orientation, is attributed to the Confucian philosophy (Santos, 2021).

### **Indulgence (IDR):**

With a score of 33, Portugal is seen as a culture of restraint with a tendency to cynicism and pessimism. There is not much emphasis on leisure time and a feeling that society itself restrains their actions, with indulgence being perceived as something bad (Hofstede Insights, 2022).

The Japanese, with a score of 42, tend to be cynics and pessimists. They do not put much emphasis on leisure time and there is a deep feeling that actions are Restrained by social norms, with indulgence seen as something wrong. (Hofstede Insights, 2022)

## **4.2.1. Cultural Mindsets and Negotiation Practices:**

### **4.2.1.1. Portugal**

From the scoring on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Portugal is a country inside the Pyramid Cultural Cluster, valuing loyalty, and hierarchy, and with a strong preference for indirect/high-context communication (Wursten, 2019). For this cluster, the negotiation is an exchange of favours, giving the name of Reciprocators. These are not looking to buy a product, but rather buying something from someone they deeply trust. After the transaction, the Portuguese will count on a favour the other party will return later.

Since this cluster is based on high Power Distance societies, the higher in hierarchy the negotiation occurs, the more prevalent this type of negotiation is. Seeing as this process is highly based on mutual trust, it is vital that the other party looks for introduction to the Portuguese through a common acquaintance, seen in high esteem by the Southern European. Not coincidentally, there happened to be a favouritism culture in these societies where, aided by the high uncertainty avoidance inclination, business leaders choose to surround themselves with people of the same circle whom they will be able to control better (Coene & Jacobs, 2017). Practice that even in Portugal is secular in multiple areas, and though seen as a negative aspect, it is not deniable that it does exist everyday (Ribeiro-Bidaoui, 2019). Like an endless cycle, so does this practice led to a never-ending reciprocation of favours. During any first meeting, it is important to allow time to discuss personal matters to form the relationship before any work-related discussion (Coene & Jacobs, 2017).

#### **4.2.1.2. Japan**

As a country of such specific characteristics, leading to a very particular dimensional mix, Japan has been classified as being the sole integrant of its own cluster: The Dynamic Equilibrium. In this country, characteristics of other clusters are clearly visible, though the mix itself is unique. (Wursten, 2019)

For Japan, the Craftsman, Negotiation is a constant search for perfection. The collectivistic aspect of the society translates as a relationship-first basis on the business world (Yi & Chen, 2021), unable to separate the two (Gelfand & McCusker, 2017, Hofstede, 2001, as seen in: Schoen, 2021), increasing the difficulty in inter-group negotiation, even more so if the other party is a foreigner. Like the reciprocator, also in Japan the relationship starts by an arranged meeting between a trusted common acquaintance. (Coene & Jacobs, 2017)

#### **4.2.2. Qualitative results on the topic.**

Starting the interview with the topic of Cultural Dimensions was very interesting for many participants were then more conscious of those that are Hofstede's classifications of each country.

With the scorings shares as above in Figure 4.7, the reactions were various., with the main issue being the quantification of such a fluid concept that is culture by those more familiar with the topic. In fact, some reactions were quite sceptical to such results are where exactly they had been obtained. Another very important point raised was the date of the original study itself (1989), as the interviewees had a hard time taking the study's results based on their own knowledge of the countries' background and happenings at the time of the study, such as the economic crash of Japan in the 1990s (Sato, 2002) and the 1926-1974 Portuguese Dictatorship (Farinha, 2009), and the current days.

Most disagreements to the scores above were not on a particular country, but more regarding the relation between both scores. Out of 12 respondents, 5 people agreed in general with the scoring, but were surprised with the lower scoring for Power Distance Index for Japan than Portugal. The same was seen in response to the last dimension, Indulgence vs. Restraint, with again 5 people mentioning the scoring for Japan was higher than Portugal as should not be the case.

On the Individualism Dimension, 7 out of 12 respondents were quite surprised with the fact that Portugal had a lower scoring, more collectivistic, than Japan, a country known for its group belonging mindset. As wisely said by one very knowledgeable Portuguese interviewee

“the concept of “me/individual” is different. The individual only exists as a part of several groups. He doesn’t exist without these groups”.

For some of the Portuguese individuals, the timing of the study was quite present seeing as many of the scorings and cultural beliefs reflected had been due to the dictatorship ended in the 70s. Not only was the collectivistic view more present with the values shared during said period “Deus, Pátria, Família” (God, Homeland, Family) (Martins Barata, 1938), as were restrictions more evident than nowadays.

As I also had thought some dimensions to have quite curious results, I decided to include a very specific question in regard to Indulgence vs. Restraint and the Workplace practices. In Japan, *Nomikai* (飲み会), a very famous gathering after work for drinks is a conflicting topic. While in other hand the main activity and purpose is to build relationships and drink (Noviana, 2018), seeing as there is a character of implicit obligation due to the importance of group-belonging and the hierarchical structure present at work is also present (Kaur et al., 2023), it is quite hard to fully grasp whether it is considered 100% work or if some of it is still seen as leisure.

In fact, not only on a daily basis, these *Nomikai* are extremely important in a Negotiation process as it allows both parties to get to know each other on a stronger and deeper level, something a collectivistic country such as Japan deeply appreciates. It is then important to understand what the implications are when declining to join these events for those not experienced with the market and culture. For this reason, I decided to inquire both Portuguese and Japanese respondents on what their opinion is “Are these *Nomikai* considered work?”.

Out of the 9 Portuguese participants, 4 were able to quickly identify *Nomikai* as work, not leisure. Due to their close contact with the culture either through Work or Academic Studies (either in Japan or Portugal), everyone was quite aware of the implications of *Nomikai*. The remaining 4 interviewees had a harder time giving a very certain answer due also to the benefits of *Nomikai*. While 8 people identified the obligation of the *Nomikai* culture, especially implied, and how the attendance would severely implicate the image of the participant at work and 5 Hierarchical presences at the events as a detracting factor, 2 interviewees also brought up the positive aspects of this event in terms of relationship development. Also, some important factors for the 4 interviewees that considered *Nomikai* to be work only to some extents were the fact that the generation gap will make it so the view of this culture is not 100% accurate. Meaning while younger Japanese generations would be more likely to categorise *Nomikai* as work due to all these implicit rules and obligation, older generations, so used to the practice, would more

easily see the event as a way of building relationships than a bother. One very important factor would also be the work sector. In women dominated fields, it would be easier to still find these *Nomikai*, however with looser obligations, such as Nursery Education. Although it is still crucial for a proper integration in the workplace in-group, it is more flexible due to the assumed domestic responsibilities of the women. Additionally, one very important factor was the fact that, while for Portuguese *Nomikai* can be considered work due to all mentioned above, especially due the long-lasting habit, it will hardly be as strange to the Japanese and quite more easily considered leisure.

In order to try and verify this premise surrounding *Nomikai*, the question was also posed to those nationals. In this case no one thought 100% that *Nomikai* were work and did think it was quite difficult topic. 2 out of 3 saw the obligation factor as a negative aspect of these events, but everyone mentioned the importance of the gatherings for the development of relationships. In fact, even if there may be some hierarchical structure and work topics present at the *Nomikai*, the personal relationships developed with these people will make it so even these gatherings can become leisure, depending on the people themselves, and not 100% if it includes any work topic.

When brought up the topic of business lunches or work parties more common with the Portuguese, only 1 Portuguese was able to state these were not work, while every remaining interviewee (Portuguese and Japanese) saw work connected to these gatherings as well. In this case, 50% of respondents did in fact continue that, yes, these gatherings are still considered work, but due to less obligation on the Portuguese side, these end up not being as strict as in Japan.

### **4.3. Impact of Cultural Dimensions in an Intercultural Negotiation**

Some interviewees, as mentioned above, had heard about Hofstede's Model beforehand. However, even some who had not, were quite quick to identify a relation between these cultural dimensions and intercultural negotiation in several aspects.

#### **4.3.1. Power Distance Index**

Out of 12 interviewees, with only 1 negative answer, 9 answered positively to the correlation between the Power Distance Index and Intercultural Negotiations, 5 of which saw as a major reasoning the importance of hierarchical structures in the negotiation. Not only is it important how the other side perceives hierarchy and status, as is one's own position in the negotiation.

It is also quite impactful in the decision processes, mainly due to the hierarchical decision-making, lengthy processes.

In the sample, when asked which dimensions had a clearer impact in a cultural exchange/negotiation between Portugal and Japan, Power Distance was the second greatest response with 5 answers. As reasoning, it was just as before an emphasis again on the impact of authority, but especially hierarchy and status. Especially in Japan, hierarchy is very important and should not be looked upon. In fact, two interviewees during the interview did exemplify their difficulties with the country with hierarchical issues: not seeing their opinions or sometimes even presence respect and carefully heard, due to being younger in age and also status in their workplace.

#### **4.3.2. Individualism**

As above, 9 interviewees answered positively to the impact of Individualism (and collectivism) in an Intercultural Negotiation. Especially in terms of group dynamics very often involved in the negotiation, but also regarding the importance of consensus in these group-centric societies.

Additionally, as similar as Power Distance, Individualism, more particularly Collectivism, was seen as impacting the approval processes. In fact, *Nemawashi* (根回し), the consensus-building communication process in Japan, where the employees look for the consensus of every person in said organisation (Fetters, 1995; as cited in Haghirian, 2019) was also mentioned as a great representation of said group/organisation-centric decision making, that makes the negotiation process lengthier. When asked what dimensions impacted Japan and Portugal's cooperation, only one person answered individualism due to the struggle of group tasks.

#### **4.3.3. Masculinity**

For this controversial dimension, 8 out of 12 people answer there is a clear correlation between the dimension and what it represents and International Negotiation, while 2 did not see Masculinity as dimension with any strong impact. However, the naming of said Dimension made it very hard for every interviewee to disconnect from the usual meaning of "Masculinity" (gender inequality), to focus on the dimension itself: the motivation of a society (Jean-Pierre Coene & Marc Jacobs, 2017).

For this reason, I would exclude one of the 8 positive answers due to greater implications of gender inequality, and not the dimension itself. Out of the remaining 7 answers who helped



by elaborating on their opinion, 3 gave the goals/objectives of the negotiation as a big factor impacted by this dimension. Depending on the country on the other side of the table, it is easy to have quite different end goals on both sides be it extrinsic goals such as monetary rewards, or intrinsic more on the dimension of long-lasting relationships. Additionally, 2 people brought up an additional impact of this dimension in the negotiation which is the negotiators attitude. Meaning in a more masculine country, it is expected a harsher negotiation (sometimes called aggressive). Consequently, in harsher settings, these are the individuals that can withstand the longer without breaking.

The third most answered dimension in regard to Portugal and Japan's cooperation was Masculinity. In all three answers, the conclusion was the same as the importance of status and work in Japan vs. Quality of Life as is in Portugal is quite evident and could easily pose as a blocker to some interactions.

#### **4.3.4. Uncertainty Avoidance Index**

Out of the sample group, the 9 people who did respond, responded yes to a correlation between Uncertainty and Risk Avoidance and the Negotiation practices. How? 5 people clearly stated the risk involved as a potential dealbreaker for an Uncertainty Avoidant country, as it would be something quite minor and insignificant for an Uncertainty Tolerant culture. Another important pointed was the changes in Modus Operandi and Processes that was seen as possible setback for Risk-averse countries, seeing as these cultures prefer not to leave their comfort zone.

Two Interviewees then chose Uncertainty Avoidance as a dimension with clearer impact between Portugal and Japan, though one emphasised this impact was not due to the assumed scorings by Hofstede, but yes by what would be the most updated scoring based on the current Japan and Portugal. In this case as well, the interviewee argued that due to many changes in the historic and societal aspects, especially Portugal with the end of a Dictatorship and joining of the European Union (Manuel & Royo, 2004), had acquired more stability that allowed for more freedom and flexibility in terms of ideas and innovation. Thus, making Japan and Portugal not standing on the same ground, but quite different.

#### **4.3.5. Long-Term Orientation**

8 out of 12 interviewees answered positively to the correlation between Long and Short-Term Orientation and Negotiation Practices. While some focused on the importance of this dimension in setting tasks and targets, many answers were insistent on the relationship itself. In other terms, for 7 out of 8 respondents, Long-Term Orientation is, as the name clearly states,

impacting the continuity or future of the negotiations and cooperations. For a Long-Term Oriented country, it is then extremely important to understand how the negotiation and cooperation will impact their future (always for the better), and only then act on it. Also on this note, Long-Term Orientation was also said to impact flexibility and open mindedness of the parties.

Long-Term Orientation was seen as the most impactful dimension in the relationship between Portugal and Japan, especially due to the assumed scoring by Hofstede. While in some other dimensions such as Power Distance, common knowledge took place in identifying stronger hierarchies such as Japan's as a big issue with a country like Portugal, in this case, it was evidently due to the scoring shared being so distant. In fact, for some interviewees it was quite puzzling how Japan scored due to the definition itself. While they understood the long-term view in Japan, the fact that it was indeed a Short-Term Oriented Country that had a closer relation with stricter norms and traditions was quite puzzling, as usually Japan was categorised with both. Answers lied mainly in the importance of continuity and future-forward visions for a Long-Term Oriented Country as Japan, and how a cooperation with a short-term oriented country such as Portugal could be challenging.

#### **4.3.6. Indulgence vs. Restraint**

Lastly, Indulgence vs. Restraint, a dimension whose impact on the intercultural negotiations is so scarcely studied and hard to connect, was able to receive 7 out of 12 positive answers, with two negative answers. The interviewees were able to connect the dimension with the viewpoint or standpoint in the negotiation: more serious, restrained and structured vs. a more easy-going and relaxed attitude. In addition, it is also under Indulgence vs. Restraint that lies many social rules also present in the negotiation. Out of 12 interviewees, only 2 identified Indulgence vs. Restraint as impacting the relationship between the two countries, on one side for Japan's strictness and heavy implicit rules, and on the other for Portugal's easy-going mentality and lack of continuous effort.

#### **4.4. Most important Negotiation Phases for each country.**

Following, the interviewees were asked which Negotiation Phase they identified as being the most important to them. Based on Adair and Brett's (2005) 4 Negotiation Stages, I decided to include an additional stage as "Post-Negotiation Phase" in order to identify some respondents who may have given bigger importance to the follow-up and continuation than the negotiation

itself. Seeing as the question was posed as a multiple answer question, several people were able to give more than one answer, with results as follows:

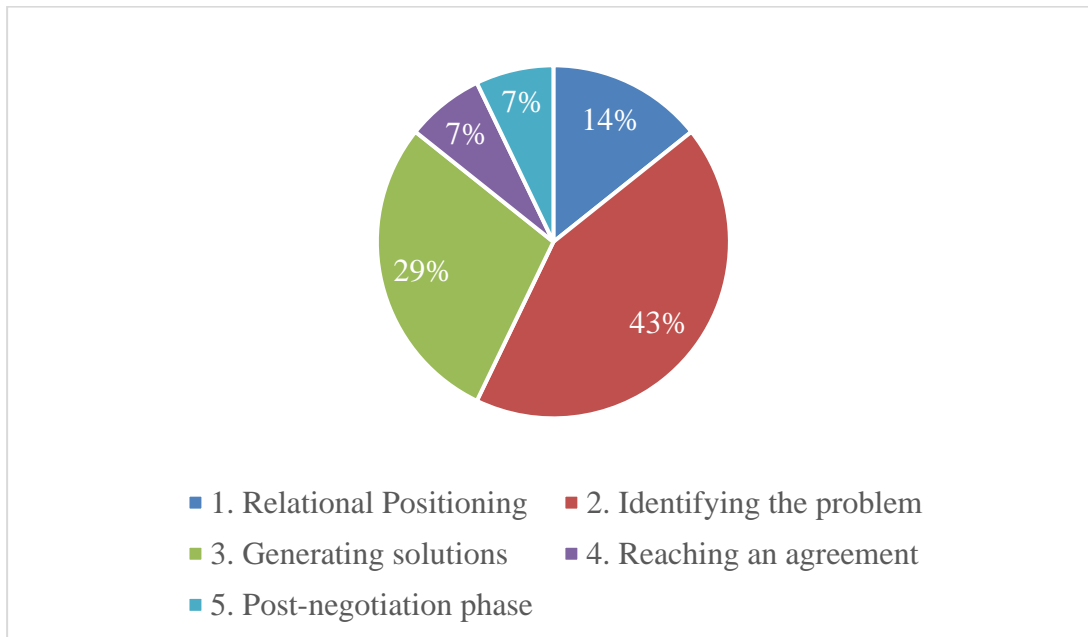


Figure 4.8: Percentage of votes by Negotiation Stage of Portuguese Nationals

Out of all 9 Portuguese interviewees identified in Figure 4.8, 6 answered the second phase (Identifying the problem) as the most important phase. For them, relationship building is quite beneficial, and so is the building of trust. Not only for a one-time negotiation, but in order to maintain a steadier relationship for the future. The second most given answer (4 people) was the 3rd phase, Generating Solutions, though only person was able to further develop their choice was based on the need they feel Portuguese have to rush into the Negotiation Phase most connected with the active search for an agreement. Curiously, 2 people's answers were in fact identifying both phases 2 and 3 as the most important. In fact, if need be, for two negotiation phases to be put together, based on their meaning I was expecting a quicker link between phases 1 and 2, seeing as they are both involved in the relationship and trust building before a negotiation. In a way, it can be perceived as these interviewees understanding both phases are inseparable and there is no generating of solutions without the building of trust of both parts, as also the objective and goal setting for both parts.

In third place, 2 people identified "Relationship Positioning" as the most important phase due to the high importance of first meetings for first impressions, not only because it is important to them but also because it may be a detractor when dealing with Portugal as first impressions are not the Portuguese's strong suit. Additionally, they perceive these first meetings as a foundation for any next phase of negotiation.

Lastly, only one vote was given to phases 4 and 5. The first more connected with the importance of goal setting and objectives of the other party. It is quite important understanding where the other person lies and what their ultimate goal is, for example monetary reward or relationship building. Lastly, one interviewee, connected with International Sale, found one negotiation, one sale not a particularly hard achievement, instead continuity is the harder part. This interviewee felt the most important is to assure a long-term healthy partnership instead of a sole successful negotiation.

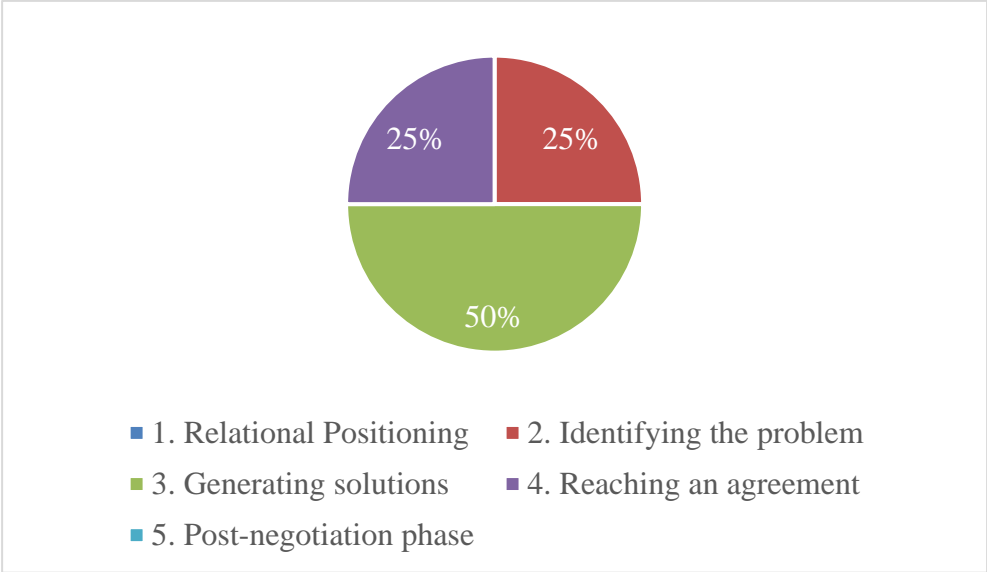


Figure 4.9: Percentage of votes by Negotiation Stage of Japanese Nationals

As seen in Figure 4.9 above, for 2 of the Japanese nationals, there was a clear most important phase (3 and 4), while the third respondent shared, they thought both phases 2 and 3 to be very important.

Starting by the individual responses, the respondent who chose phase 3 as the most important saw great correlation between more dialogue and exchange of opinions between the parties and reaching a mutual understanding. Additionally, they mentioned they valued this phase the most due to having a harder time being open from the beginning of the process. A later stage as phase 3, would allow them to further understand the other party’s motivations and understand how to interact.

Phase 4 was chosen for the same reasoning as Portugal did. Not only is it important for them as each person has their own goals, as the negotiation process can vary greatly from what primary goal each party has.

For the last interviewee, phases 2 and 3 were chosen due to the importance placed in the building of trust and understanding of mutual benefit and generating solutions for the issue at

hand in the decision-making process itself. Even though the Japanese sample in the research is lower than the Portuguese sample, it would be indeed interesting to see if the tendency to choose both phases 2 and 3 as the most important would increase with a bigger sample. Indeed, it seems like the most popular pairing.

#### **4.5. Biggest struggles in Intercultural Negotiation**

Even though only 33% of respondents had previous experience with Business Negotiation, it was not difficult finding common difficulties connected with the topic. In fact, no one dare to say there was no difficulty associated with Intercultural Negotiation.

The most mentioned topic was definitely language by 8 of the interviewees, followed by culture (5) and less mentioned but very relevant topic such as social norms and behaviours (3) and the objectives of the negotiation (3). In general, the 12 responders answered also that they would yes try to prepare somehow in advance to an intercultural exchange one way or another, either through previous studying on the country's history and culture or even language, especially if the stay were to be long.

Considering all interviewees' past with Intercultural exchange, either through personally or professionally, several examples of difficulties were shared, with the main pain point the behaviour of the other party (6), the communication flow being very different to their own (4), Implied and not outspoken rules (3) and lastly beliefs (2), including that of Gender inequalities and prejudice. However, not all is terrible, and many had positive surprises when in contact with another culture, especially regarding surprising behaviours (6), many of which had also claimed behaviours to have been a pain point for them in previous cultural exchanges. One responder brought up also the big impact also the language has in the perception of the other party, with many barriers being lifted as soon as a common language is implemented and every rule and barrier surrounding the native language disappears, such as the social rules and implicit meanings. Though half of the interviewees' cultural experiences were limited to the other country, even those with more international experience brought up the same limitations to intercultural negotiation as impacting the relationship between Japan and Portugal.

On the Portuguese side, a bigger emphasis on the Language barriers (5), Trust (3) in the other party as a business partner, but also in everything foreign, implied rules and beliefs and Flexibility were seen as quite important struggles in their interaction with Japan. The Japanese interviewees also identified strict rules and the importance of trust as difficulties the Portuguese could have when dealing with Japan.

On the other side, there were not many topics introduced as a special difficulty dealing with Portugal by the Japanese responders, only that of trust, not particularly on a professional level, but concerning the lack of fulfilling promises and appointments in Portugal in some services. On the other hand, the Portuguese interviewees were quite quick to elaborate on several issues the Japanese may have when dealing with them such as inconsistency, as mentioned also by one Japanese interviewees, and mainly behaviour differences such as frontality and being slow paced, and the lack of such implicit strict rules.

Whichever difficulties there may be in a negotiation between the two countries, no one showed any indication that cooperation would be impossible between both countries. In fact, when asked, many interviewees were able to innumerate certain aspects they themselves would see as crucial for a negotiation between the two countries from the obvious cultural and language experience, either personally or through a mediator, to trust. The presence of hierarchical superiors was also mentioned as an important part when dealing with a Japanese counterpart.

It was also very valuable understanding how culturally aware every interviewee was, certainly due to their previous international experiences. In fact, not only did they mention they would prepare for an intercultural negotiation beforehand, as everyone was able to confirm they had at least once changed either their perspective and point of view or concrete negotiation strategy at least once before. For both sides the reasons were the same: behaviour, social norms/rules, and communication barriers. From different thought processes on the other side to implicit rules and norms different from their own.

## **4.6. What makes one country easier to negotiate with?**

### **4.6.1. Easier and Harder countries for Portuguese Negotiation**

When asked which countries would be easier to deal with, the Portuguese interviewees were quick to mention, as expected, Western countries due to having stronger connections and easier information and communication exchange. All mentioned at least one European country, in special or region of Europe, particularly due to cultural affinity, such as Ireland, in general and geographical proximity, such as Spain, with emphasis on the European Union (8/9) especially due to Economic and Political context. 7 interviewees encompassed Mediterranean Countries in their answer, with specific mentions of Spain (3), Italy and France (both 2) as easier countries. With cultural affinity as the main reason, there were 2 mentions of high emigration as a reason for this cultural proximity in especially France (Silverman, 2003) and Switzerland

(Góis and Marques, 2009). Additionally, 2 interviewees mentioned Eastern Europe to be quite similar to Portugal also in terms of, not only similar economic history, but also in personal relationships experienced.

Also included in the Western Cluster, 5 interviewees somewhat mentioned Latin America in their answers, with 3 specific mentions of Brazil. In fact, the mention of “Latin/South America” as an answer by itself was only done by 2 of the interviewees with Negotiation experience. While Brazil would be an expected mention due to the historical past, though not always 100% positive, and language proximity, the mention of Latin America in general indicates further experience either directly or indirectly of these respondents. In fact, it was also mentioned by one person that in the business world they are used to, there is a strong economic relationship with Latin America as Portugal is often clustered with this cluster and Spain due to several factors with language being quite present, but certainly historic proximity and cultural similarities.

Lastly, seeing as language barriers are one of the most prevalent in some intercultural relations, 5 people included in their answer English-Speaking countries, with 2 specific mentions of the United States of America and 1 of Ireland. The USA, not only for language, but also due to their strong economic power and political freedom, though culturally speaking there are not many similarities. On the other hand, Ireland was mentioned in fact due to quite similar business practices and cultural affinity, which was not expected on my side as usually it is a country not as influential, meaning this opinion is very experience-based.

The facility in dealing with Latin American in very easily explained, not also with the help of the above mentioned economic and language factors, but also due to very similar cultural values, as shown in the 7 Mental Images of Culture (Wursten, 2019). As mentioned in literature, Portugal is a country very similar in terms of scoring in Hofstede’s Dimensions to Southern European, thus the votes for these countries were also expected, but when put into cultural clusters and analysing similar negotiation practices (Wursten, 2019; Coene & Jacobs, 2019), both Portugal and Latin America are part of the Pyramid cluster. Thus, their affinity is quite expected: both countries with significant presence of hierarchy (High Power Distance), loyalty (low Individualism) and implicit order (High Uncertainty Avoidance).

On the other hand, regions classified as harder to negotiate and work with from the Portuguese point of view were Asian Countries (6 votes), especially China and Japan with 4 votes each, the Middle East and Africa. East Asian countries such as China, Japan and Korea, were chosen out of difficulties with different and restrictive ways of thinking and extreme formality. The lack of culture awareness of the Portuguese, especially when looking at each

country on an individual level can also be a very big blocker, such as the different communication flow and language, as expected, due to lower English Proficiency, but also these countries are seen to have a very closed mindset when dealing with foreigners, which does not help in a business setting. The Middle East and the African continent were chosen due to lack of cultural awareness and more conservative ways of thinking, mostly due to religion influence. Notwithstanding, independent of geographical proximity, several countries are perceived as difficult to deal with by the Portuguese especially due to complicated and restrictive Political and Social reasons. These are: Russia (mentioned twice), North Korea, China, Cuba, and Venezuela.

#### **4.6.2. Easier and Harder countries for Japanese Negotiation**

For the Japanese interviewees, the answers were harder to obtain. One of the interviewees stated that, while personally she found it easier to deal with the United Kingdom and Portugal due to personal experience, it would not be the same for Japan as Germany and the United States of America (USA) would be easier to trust and cooperate with. The first being due to the stereotypical German ideal. The Japanese, as many people, truly believe the German are quite strict, thus would be easier to trust them to deliver everything correctly and on time. In sum, they would be the perfect partner in terms of professionalism, something very important for Japan. The USA was mentioned especially due to the closeness of the two countries, especially due to the, mostly historical, influence of the Western Country. The remaining two interviewees mentioned Asian countries, with one specific mention of Vietnam, due to their friendly relation with Japan and close values in terms of diligence and high standards towards work. It is important to note that even though the last interviewee was able to identify the geographical closeness of neighbouring countries a positive aspect of a collaboration between the countries, the fact that even then Negotiation strategies may differ also from person to person, led them to not mention any easier or harder country with confidence.

For the Japanese interviewees, geographic proximity is extremely important, as they classify regions such as Latin America and Africa as more difficult. In fact, geographic proximity allows the countries to have a quicker and smoother exchange of information. Additionally, for Latin America, the cultural differences between the countries, even with Brazil where they share a very long history (Tsuchida, 1798), is seen as a detractor in dealing with them. India was also mentioned due to lack of consistency in communication and not being too serious with their promises as the language barrier was quite present, having an accent very hard to understand for low English Proficiency countries like Japan. Finally, one Japanese



interviewee also mentioned some Asian countries would not be good business partners due to political issues between them.

In Japan’s case, it is harder to detect a pattern in easy or hard countries in negotiation. Because Japan is their own cluster, with its own dynamic equilibrium, (Wursten, 2019; Coene and Jacobs, 2017), each other cluster can have some affinity with the country in some respects, while quite different in others.

**4.6.3. The case of Japan and Portugal in more detail**

When inquired “How easy would you rate a negotiation with the Portuguese/Japanese counterpart from 1 to 10?”, the results varied quite a lot, especially in the Portuguese side that was more complete in terms of participation.

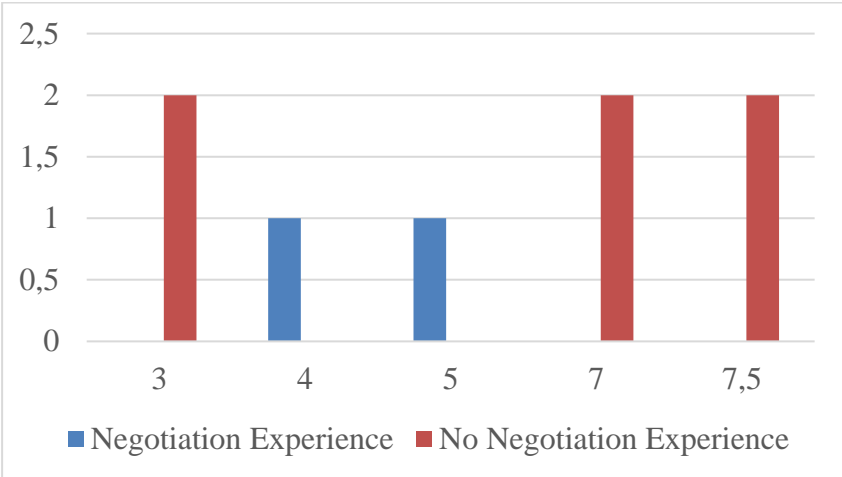


Figure 4.10: Scoring of Business Affinity between Japan and Portugal – Portuguese Interviewees

As seen in Figure 4.10, 66% of answers of people without Negotiation Experience was above 7, while those two with Negotiation Experience represented opted for a scoring on the lower half, leading to an unweighted average of 5,5. The remaining one Portuguese national with Negotiation Experience (3 in total) did not give an accurate score, but did mention although the respect for both countries is quite present, it is still quite hard to work with Japan, meaning they would also be positioning this affinity on a lower spot in the scale.

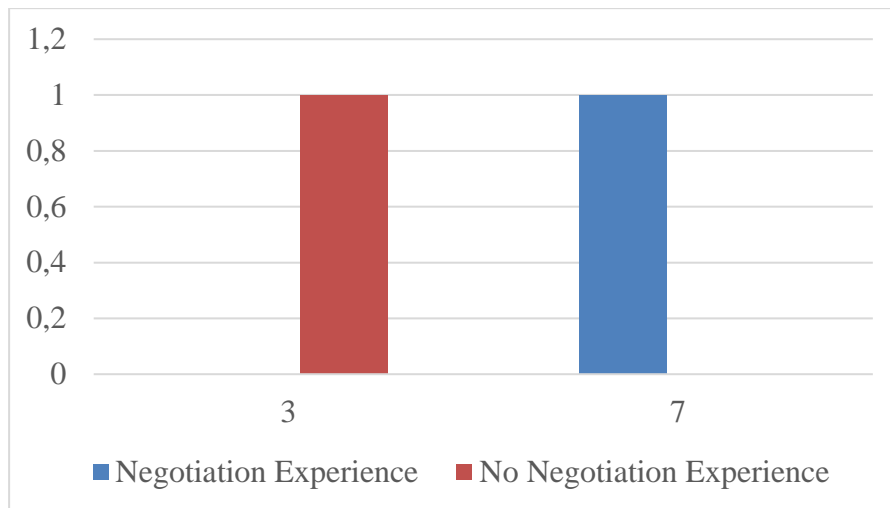


Figure 4.11: Scoring of Business Affinity between Japan and Portugal – Japanese Interviewees

Unfortunately, out of the 3 Japanese interviewees, only two were able to give a concrete answer regarding this question, as seen in Figure 4.11. In this case, although it is hard to take conclusions based on the lower number of responses, we can hypothesise a complete opposite view of the Portuguese. In this case, the interviewee without Negotiation Experience classified the business relationship with Portugal on a lower scale, while the one with experience opted to give a scoring of 7. The latter explained her scoring stating that Portuguese and Japanese are quite similar when comparing other Occidental countries and that the mutual respect is quite present. In fact, the interviewee without Negotiation Experience added that on a personal level, she would score the relationship higher at 9/10 out of her own long experience with the country (10 years) on a personal and professional level for she sees affinity on a personal level as well with the Portuguese people themselves. On the Portuguese side, one interviewee without Negotiation experience did score Business Relationship (more on the diplomatic relations and long-lasting processes) higher with a scoring of 7, however she did score the personal relationship lower at a 5. It makes one wonder if the restrictions felt on the Portuguese side make the relationship seem harder than the other way around, maybe due to more easiness in dealing with the Portuguese also due to some aspects like frontality. Although in total out of all 12 interviewees, 3 mentioned there is some personal affinity between the people of both countries, which I would say must be very impacted also by their own experiences with the other culture.

Thankfully, no one replied “impossible to improve” to the question “What would you say can be improved” in the relationship between the countries. Which answers to the bigger question if “Cultural differences are an impediment for Intercultural Negotiation”. In fact, there may be several difficulties, but nothing that is unfixable and utterly impossible to improve,

especially if the other side is culturally conscious and willing to adapt themselves. In this case I believe it is very important to note that even if only with Japan, everyone had had international experience, meaning they were already open to interact with more flexibility to the other person, but my hypothesis is that many other countries would not be as open to dealing with the others' cultural differences and adapting since they would not see any positive impact of that. For example, an individualistic country would have a harder time seeing long-term benefit on establishing strong relationships and going the extra mile for it due to being mainly focused on the sole negotiation goal and outcome (Wursten, 2019).

As expected from the previous answers to difficulties in International Negotiation not only in general, but also between these two countries, language and behaviour were two of the most mentioned. In terms of language, since both languages are extremely complicated for the other party, the knowledge of a common language as English is something extremely valuable. As is common knowledge, Japan is one country with a lower English proficiency (EF - Education First, 2022), so, not only the Portuguese, but many other cultures feel it hard to do business with Japan. In terms of behaviour, not only was identified the communication issue with Japan as they should be more direct and concrete, option for a lower context communication more often when dealing with other cultures (seen as important by both 2 Portuguese and a Japanese interviewee), as Portuguese should be more efficient and quick paced when dealing with a stricter country like Japan (identified by one Japanese interviewee) and be more ambitious (Portuguese interviewee).

Also scoring high in ways to improve the cooperation was the culture education with 3 mentions, with another 2 specifying that this cultural education should not only be done on a personal level in order to also make both countries more culturally aware of each other (hopefully ending the very common grouping of Asian and European countries and helping identify the differences and particularities of both countries), but also on the actual Negotiation. There should also exist a stronger training for negotiators dealing with the other culture.

Lastly, the development of stronger interpersonal relations was mentioned as a valuable step in bringing together these two cultures, as should formal relationships as those made by governmental policies, such as Twinned Cities (Zelinsky, 1991), be more looked after. In a country like Japan, the existence of these long-lasting agreements is seen as a risk-detractor factor seeing as it means the higher entities such as governments are also committed in making the connection work for a very long time. Aside from the personal affinity mentioned above, one Portuguese interviewee with negotiation experience also mentioned that the business culture between both cultures is quite similar in terms of relationship developing outside the

business meeting. The concept of business lunches as explored above is quite present in Portugal, and it is also then that people further develop the business relation that will help a smoother negotiation afterwards.

#### **4.6.4. Overlooking Cultural Barriers**

When asked if the Portuguese interviewees would be willing to choose another, by them considered easier, country instead of Japan if they had a chance. Seeing as it is not an easier question, several factors were considered from geographical proximity, time zones to reputation and culture. In the end, 3 out of 9 interviewees would still choose Japan no matter which country they were comparing it to due to their cultural and language knowledge and also because for them getting out of their comfort zone is more important in building their relationships and work portfolio. 3 respondents would choose the easier option out of experienced cultural barriers and geographic proximity, independent of cultural knowledge. The remaining 4 respondents would consider opting out if beneficial in terms of the factors mentioned above, but seeing as it would never be a comparable outcome, they would have to ponder other factors such as reputation in the industry. In this case, working with countries with such high name like Japan is a great career and business builder. Plus, this would mean creating a long-lasting relationship.

For the Japanese interviewees, unfortunately I was only able to receive two answers. Both interviewees would opt to choose the easiest country especially due to cultural and values proximity, as language proficiency (in one case). Even though they both understand the reputation in some sectors of the Portuguese, it would have to be a very strong variable to make them take said harder choice.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Through the extensive literature review and interview process as shown above, I was able to answer my research questions quite easily.

### **5.1. Are cultural differences an impediment for negotiation?**

Certainly, not only in theory, but also as seen in the interviews, in the real world, any negotiation is complex, but several factors impact even more Intercultural Negotiations. In this research it was easily seen that culture and the behaviours and rules implied are one of the most called out barriers.

However, it does not mean it is impossible for an intercultural negotiation to happen smoothly. In fact, no interviewee ever mentioned that, even with the hardest countries to deal with it would be utterly impossible. For example, African countries were mentioned by both groups as hard to do business with. In this case it was hard to really place a specific reason as they had little to no knowledge about the continent. Nonetheless, everyone that did claim that continent seems apologetic and afraid to say exactly that Africa would be hard to deal with because they themselves had no knowledge about it. This shows the interviewees, being all quite culturally aware for their experiences, would put extra effort into researching about this lesser-known countries if they ever needed to work with them.

In fact, no matter what difficulty there may be from behaviours to implicit rules, as long as there are trained in that sense, no one felt like it was an unbreakable barrier. In fact, especially when sharing their stories and examples of cultural experiences they all seemed extremely interested in also understanding the why and how to behave. Thus, everyone had claimed to have at least once changed their perspective, modus operandi or more specifically negotiation strategy in order to help lessen these cultural barriers. It is also easier for, not only the individuals with cultural experience, but also for those in living in very multicultural countries as is the case of Portugal, to be more open to understanding and adaption to the other, as was mentioned by several respondents from both nationalities.

### **5.2. Do cultural dimensions impact Intercultural Negotiation?**

Although some interviewees did judge the countries' scoring on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, they did not judge in anyway the fact that the Cultural Dimensions do impact the Negotiation, with some more evident than others, such as Power Distance with Hierarchical

Structures (also seen in Liu et al., 2019) and decision processes (also seen in Hurn, 2007, as cited in Gonzalez, 2021; Lewicki et al., 2016, p. 251). Also very evident was the importance of Individualism in Negotiation in terms of consensus building (also seen in Caputo et al., 2019) and those same lengthy decision-making processes (also seen in Hofstede, 2001, as cited in Schoen, 2020)

Nonetheless, it is clearly seen that the cultural dimensions cannot be said to impact by themselves the negotiation processes. One very strong example in this case is Baber and Ojala's (2015, as cited in Schoen, 2020) research on the connection between Long-Term Orientation and Individualism. The perceived by the long-Term Orientation itself by both the interviewees and researchers is that while one would be very forward facing and future oriented. In theory a Short-Term Oriented country would not be as relationship focused as it is focused on quality products (Hofstede et al., 2010) and the transaction itself. However, due to the presence of low individualism in Portugal's "cultural DNA" is why many respondents unknowingly placed relationship building as important in the negotiation process (Baber & Ojala, 2015, as cited in Schoen, 2020). Even though it may be very short-term oriented, the collectivism of the society, as seen by all, is what brings this "Relationship first" (Coene & Jacobs, 2017) mentality to the country.

Even though several interviewees did pose limitations to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Model as the quantification on such a complex theme (4 mentions) and the period during which the research was done (4 mentions), several results of the interviews were still evidently connected to the theory behind them. For example, even though some interviewees would question dimensions scorings based on timely changes in the Portuguese mindset, they were still able to unknowingly place Latin America and Mediterranean countries as easier countries more than by geographical proximity because of shared values, evident from similar cultural clusters.

Another important note was the identification of Negotiation Phases so closely related with the expression of culture. During phase 2, Identifying the problem, also comes the building of trust. For both Japan and Portugal, this step is extremely important as they need to fully trust the other party. This is not only a reflection of their Risk/Uncertainty Avoidance, as is of their Mid to High Power Distance (Metcalf 2007, as cited in Schoen, 2020) where basis of trust do not lie in externa, but internal factors. For Portugal it is also easy to see a tendency to choose phase 3 due to their "getting it done" approach, or problem-solving, a high-Power Distance characteristic (Graham et al., 1994, as cited in Schoen, 2020). As is the, although slightly lower preference for phase one, a show of the importance of relationship building of a collectivistic

society such as Portugal (Vierregge & Quick 2011, as cited in Schoen 2020). Same thing for the sole choosing of my additional phase 5, that shows the importance given by the interviewee to a long-lasting relationship, confirming again what was said before. Lastly, the tendency to group together phases 2 and 3, even though it was something I did not expect, is something that Schoen (2020) had already seen as inseparable for countries with collectivist values such as Portugal and Japan. Yet again, confirm the validity of the cultural dimensions' scores.

### **5.3. Is the negotiation between Portugal and Japan easy?**

One very important point to note is the importance given to both countries to Relationship building. Though Japan, for example shows greater emphasis on the importance of trust and building a long-term relationship, Portugal is also quite interested in developing a long lasting partnership as seen by the interviewees' interactions when talking about strategies to implement a relationship between the countries and even the fact that some would still be working with Japan no matter how hard it may be due to the need of continuity and feeling that betrayal may lead to an end to the position achieved.

In any case, though the above should be leveraged at all costs through many more initiatives from both countries to build, and most importantly maintain, good grounding for future and permanent cooperation, it is quite hard to say it is easy to negotiate without the proper preparation beforehand.

It is quite interesting how when asked about the business affinity of both countries, the Portuguese nationals with negotiation experience answered lower scores and the Japanese individual with experience placed Portugal higher. It was the opposite for those without any Negotiation experience. Of course, with a lower sample of Japanese interviewees, this trend is not something we can conclude upon, but the fact that those experienced from the Japanese side are able to somewhat claim Portugal not as hard to do business with than the other way around, means a lot should be developed on the relationship. Open mindedness and frontality from the Japanese side could help the Portuguese understand what they are doing well as the other way around.

The fact that more Japanese nationals though it was easier to deal with Portuguese than the other way around does not mean one country is doing a better job at welcoming and negotiating the other people, but that communication should be more open. It was mentioned above also that Portugal is a quite amicable country for foreigners as it is considered to have more similar

values to some Asian countries than other European or even Western countries, which is something good to build upon.

#### **5.4. How can one improve the negotiation between Portugal and Japan?**

As a last question in the interview, the respondents were asked to summarise an advice they would give to both sides when negotiating with the other country. It was in the end a summary of all said thus far, considering all difficulties and positive aspects of dealing with one another. This advice, from both sides, were then compiled and completed with more insights during the interviews and reasoned with theory.

##### **5.4.1. Advice to a Portuguese negotiating with Japan.**

Japan is a very particular country. Not only do the nationals say it, as does theory, by placing it in its own cluster as a dynamic equilibrium of every other cluster (Wursten, 2019). This means, this Craftsman (Coene & Jacobs, 2017), also has its own very particular way of negotiating, sharing one common element with each other cluster. Thankfully, the common element shared by Japan and Portugal's cluster is prioritising the Relationship Building. Meaning as the first advice would be to focus on this common point and make sure to develop a great relationship with the Japanese party. Although in Portugal there is great personal and professional links in some areas, the difference with Japan is that these links are not as quick to form. It is important to be patient and persistent.

It is also vital to be aware of cultural nuances such as formality and respect for the hierarchy. In fact, it is advisable from real life experience that the Portuguese starts this first contact with Japan with someone older and of higher status in the company. Unfortunately for many new companies, it is almost impossible establishing any relation with Japan without a prior connection through an acclaimed and trusted institution, or person. As represented by the higher Power Distance and Collectivistic values, Japan gives great importance to the decision-making process, *Nemawashi*, which means the opinion of all relevant parties will be heard. For this it is important to, not only be patient in the lengthy process, as one should make sure in advice to know who exactly is on the other side and who makes the decision. As they are known for not liking to lose face (Ho, 1976) under any circumstance, the Portuguese should make sure to properly inform everyone of any topics before any meeting. The purpose of a meeting in Japan is not to share information as the information has already been shared across. No one will arrive to a meeting to be surprised.



Lastly, quite closely related to the Craftsman's ideals, make sure to be extremely detail oriented and take time preparing. As it is known, the Japanese value promises greatly, and the promise of time, deadlines, should also be maintained at all costs. Being a more talkative country, it is also advisable for the Portuguese to be proactive and read the room as the High Context Communication in Japan is quite grand. It is important to gather knowledge on the culture and keep all above-mentioned factors in mind, in order to properly gain the trust of the other party. Being quite risk averse, it is vital for the trust once built not to be broken. The likelihood of getting a second chance is close to none.

#### **5.4.2. Advice to a Japanese negotiating with Portugal.**

As part of the Pyramid cultural cluster (Wursten, 2019), Portugal, the Reciprocator (Coene & Jacobs, 2017), gives very high importance to relationship building. Although as a collectivistic country, one would expect a preference for High Context communication (Coene & Jacobs, 2017), this is not at all as evident as in the Japanese culture. For this reason, the biggest advice given by the Portuguese is to not be shocked about the seemingly frontality in Portugal and to try to be more direct, even if it is difficult. The Portuguese will appreciate this severely, and even though they are quite eager to help, it will be hard without proper communication.

A big advice is to be openminded and not expect the Japanese standard. Unfortunately, the cultures are indeed quite different, so it is important to balance your expectations and prepare for the shock. Again, the Portuguese are quite tolerant of the other culture and understanding, but for a deeper relationship, it is important to also try to adapt. It is also important for the Japanese to know they can be more relaxed when working with the Portuguese, though it may be important to elucidate them on the importance of your view of "The Bigger Picture".

From both sides goes to the need to be openminded, again, and culturally aware. Just as the Portuguese will try to guide you in your terms, it is important to be somewhat mindful of some cultural aspects before starting the relationship with Portugal. Also evidently, it is very important to assure there will be a common language between both parties. Just as Portuguese is hard for a Japanese, so is the other way around. In sum, prepare to get out of your comfort zone. It will be a great opportunity to develop further problem-solving and communication skills not very needed when dealing with the Japanese culture.



## **6. Limitations and Future Research**

### **6.1. Limitations to the Research**

The limitations of this dissertation can be compiled in two main pillars: data availability and Hofstede's Model.

#### **6.1.1. Data availability**

The main struggle of this research was with data availability. Even though the Portuguese were quite glad to share their thoughts and experiences, the same was not as easy with the Japanese. Especially due to the theme of the dissertation. Even though the research is mainly about Business Negotiation, the intention behind including people with much experience was in order to, not only increase an already very limited sample, but also compare in what way diverged the practical experience and the theoretical assumptions of those only dealing with the culture in terms of Negotiation on a daily basis. In fact, when asked to give examples, even though not 100% connected to business, everyone was able to give an answer based on their own experience with negotiation, be it with co-workers, peers, or organisations.

Due to the high fear of the Asian people, in this case the Japanese, to lose face, it was hard to gather people even without Negotiation experience. I believe it is not because they, themselves, were afraid to be put in an uncomfortable position as much as they would be afraid to put myself, the researcher, in a biased and incorrect opinion due to their lack of experience. For that same reason I am very thankful for the responses I got which were very honest and insightful as I was already expecting a lack of responses. Even though many Portuguese interviewed were also somewhat undecided on whether to answer, afraid to not be able to, mostly the fact that I knew some personally, helped convince them that indeed if I already knew they did not have that knowledge and asked them, nonetheless, meant I was aware and willing to receive those answers.

Another stuck was concerning the interview process. Due to the complexity of the theory behind the research (Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions), it was hard to explain fully the definitions of all dimensions without showing any biased opinion and still assure full understanding of the other part to give informed opinions. Also due to this complexity, the interview would end up being extremely long (1h to 2h), which was also a stuck in terms of availability of many people. Thankfully, all interviewees were able to remain fully present and still give immensely valuable insights throughout the long interview.

### **6.1.2. Hofstede's Cultural Model**

One of the biggest limitations with Hofstede's Cultural Model was the naming convention and Definition of some Dimensions.

The general view of a collectivistic society outside of theoretical literature, would be one more focused on society wellbeing and helping the next person. Thus, some interviewees were able to understand how Japan could be both collectivistic and individualistic than Portugal. Yes, Japan is a very group-centric society, and that is common sense. However, their view of Us vs. The other does make them seem individualistic as well, as for example the meaning represented in Hokusai's *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (Guth, 2015), of how Japan (the little boats) faces the world around them (the big wave) and the uncertain future and change by those surrounding them, as a consequence of their period behind closed borders (Hellyer, 2009).

This way, the Japanese are extremely collectivistic as per their vision of a Group, but the results show that, alongside the historical reasonings behind it, the fact that a higher score on Masculinity is present, makes it so the in-group cooperation is very well maintained, but when it comes to helping the weaker, if outside of the group, or worse, not part of a well-established group at all, it is extremely uncommon. In countries like Portugal where Masculinity is low as is Individualism, it is easier for someone to have the predisposition to help outside of their group.

In 1989 when the study was first published, I believe there was not as much friction with this name as there is now. Even outside of the research conducted, only mentioning the name of this dimension would be quite controversial. In the same way, it was unavoidable for people to start commenting on sexism in both countries when asked about the scorings on this dimension. For example, in Japan's case it was easy to see a higher score for Masculinity, the Dimension, because the country itself is known to have strong quite present gender inequality (Belarmino & Roberts, 2019, Krajewski & Burke, 2004).

On the other hand, in Portugal's case it was very hard to explain the difference between both definitions seeing as it is not possible to say there is no gender inequality in the country. In this case, when stated that Portugal was "Feminine", without understanding the concept behind being "What motivated society", it appeared as though my reality was shadowed by the idea of Nationalism and that Portugal was perfect. Although many people were able to understand the concept behind it, it was still difficult for some to fully give their opinion connected to the real meaning behind the dimension.

In the meantime, since the beginning of the research, this Dimension has actually changed names. Unfortunately, I had not been aware of such, or else I would have also called the dimension by its new and much more self-explanatory and less polemical naming: Motivation towards Achievement and Success (MAS)”.

Specially with Japan’s scoring, it was quite hard even for me to justify to a more curious interviewee at the end why this dimension was so ambiguous. Long-Term and Short-Term Orientation by themselves are quite self-explanatory. The main concern was that while Japan is known to be a country with stronger values and norms than, for example, Portugal, it was still considered Long-Term Oriented. It was easy to understand the reasoning behind their wish long-lasting partnerships and cooperation, but at the same time, it is a country that places great emphasis on those rules and traditions.

On important point on this dimension brought up by one very knowledgeable interviewee, was that the timing of Hofstede’s research had great influence. In fact, seeing as this dimension is the most related with time passing, it is possibly the one with the most changes throughout the time. In Japan’s case, a big economic Crash in the 1990s could have easily changed the mindset of people to live more in the present and be more ambitious, as could have the re-start of a democracy in Portugal in the late 1970s have led younger generations to start dreaming and planning ahead also with the help of newly acquired access to information and endless possibilities.

As mentioned so far throughout the study, the timing of Hofstede’s study greatly impacts some dimensions more than others. Even though the fluidity of culture is not as quick paced, dimensions like Long Term Orientation can easily be affected by the sudden changes in the course of history such as political regimes, wars, social and economic crises. It would be very interesting to see a re-run of Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions study under today’s circumstances and verify if, truthfully, culture is as impacted by every external factor as we think it is.

## **6.2. Future Research**

A very important next step would be to including more Japanese Nationals and allowing for a more even distribution of genders, ages, and experiences. I believe to achieve this; it will not be easy as the above-mentioned cultural factors can still hinder the research. For a study to be more complete, the intervention of a higher organisation would be very important in order to validate the importance of the study and opinion gathering.

Lastly, even though Portugal was seen as still a harder country to negotiate with from the Japanese point of view, as mentioned by some interviewees, there is some people affinity between both countries. In fact, out of the same cluster, it was easier to see Portugal as an easier country than Latin America, for example. What exactly makes Portugal and Japan similar then in the point of view of the Japanese? Personally, it was not the first time to hear that Portugal is much more Asian-friendly than any other European or even Western country; “Asia in Europe” as I have heard. I understand that Portugal may still be somewhat conservative, but what exactly makes it so different? If the same study were to be done to people with experience in both countries (Portugal vs. another mediterranean country or Portugal vs. Latin America), we may be able to understand why.

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