


Investigating the Role of Cultural Awareness in A Multicultural Business Environment: A Case Study Based on Turkish and British Markets

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to understand the role of cultural awareness in a multicultural business environment with an attempt to explore the key factors that boost effectivity and prevent the failure of businesses in cross-cultural circumstances. Defining the mutual approach and understanding levels of expatriates operating abroad is a crucial factor for an accurate business strategy and management planning. For the purpose of this study, 24 managers were interviewed (10 non-Turkish managers who run British companies in Turkey and 14 non-British managers who run Turkish companies in the UK). A predefined questionnaire was used to conduct interviews with open-ended questions designed to research *cultural awareness* indicators, derived from the analysed literature, and cumulated under the 4 main spheres: 1) multiple perspective abilities, 2) culture reading skills, 3) intercultural communication development and 4) adapting cultural flexibility. The main focus is to investigate how adaptation strategies may differ in the business environment depending on the specific cultural background of the subjects. The answers of the study's participants were analysed through the indicators defining cultural awareness and therefore lead to conclusions related to the understanding and coping with a cross-cultural context in the business environment, aspects of cultural adaptation, as well as linked strategies of management. Results show that companies tend to rely on their managers' knowledge and professional background in coping with issues related to a multicultural environment. Furthermore, most entities follow home-country practices on the host country market or prefer the use of one-size-for-all strategies while attempting to adapt their operations locally.

Keywords: culture, strategy, learning, management, international business

JEL Classification: M16, F23

INTRODUCTION

The growing direct access to various goods available on an international scale by an increasing number of individuals around the world brings to mind the symbolic disappearance of countries or regions' borders, as described in the *denationalization* process (Wild & Wild, 2014). The path to reaching profit and establishing the brand value seems to be paved through economies of scale (Kotler et al., 2008), hence, all size of companies starting from SMEs (conventional home-market perspective) to multinational groups (experienced perspective) are attracted to join this global rally (Root, 1994).

The social and cultural norms that shape international markets and their interactions constitute a constant challenge for the adaptation strategies of companies to

structure the organisation best practices (Osland, Taylor & Zou, 2001). An important aspect for businesses to consider in an international environment is the strength brought by the understanding of cultural complexities and adaptability in a diverse market that ultimately represents an important asset and advantage for the entity's management (Jones, 2018). Shaping business development goals in an international environment needs to include factors related to various social and cultural indicators. Companies might, therefore, overpass the competitors while shaping the market development plans under the influence of game-changer cultural complexities (Deresky, 2011).

Outlining the strategies adopted by a company in a new cultural context and the adjustment of the

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management approach in the face of various cultural differences' impact is crucial. Decisions taken in the international business environment might lead to a loss of management control on the host country market (Jansson, 2007). Fulfilling economic, legal, and political requirements in an unfamiliar territory may not be achieved if the cultural rules and norms are not met (Ramirez et al., 2019).

A clearer view of various occurring mechanisms might be emphasized through the analysis of companies from different cultural, ethnic, and social background. It is, however, crucial to compare entities of countries with a history of previous business cooperation, that can at the same time be associated with cultures significantly differing from each other. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, a comparison of companies originating from the United Kingdom and Turkey was conducted with a focus on researching the dynamics occurring within a company concerning its cross-cultural approach. The unique history of trade relations between those markets creates a rare opportunity to understand the dynamics of how cultural factors shape businesses (i.e., British Chamber of Commerce of Turkey (BCCT) is the 2nd oldest British Chamber in the world). The cooperation was established between those two markets not only because of their commercial dynamism but also due to their location, their religion, their development levels, their reciprocal influence. Taking a closer look at the social structure of the two and analysing the cultural context in which the business operates is crucial in the attempt of finding the answers to that question.

The cultural complexity of Turkey is reflected through its mixed ethnic and historical heritage combining Asia, Middle Eastern and European influences. Turkish society might be viewed as more homogenous than the society in the UK (even though highly complex due to its rich ethnic-cultural history), as would suggest the shown percentage representation of ethnic groups, spoken languages and religions (see Appendix 2). From the business and management point of view, this points out to expectations that Turkish business managers will face a more diverse cultural environment, whereas UK managers will be able to focus on a narrower cultural context.

The study focused on individual experiences of British and Turkish business managers representing companies doing transnational business in each other's countries, intending to identify the main cultural obstacles and difficulties they reported. The ramification of the results could represent a significant base of cul-

tural-shock prevention in a business context, though the emphasizing of the main areas requiring attention from a company and preparation before engaging in cross-cultural interaction. Therefore, the principal object of the study is to analyse how cultural adaptation strategies adopted by business representatives may vary when placed in a different cultural context.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on the analysis presented throughout different research, four separate indicators have been identified, as the main components serving to define and measure cross-cultural awareness: *The multiple-perspective approach, culture reading, intercultural communication, cultural flexibility*. Each of these indicators represents what could be referred to as a 'component', although vast in its depth and interpretation possibilities, that altogether form a set of skills and exhibited factors the author of this study defines as cross-cultural awareness among the research participants. The existing large variety of research concerning business management and its cross-cultural aspect points out some key findings that allow an attempt of categorisation to analyse gathered data.

1.1. Multiple Perspective

The core of all business is to adapt the offered product to the needs and expectations of the customers, which involves adaptation to 'local' requirements (Gvili & Levy, 2019). Even though some goods are getting more homogeneous with time (e.g., American jeans), many products remain diverse per culture/region/area. Stonehouse et al. (2004) underline the multiple perspectives adopted on the example of bread as a basic-need product sold globally but subject to major differences per country or even region (e.g., the French baguette or the Indian naan). Even in parallel national or regional contexts, important cultural differences might occur, as illustrated by the well-known expression: 'separated by a mutual language'.

The overgeneralised view of the characteristic of nations or social groups and lack of multiple perspectives is the source of stereotypes, which by definition are an important obstacle to cultural fluency (Gonzalez et al., 2019). Overcoming them might prove more difficult for people originating from more homogeneous cultures (e.g., Japan) (Koslow, 1996), the similarities being nonetheless more likely to be noticed and therefore facilitate the business approach (Segal-Horn, 1994). Historical, religious, doxastic, and social heritage should

be the object of focus and understanding to get rid of preconceived opinions, understanding culture in detail needs therefore systematic progress (Adekola & Sergi, 2007). As argued by Zhang & Lopez-Pascual (2012) based on a study on Spanish banks in China, two types of cultural perspectives may be defined to describe this process of understanding:

- I. *Static perspective* is a superficial feature of culture and helps to discover seeming differences in alternative ways of business approach, however, might not be adequate to translate the density of the culture.
- II. *Dynamic perspective* is the deep and unexposed face of a culture and considered by the authors as a learning process. According to Woo & Dominick (2003), this process is named acculturation with 3 steps: 'Cultural Barriers', 'Adaptation' and 'Cultural Development'.

Each variable of cultural interplay starts with multiple perspectives and it is important to have or educate managers who have high cultural intelligence to handle this process efficiently.

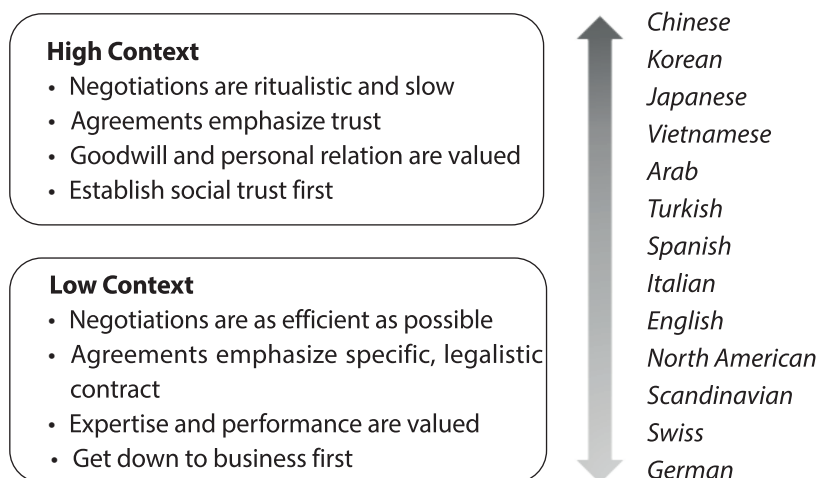
1.2. Culture Reading

The global market (and therefore, the way supply and demand influence each other) is directly affected by the cultural norms and expectations that have emerged through history, religion, geographic and climatic

factors (Stonehouse et al., 2004). According to Terpstra & David (1991) and Beamer (1992), the fundamental principles of the so-called 'culture reading' are, that: (i) cultural bias always exists, (ii) the way all cultures organise and explain human experience are equally valid, (iii) cultures are coherent and whole, (iv) cultures can be learned with time. Culture reading as a concept is the basis to reach cultural fluency. A second step is reached with the identification of more detail's characteristics of a specific cultural environment. At this point is it seemingly easy to jump to stereotype-based assumptions to interpret the situations we face. As pointed out by Segal-Horn (1994), some stereotypic conclusions are drawn to faced business interlocutors that represent another culture, such as: "Swedes wish to discuss a business problem at interminable length"; "Germans are reluctant to clinch a deal before consulting their lawyers"; "Latin Americans are unwilling to do business with people who have no interest in their family affairs".

An interesting theory was offered by Hall (1981), that underlines two main categories fundamental for culture reading (rather than a divisive classification that leads to stereotypization) as presented on two edges on:

- I. *Low context cultures* rely on spoken words rather than non-verbal communication. These cultures need to communicate and transmit the information in a clear, open, and direct way.



Source: Hall, 1981

Source: Based on Hall's (1981) Beyond Culture

- II. *High context cultures* need a communal lifestyle, sensitive relationships, and harmonious communication type. In these cultures, understanding the social ranks and creating empathy is very important. This contextual level is very critical even in the same language sharing cultures. According to Hall (1981) e.g., British businesspeople think that American businesspeople explain every little detail even when things seem to be obvious. Moreover, as visible through the research of Patel et al. (2020), approach to specific products will vary between high and low context societies, pointing out the importance of locally adapting chosen business strategies, as tendencies of reaction will significantly vary accordingly.
- III. *Low context cultures* rely on spoken words rather than non-verbal communication. These cultures need to communicate and transmit the information in a clear, open, and direct way.
- IV. *High context cultures* need a communal lifestyle, sensitive relationships, and harmonious communication type. In these cultures, understanding the social ranks and creating empathy is very important. This contextual level is very critical even in the same language sharing cultures. According to Hall (1981) e.g., British businesspeople think that American businesspeople explain every little detail even when things seem to be obvious. Moreover, as visible through the research of Patel et al. (2020), approach to specific products will vary between high and low context societies, pointing out the importance of locally adapting chosen business strategies, as tendencies of reaction will significantly vary accordingly.

1.3. Intercultural Communication

The communication styles of companies and their business managers exhibiting a lack of cultural sensibility require the adaptation of communication strategy so that it enhances the awareness of the cultural context (Szkudlarek et al., 2020). The corporation faces, therefore, a significant risk of falling into the trap of creating various social biases within the entity. A good identifier system adapted in a company through practice could turn into a valuable analytical tool (Lane, 1980). There are five subdivisions of intercultural

communication since this is a relationship with people via their culture (Stonehouse et al., 2004; Trompenaars, 1993; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997):

- I. *Particularism vs. universalism* focuses on the significance of rules and norms in determining behaviour. Particularism favours a more relative approach whereas universalism favours the rules.
- II. *Collectivism vs. individualism* emphasises group or individual needs recognition within a group/society. Collectivism stands for group harmony; individualism stresses the culture of self-reliance.
- III. *Neutral vs. affective cultures* reveal a tendency to show emotions in the community. Neutral culture members do not show emotions whereas affective culture members do.
- IV. *Diffuse vs. specific relationships* refer to having diverse relationships. Diffuse dominant communities invite their colleagues to their home whereas 'specifics' generally do not.
- V. *Ascribing vs. achieving status* reflects which way of achieving status is seen as preferable. The ascribing status will be based on age, class, or seniority whereas the achieving status will be based on self-achievements.

An interesting complementary approach was later described through a focus on communication styles and factors that shape it by placing countries/societies on an eight-scale map developed by Erin Meyer (2014), which besides its academic value brought a lot of interest to the topic of intercultural communication in business and culture-clash in the business community itself.

Characteristics of the local environment will determine the non-verbal communication patterns and the ability to send and receive non-verbal messages is crucial for decoding the most complex culture indicators (Segal-Horn, 2004). This 'advanced' level of cultural communication seems to be fundamental for accurate evaluation and understanding of each process in a business environment. As presented in Table 1, the application of the Critical Incident Analysis (CIA) method could prove to be a successful tool in achieving fluency in pro-active communication (Keller, Senn & Thoma, 2007; Solomon, 2001).

Table 1: CIA (Critical Incident Analysis) methodology in communication

Stage	Aim	Method
Identification	Being culturally aware to be able to communicate with another culture	Primary & Secondary research, socializing by managers and local workforce, working in groups
Confrontation	Preventing the pre-judgments, controlling all communicators and communication ways	Using native citizens, business, or marketing consultancy firms
Communication	Learning the cultural behaviours with meanings to formulate responses	Using language interpreters, strategic partners from local culture, and small focus groups
Customisation	Understanding the whole process to adapt products/services to improve continuously	Administration and client-facing departments should be trained/updated about local culture

Source: (Keller, Senn & Thoma, 2007; Solomon, 2001)

1.4. Cultural Flexibility

For multinational companies, a crucial aspect of the business strategy is implementing a high level of flexibility and readiness to analyse and ultimately adapt locally to cultural requirements achieving cultural flexibility (e.g., adaptation of food products by implementing some locally appreciated ingredients). A similar strategy is to be adopted by companies' managers who are expected to exhibit flexible behaviours showing a culturally open mind-set (Stonehouse et al., 2004; Segal-Horn, 2004). An interesting theoretical approach is offered by Fairbass (2003) who presents two different strategies and argues that both standardisation and skipping the cultural dimensions of the local environment may prove to be accurate. Superiority suggests imposing an authoritative culture approach and should be applied to the societies that have a higher power distance than the average. Debatable Standardisation suggests building a new approach between the home and host country culture. Apetrei et al., (2015) suggest two different adaptation technics: By Indifference - delegating the local employees to join management, so that the managers can understand the local culture directly and adapt themselves; By Submission - delegating decisions to employees.

Leading with a democratic strategy and approach is helpful to determine a strategy for customers effectively. Nonetheless, Hofstede (1994; 2001) shows that these strategies can mislead the management decisions if the host country has a high-power distance.

This literature review about the subject of cross-cultural management and adaptation strategies in various cultural contexts sheds a light on the main pillars forming what is described as cross-cultural awareness within a company environment. The formed complexity that sets of cultural norms and rules bring to a company's operations and strategies must be looked

at from a perspective applying possibly various theoretical approach. Although a solid analytical background is reflected through the description of each pillar, the exact practical outcomes remain uncertain, pointing out to tendencies and patterns occurring as a result of a certain interaction, not necessarily defining the source or detailed cause. Similarly, a focus on subjects through a certain chosen theoretical path may narrow or limit the possibilities of analysis, whereas a broader approach could offer the opportunity of a wider look at a whole spectrum of the problematic. Therefore, analysing the data in this research through the above-mentioned described various constructs may provide a more accurate and reliable view and therefore significant importance of the offered conclusions. The chosen categorisation into four pillars proposed by the author of this research is intended to provide a better understanding of gathered data by distinguishing taxonomically the described academic findings of the literature review.

This study, therefore, aims to try to find answers to the following questions:

- Are there effective tools that may help to prevent risky business mistakes occurring on grounds of culture and possibly due to pre-conceived notions of a company operating in a foreign country about the host country's cultural norms?
- How does the ability of 'culture reading' affect the business operations of a company operating on a foreign market?
- Is there a way to develop a common cross-cultural communication strategy valid for every culture to eliminate issues that affect the international business of a foreign company in a host country?

- How does pro-active cultural flexibility help in adjusting plans and expectations to local cultural requirements?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research strategy

This study is constructed based on a qualitative research method with a pre-understanding approach. Pre-understanding is activated when we regard something with intentionally structured feelings and thoughts (Gadamer, 1995). Individual experiences, such as professional and private life are classified as the first-hand pre-understanding whereas the indirect knowledge and practices of other people, such as lectures, articles, research reports are called second-hand pre-understanding (Gummesson, 2000). Since the managers confirmed through the interviews, they had acquired such second-hand pre-understanding of existing cross-cultural differences, the data used in this study were those relating from first-hand pre-understanding.

Consistent with the literature review, the hermeneutic method is the technic that assures the most suitable interpretation scope for this study to emphasize a specific individual point of views and understand the core meaning beneath the words where direct understanding fails. Moreover, the hermeneutic approach can lead to more consistent results in such studies according to Gummesson (2000). This method is mostly used while dealing with expressive human activities and includes the investigator in the research – which, in the case of the research described in this paper plays a significant role, as the author is a Turkish national who has been living in the UK.

2.2. Data collection

For the purpose of this study, the area of research was narrowed down to the interaction between Turkish and UK business. The object of the study was to investigate the strategy (and possible cultural awareness adaptation) chosen by business representatives (company managers) in cross-cultural interaction. To capture the real business life experience and to discover Turkish and British specific markets, managers from different companies were interviewed (Turkish companies conducting business in the UK and British companies conducting business in Turkey). The managers participating in the study were informed of their goal beforehand. They were chosen from internationally operating companies to gain a higher probability of comparative results. This research used qualitative data and the

collection of information was gathered by interviews with the managers. Structured interviews were used with open-ended questions where the answers do not need to be chosen from a specific multiple choice.

2.3. Sample

To identify an accurate and possibly complete database of companies operating in both markets, a current list of entities enlisted as members of the locally operating chamber of commerce was used as a source – therefore companies with a majority of Turkish capital that are a member of the Turkish British Chamber of Commerce and Industry (in the UK), and respectively companies with a majority of British capital that are a member of the British Chamber of Commerce in Turkey. The list of companies was then divided into big companies/big groups (>150mln TRY/GBP turnover per year) and SMEs (<150mln TRY/GBP turnover per year). A written invitation to participate in a survey designed to investigate the role of foreign business abroad was then sent to all companies through email. The companies that agreed to join the study were then contacted again and were provided details about the purpose and scope of the research and were informed that all interviews would be fully anonymous. The companies were asked to identify the employed managers who would be willing to represent the company and participate in the study. They were afterwards contacted to obtain their consent to participate in the research. Upon received confirmation, the representatives of the companies received detailed information about the methods of the study via phone and email. A total of 24 business managers participated in this study, representing 10 British companies in Turkey and 14 representing Turkish companies in the UK.

2.4. Method

To explore new factors of cross-cultural awareness for international business, interviews with open-ended questions were conducted via an online platform. Managers were asked to answer (in writing) without a time limit a series of twelve open-ended questions (see Appendix 1). Moreover, the general data and information regarding the companies and the local market were gathered to provide a broader context in the research data analysis and place them in the current economic context.

Although attempting to compare experiences of representatives of different countries and cultures might seem to not be accurate, it is worth to underline that this study aims to take a closer look at the situation

common for all the participants - working and living abroad and experiencing cultural differences on a certain level – which represents the point of reference for this research.

2.5. Reliability and validity

The research being a qualitative study lacks the classic measurement tools to provide a clear measure of those indicators. All the possible controllable factors have been carefully chosen based on the research aim and as such are reflected through the characteristics of the subject group (random choice of participant but who were from a specific and narrowed down group). The fact that business environments that the participants represent are of a wide variety significantly increases the reliability of obtaining similar results over another period of time or with a different sample. The study being based on personal testimonies is on the other hand an evident unpredictable element for further research and as such might lead to a variety of different results, should the same research be repeated over a similar group and similar adopted circumstances.

2.6. Participants

The sectors of business activity of the companies that appeared both in the case of British companies and Turkish are: Consumer goods, Energy, Chemistry. The ones specific only for British companies were Finance, Energy, Insurance, Retail and Telecom whereas the ones specific for Turkish companies were Textile, Food, Airline and Mining. The large majority of Turkish companies operating in the UK represent sectors of Textile (4 companies) and Food (5 companies), whereas British companies in Turkey seem to operate in a wider range of areas, with a majority named in this research as Finance, Energy, Insurance (2 companies each). Most of the British companies participating in this study have been placed within the first 500 companies in the Fortune Global 500 (2019), 90% of them have already expanded to more than 30 countries, and the interviewed managers have an average international abroad experience of 3,5 years. In the case of Turkish companies, 2 are listed among the first 500 of the Fortune Global 500 ranking (2019), 50% have expanded to more than 30 countries (the other 50% to more than 5 countries), and the interviewed managers have in average been 3,9 years in an international environment.

3. RESULTS

According to Deresky (2011), for reaching a successful level of understanding of the impact of a given na-

tion's cultural values, its variables have to be examined in a broader perspective. For this reason, the answers of the participants who were asked about the aspects/areas/values that were most affected according to them while conducting business in the host country were analysed semantically and additionally categorised into groups of indicators forming cultural values elements described by Deresky's (2011). A predefined group of specific indicators were formulated prior to the analysis, depicting areas from work/business related to nation/culture related to reflect the overall coverage of notions, which were afterwards categorised by the author into larger 5 categories in order to facilitate the presentation of results (*Job Behavior, Attitudes, Cultural Variables, Socio-Cultural Variables, National Variables*). Each formulated question or group of questions that the participants were asked (indicated in Appendix 1 as *Notions About Culture, Norms and Practices of Culture, Intercultural Communication, Adaptation to the Local Culture, Other overall recommendations*) refers to one or more defined indicators.

All gathered data was analysed based on the indicators identified through interviews. Two results charts (Table 2 and Table 3) were created (one regarding Turkish companies' representatives and one regarding British companies' representatives) to point out the indicators mentioned by each participant throughout the interview as a key factor and determinant of the cultural context within which companies and their employees operate.

As the study was fully anonymous, each interview was marked with a unique code number that can be found in the two above-mentioned charts, which serve in the later result analysis to provide examples of statements from the interviews.

3.1. Turkish Companies

The indicator mentioned the most in interviews of Turkish participants was the importance of *norms* and *values* as a culture variable to consider in international business and therefore indicates the awareness of the possible divergence in that matter worldwide and underlines the possible need to acknowledge those differences.

In terms of work conditions mostly *productivity* and *commitment* were mentioned in the answers, relating to the importance of core values and symbolism of the work ethics. *Work* and *time* matters are seen as key determinants of a general approach to various areas of functioning, determining as such key 'attitudes'. In

terms of socio-cultural factors, mostly *education* was mentioned throughout the interview, and among national variables, the importance of *technology* and *legal factors* were mostly spoken of.

The average experience of managers is 3,9 years in the host market.

3.2. British Companies

Representatives of British companies focused on the interviews mostly on matters related to work *ethics* and socio-cultural factors, where similarly to Turkish respondents, *education* seems to play a key role. The overall behavioural factors and attitudes cover most of the interview areas related to *work*, indicating the importance of a more pragmatic approach. The cultural values include mostly topics related to *beliefs* – as a bridge between the symbolism of religion and the constructs of norms – whereas on a more national scale the participants mention the importance of *legal systems* and *infrastructure*.

The average experience of managers is 3,5 years in the host market.

As shown in the results, managers from both Turkish and British companies have had approximately a similar amount of experience in the host market (per years), although British companies have a significantly longer presence abroad and therefore is more present in various countries' markets and operates within a different cultural environment. On the other hand, Turkish companies are not ranked high, contrarily to the British companies, on the Fortune Global Scale and operate within more specific sectors than (the majority of textile business representatives).

Throughout the interviews, British participants mostly emphasized issues related to socio-cultural factors, such as the importance of language, economy, or religion, and at the least were directly referring to matters describing job behaviours. Interestingly, the participants representing Turkish companies underlined more often in their answers the role of direct work behaviour patterns and approach, as well as factors defined on a national scale such as legal system or the local politics.

The interviewed managers agree that culture has a significant effect on the way business is run locally. They are aware that preparing a company for international

expansion means getting ready for cross-cultural interaction. Managers 3b, 8b and 9t stated that language is a key element allowing to learn about a culture and that it gives leverage to understand e.g., the sense of humour, which is the ultimate expression of a society's cultural heritage. Manager 3b and 4b expressed from their side that it is difficult to make contact with the people due to the poor level of English in Turkey and that is why they started to learn Turkish to avoid possible misunderstandings.

Most of the managers felt affected by cultural variables such as local norms, beliefs, and values. Manager 7b mentioned in that aspect that he views Turkey as a more relationship-driven country than other European countries where the business is more task-driven. Most of the participants agree that the work culture understood in general as the sense of commitment, ethics, motivation, and productivity will also be affected through contact with another business culture. Managers 4t and 9t also said that the way of placing commitments and ethical issues are different than in their home country, however, they already adapt to most of the job behaviour requirements. Manager 7t pointed out that sometimes businesses prefer to employ people from the same culture as they have more confidence that the job will be done according to the locally expected standards: e.g., that manager's company originally had an English manager, however, it did not reach the intended goals because the manager was unable to communicate and deal with a majority Turkish based organisation.

The interviewed managers felt in majority affected by overall cultural and symbolic differences, such as language or religion, but do not necessarily perceive those factors as crucial in business environment influencers. An interesting example was provided by Manager 3b, who mentioned that many bureaucratic requirements had to be sorted out in Turkey before the month of Ramadan because the business activities become almost standstill during this time of the year in Turkey (e.g., lunch with a Muslim business partner cannot occur during that period, which in turn slows the business process). Manager 10b points out, on the other hand, the possible negative influence of language differences that could represent a significant obstacle. Szkudlarek et al. (2020) explain that language is the main issue in the communication of international business, but that can be seen as an important asset, respectively.

Table 2: The background of the interviewed managers and their companies in Turkey

British Companies and Their Managers in Turkey																											
Participant ID	Background					Values & Variables Challenged By																					
	Sector of the Surveyed Companies	Number of Companies Surveyed For the Study	World Ranking (Value)	Number of Expanded Countries (Total)	Running Business in the Host Country (Since)	Manager Experience in the Host Country (Year)	Job Behaviour			Attitudes			Cultural Variables			Socio-Cultural Variables				National Variables							
							Motivation	Productivity	Commitment	Ethics	Individualism	Time	Materialism	Work	Change	Values	Norms	Beliefs	Religion	Education	Language	Economy	Legal System	Politics	Infrastructure	Technology	
1b	Finance	2	0 - 500	60 +	1990s	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2b							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3b	Energy	2	0 - 500	50 +	1960s	2			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4b							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5b	Insurance	2	500 +	70 +	1990s	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6b							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7b	Retail	1	0 - 500	30 +	2000s	1	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8b	Chemistry	1	0 - 500	70 +	2000s	3		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
9b	Consumer Goods	1	0 - 500	70 +	1990s	4		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
10b	Telecom	1	0 - 500	5 +	2000s	6			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Source: Data collected from companies' web sites; Fortune Global 500 (2019); indicators of cultural values adapted from Deresky's (2011) nation's cultural values

Managers *9t* and *11t* stated the negative effect of the country's macrosystems on business development (due to differences in management in developed – UK – and developing – Turkey – countries). Those dynamics might be influenced by the constantly evolving business background of a region/country, which according to Ramirez Marin et al. (2019), is shaped by political, economic, technical, and geographical factors, in turn reversely influenced by the business development activities.

4. DISCUSSION

There are three important things that a company must do before expanding. According to Rugman (2000), the first condition is to be economically competitive, the second is to be the influencer over the trade procedures and the third is creating a worldwide orientation so the company can become a multinational firm. According to empirical data collected from the firms via interviews with Turkish and British business managers from 24 different companies, they indeed feel they have to be the leaders in their sector before they enter a new market (and which they did years ago). All companies represented by the interviewed managers have more than one branch, and all have competitors on a local and international level as well. Influencing the trade regulations is not necessary for those companies due to the attractiveness and open market of both Turkey and the UK, therefore all companies have a global orientation that helps to conduct business worldwide. The results indicate that companies are relying on their managers' knowledge and professional background to cope with and understand situations placed in a cross-cultural context. Furthermore, entities exhibiting the tendency of applying the strategy of repeating the home-country business practices or of using the one-size-for-all strategy tend to fail in the adaptation within the host country culture.

According to Hoecklin (2000) being aware of culture both at home and host market is crucial. Ball et al. (2004) also mentioned that to obtain a strategic improvement and adaptation regarding both local and international rivals, the important thing is gaining more developed consciousness as well as learning how to identify and interpret cultural differences from a business perspective. In that aspect, Manager *3b* mentioned that in the sale of a product, it is important to consider the factors that will make it relevant to a local market. Manager *10t*, on the other hand, mentioned 'awareness' in terms of the company culture that provides inside tools and

means for the organisation to help understanding possible cultural differences.

4.1. Multiple Perspective

According to Gvili and Levy (2019), the preferences of customers from different countries and cultures can be differentiated and categorised. Experiences of Manager *1t* seem to prove that since globalisation as a phenomenon points international business towards dealing with various cultures, the role of gaining multiple perspectives to cultures is vital. According to Gonzalez et al. (2019), the clearer distinctions there are between nations or cultural groups, the easier they will be to identify. Those identifications, however, may easily lead to stereotype constructs, and those might have a profound negative and costly impact on companies, as stated Manager *6t*. Manager *7b*, on the other hand, underlined that: "If you have some judgement regarding the other culture, you might have misunderstandings or you might make a wrong decision because of your judgments". Manager *2t* referred stereotypization to as a business example that can be seen in the perception of products based on their label ('Made in Italy' might be seen as a better-quality product than 'Made in Turkey'). Business managers need to plan the strategies, accordingly, bearing in mind the possible perception reactions and general attitudes of the intended customer. Manager *8b*, for instance, defines the barrier of cultural understanding as a possible obstacle in building the customer-partner relationship. For Manager *2b*, no matter how good a product is, if a manager cannot 'sell the idea' to the counterparty, it will be very difficult to sell the product in places where personal relationships are more important than anything else and understanding the importance of it. Adekola & Sergi (2007) argued that understanding culture in depth is possible by starting to understand the historical, religious, and social heritage. It would mean overcoming pre-conceived notions related to a culture, as pointed out by Manager *8t* in an example: "When my company expanded a product to the UK, environmental factors were regarded as important and people were willing to pay more to ensure that the product was safe, so the necessary knowledge was gathered". The theories of Zhang & Lopez-Pascual (2012) can be referred to when looking at the explanation of Manager *4b* who underlines the importance of attaining a higher degree of integration of business managers over time (such as learning the local language), thus gaining a more dynamic perspective with the acquiring of experience.

It is after all difficult to grasp the real characteristics of a culture without involving in that market.

4.2. Culture Reading

According to Jones (2018), the links between industry and markets overall are not only a simple relation of supply and demand, but a wider system affected by the local environment history and current situation. Manager 6*t* mentions here the example of work-hours differences that vary under adopted models of family-work balance (workhours of women in the UK depend more on the childcare situation). The preferred style of adaptation and approach to the 'openness' towards a local culture is differently defined by the interviewed managers (Manager 2*b*: 'lifestyle, environment and news'; Manager 1*t*: "Willingness, readiness, open-mindedness, avoiding judgement of norms and practices"; Manager 3*b*: "Laws and policies, market expectations, working environment, quality or quantity and prices"; Manager 9*t*: "Not jumping to conclusions and making generalisations based on a single incident". The danger of stereotypes forming unwillingly but always in the case of non-active culture reading and interpretation (Patel et al., 2020) might be minimised as pointed out by most of the interviews with Managers with the help of internationally and locally experienced staff. The typology of high/low context culture/nation described by Hall (1981) in continuation of Hofstede's studies (Hofstede et al., 2010), doesn't place Turkey and the UK far from each other on the continuum of high/low context (Turkey being at the beginning of the high context and the UK at the end of the low-context). The managers could perceive differences though, as mentioned in examples concerning business negotiations: Managers 6*b* and 7*b* said that they were spending much more time than they did in the UK for communication and meetings with Turkish managers. Manager 7*t* and 13*t*, on the other hand, found themselves struggling with the rapid pace of the ongoing negotiation process.

4.3. Intercultural Communication

Szkudlarek et al. (2020) defend the idea of a systematic approach to communication issues. As most of the managers agreed, a stable and well-prepared system of interaction (conducted by a specific team, e.g., the administrative personnel) for all businesses with their customers, counterparts, suppliers etc. is a core element to prevent mistakes at the personal and corporate level. Whereas such an approach might significantly help from a systematic point of view, managers also

agreed that avoiding cultural misunderstandings is a much more complex goal to reach. As a solution, Manager 3*b* believes that regular training, intercorporate workshops, and a good system of professional feedback between departments that deal directly with the external environment (PR, HR, Customer Service, etc.) is helpful to understand and readjust the cultural awareness. Certain common behaviours might be observed, learned, and understood to be adapted in further professional interactions (Segal-Horn, 1994; Brislin et al., 1983; Triandis, 2002). A good example was provided by Manager 1*b* who explained the near lack of use of the word 'no' by Turks in business talks, replaced by other expressions such as 'Inshallah' (Eng. 'God-willing) suggesting indirectly the hesitance of the speaker. Naturally, a direct interpretation could lead to a serious business misunderstanding. The adaptation of strategies where openness to learning the 'decoding' of verbal communication is key to effective adaptation on a market. About the described earlier Critical Incident Analysis (CIA) methodology (Keller et al., 2007; Solomon, 2001), none of the described techniques (identification, confrontation, decision & communication, and customisation) defined as effective in reducing potential culture-shock have been mentioned in any form by the interviewed managers.

4.4. Cultural Flexibility

Srivastava et al. (2020) defend the idea that flexibility refers not only to the active observation of the environment but also searching to meet the cultural requirements, while implementing if possible positive formative cultural feedbacks to shape the business strategy, e.g., to locally sold products. Manager 8*t* was the only one to explain his company adopts such a strategy of prior inquiry to determine the company's position. Manager 5*t* and 11*t* expressed that their companies are using similar financial products but different calculation techniques depending on the governmental terms and conditions for the host countries they operate in. Manager 5*b*, due to their B2B business nature, mentioned that their products are the same in all countries they operate in. The approach of Fairbass (2003) that stands as a theoretical construct, in contrast, seems to be reflected on the other hand through the statements of Manager 3*b* who pointed out that maintaining the diversity although leading to the risk of biases side effects, seems to also be the key in overcoming the distance between client-supplier (as each needs to find a comfortable ground for effective interaction). The constructs of superiority (being formal

and forcing the home country's culture) and debatable standardisation (creating a common culture between management and the local employees with low control and direct communication ways), ultimately suggesting the role of ignoring cultural dimensions for the local environment, seem to be reflected through the words of Manager 2t who stands up for creating mix culture with the adapted managers and products to the host country's culture. The approach of Manager 2t who prefers to adopt a completely tailored strategy, which steps will be entirely dependent on all the variables, such as the target customer, sold product, goals to achieve etc. Manager 14t, on the other hand, expressed that as a mining company, they prefer for the managers to adapt to the host countries and their cultures.

CONCLUSION

Effects of culture and the role of cultural awareness in international business transactions are the most common issues for both business managers and researchers. However, not all research is adopted by managers in their businesses, and not all managers' techniques have been revealed by researchers. This study was conducted between a developed (UK) and a developing country (Turkey). One of the biggest potential risk sources in international business is its cross-cultural aspect. The main perceived obstacles are related to social norms, values, education, and most ethical issues as general beliefs, as proven in the analysed literature, and as reflected through the conducted interviews. Besides that, religion, language barriers also seem to affect most managers. Relationship driven business in Turkey affected managers who are from task-driven business life in the UK.

Managers seem to agree that cultural awareness is crucial for international business regardless of its cost and required effort, as developing it might ensure a significant improvement of the image in the eyes of clients, especially in comparison to competitors. Their responses show also that originating from a complex cultured background helps to avoid preconceived notions. As suggested through the literature review, being aware of components of a culture can be possible by actively involving in understanding the local environment. Learning about a culture and responding to that culture, in the same way, needs careful culture reading according to the research results. All managers have their way to approach and learn how to operate within a new cultural context to prevent forming and using stereotypes. Managers from different context

backgrounds have struggled to keep pace with the business life in the host country. Furthermore, improving the business in the host country depends on the communication skills managers gained in the host country. Acquiring those skills facilitates the overall adaptation to the local market and cultural environment either in a democratic or more dominating way. For many companies, adapting to conduct their business within different and new conditions, where communication strategies and behaviour patterns may differ, represents a significant challenge – often impossible to overcome. The adopted strategies will vary for the country of origin of a company and the host country's formal and informal requirements. To take a closer look at the cross-cultural management approach, this research focused on Turkish companies that expanded to the UK market and British companies that expanded to the Turkish market. Its primary goal was to examine the possible effects of cultural awareness in a multicultural business environment and attempting to understand the chosen methods allowing the reach a satisfactory level of awareness both in Turkish and British market conditions, as well as defining the strategies undertaken by international business managers that might help to prevent possible culture shocks while establishing projects abroad.

The data was collected via interviews with 24 international business managers who have experience and knowledge about business management in a different cultural business environment. The collected qualitative data was further analysed in a hermeneutic scientific approach. The results demonstrated that cultural awareness plays a key role in achieving success in international business interaction. The preconceived notions, norms and practices, cross-cultural communication and adaptation have crucial effects directly on cultural awareness and indirectly on international business. These provide clear answers to the posed research questions I, II, III and IV. A conclusion possible to be drawn is also that ignoring factors helping to lead to a level of cultural awareness may lead companies to business failure. Overall recommendations by the managers via interviews revealed that even though multinational companies and international managers are aware of the cultural differences and their effects, the efficiency of solutions to the cultural problems in the host countries are depending on the managers' background, personal training and skills, and experiences in most of the organisations instead of a steady system.

The results of this study might prove useful as potential recommendations for shareholders and decision-makers of companies in the anticipation of international expansion. Preparing a tailored strategy for cross-cultural experience is key for reaching a more prospering organisation. This study might also be beneficial for economists and investors to shed light on other important aspects to consider while planning or considering financial decisions and investments within an internationally expanding company. Finally, thorough preparation of managers and expatriates regarding their awareness about the news local culture is crucial for an adaptation process allowing a transition and effective business operations in the host country.

Every interaction, even brief and indirect, between representatives of different cultures is a catalyst for changes in the individual's cultural scripts, behaviour, way of thinking, etc. As a result, the culture perceived by the expatriate as his/her own is redefined, and the way and extent to which elements of the 'other' culture have been assimilated determines his/her adaptation strategy. In this sense, cultural awareness can be understood as the protection of one's own socio-cultural background and known values while at the same time attempting to relate to the culture of the receiving society (Navas, 2005).

The ability to fluently and flexibly use and relate to culturally specific artefacts enables the creation of bonds with a given community or group. Adaptation is understood here as the balancing of two seemingly completely antagonistic processes. Firstly - maintaining unity, stability in the perception of oneself and one's identity - but secondly - readiness for change, flexibility in assimilating and understanding surrounding differences of a new cultural setting. Cultural adaptation resulting of awareness understood in such a way ensures the feeling of a complete integration and stabilisation through conscious 'enrichment' with new elements, e.g., of another culture.

An interesting addition that sheds a light on potential interpretation of gathered data and implications to be considered by business managers in international environments is the approach offered by Erin Meyer (2014), where the described model enables to place countries on multivariate and not necessarily static scales with regard to core values and aspect that can be used to define elements of a culture in a business understanding. The focus on key communication factors that after all shape the workplace environment needs to be taken into careful consideration, especially

that the understanding and decoding will happen on very different levels i.e., in a low context or high context culture.

A crucial factor to consider in the investigation of one's adaptation strategies is how the environment reflects to their presence and behaviour – in this case the attitude and openness and awareness of business managers will not only affect but also be directly affected by the employees and teams they work with directly and indirectly. In this aspect, a deep analysis of the specific socio-cultural structure of the micro-environment of an enterprise in addition to the general features that can describe the country's culture need to be carefully considered.

In considering the limitations and areas for further research, it is important to mention that next studies on other companies originating from other countries need to be undertaken. This study focused on a limited number of companies and only focused on the originating markets of the UK and Turkey, limiting the scope of interpretation of the results to those cultural contexts. The possibility of higher variability of results in the case of a bigger number of respondents needs to be taken into consideration as well. Moreover, the companies that were contacted and invited to take part in the study were all members of the Turkish/British Chamber of Commerce, which, although being the most representative institutions for a large majority of foreign companies, are not gathering all the existing entities operating with a capital of a given country. The combined list of Turkish/British companies formed of only members of the Chambers of Commerce needs to be seen as only a representative sample, given the existence of other enterprises operating on the British/Turkish market without being a member of the respective Chamber. A categorisation of research findings according to the sector of business of the companies taken into consideration in the study might also prove useful, as the need for interpersonal interaction and therefore cross-cultural encounter and communication might be more or less limited. Lack of emphasis on the business line of operation of interviewed participants represents a limitation of this study and points to further possibilities of its expansion. Taking into consideration the answers and testimonies of those other companies could provide more relevant data and diverse results, therefore representing a possible area for further research. The research focused on cultural differences that might shape business management and interpersonal approaches in a work environment,

and as such, it is crucial to underline the importance that the context and background of the data have on its interpretation, as it constitutes a potential limitation of the study, since a common method of analyses might omit certain culturally specific factors.

Moreover, the qualitative research method emphasizes the acquirement of quality data, regardless of its amount, we need to bear in mind that further interview could shed a different light on the discussed issues. The

interviewed managers represented moreover several sectors of business, which could have influenced or biased certain answers. Further conducted research should focus on a variety of sectors, possibly involving various sizes of business and place of origin. The hermeneutic approach, although allowing a deeper level of accurate data interpretation is naturally prone to subjectivity of the researchers and as such should be for the purpose of further research combined with relevant quantitative methods.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

APPENDIX 1

Interview Questions

Investigating the Role of Cultural Awareness in Multicultural Business Environment: Based on Turkish and British Market

Cultural Awareness

The purpose of this investigation is to achieve an understanding of the role of cultural awareness for business transactions. Your participation will help to develop a better understanding of this study. We believe that your rich experiences and observations will contribute greatly to this study.

All personal information gathered in this study will be kept confidential and secured in order to protect your privacy.

There are 3 questions under every 4 sections to be answered below.

A. Notions About Culture

1. In this era of globalisation, do you believe that culture has a vital role in international business? What are your experiences?
2. When do you expand to another country, how do you appreciate other cultural conditions and differences?
3. As an international manager, how do preconceived notions become a barrier for business transactions?

B. Norms and Practices of Culture

1. Could you explain any of your experiences of the norms and practices that affected your local business?
2. What are the main subjects to be considered while discovering another culture?
3. Do you prefer internationally studied or experienced personnel for your international business? Do you believe that they have the ability to understand another culture and adapt strategies more efficiently in either operational or managerial areas?

C. Intercultural Communication

1. When it comes to communication, are there many differences between the international and home market? What are the differences?
2. What do you think of how the cultural context of the host country should be considered and implemented while international/cross-cultural communication strategies are planned?
3. Do you think that using the internet and its facilities will make it easier to understand the local culture? How do you use social media for intercultural communications?

D. Adaptation to the Local Culture

1. Have you ever faced the negative effect of culture when you could not meet the expectations?
2. According to some authors, (I) forcing home country's culture in international business, (II) or adapting the managers and products in the host country, (III) or creating a mixed culture is the key to maintain cultural side effects. Which one do you prefer in your organisation and why?
3. Do you believe that culture would affect companies equally when they produce either tangible or intangible products? How do you use positive feedback in your organisation to determine this effect?

E. Other overall recommendations?

APPENDIX 2: Social Structure of the United Kingdom and Turkey

Category	Classification	Ratio	Classification	Ratio
	United Kingdom		Turkey	
Ethnic Groups	White	87.20%	Turkish	70 - 75%
	Black/African/Black British	3%	Kurdish	19%
	Asian/Asian British: Indian	2.30%	Other	7 - 12%
	Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	1.90%	-	-
	Mixed	2%	-	-
	Other	3.70%	-	-
Languages	English	Official	Turkish	Official
	Scots (in Scotland)	30%	Kurdish	15%
	Scottish Gaelic (in Scotland)	60,000	Other Minority Languages	2%
	Welsh (in Wales)	20%	-	-
	Irish (in Northern Ireland)	10%	-	-
	Cornish (in Cornwall)	2,000 - 3,000	-	-
Religions	Christian (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist)	59.50%	Muslim	99.80%
	Muslim	4.40%	Other	0.20%
	Hindu	1.30%	-	-
	Other	2%	-	-
	Unspecified	7.20%	-	-
	None	25.70%	-	-

Source: (CIA, 2019)