

**UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA**

**FACULTY OF ECONOMICS**

**DIPLOMA THESIS**

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**FACULTY OF ECONOMICS**

**DIPLOMA THESIS**

**CROSS - CULTURAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION  
MANAGEMENT IN COMPANY REXAM**

**(MEDKULTURNI MANAGEMENT POSLOVNEGA  
KOMUNICIRANJA V PODJETJU REXAM)**

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## **IZJAVA**

Študentka Aziza Dobardžić izjavljam, da sem avtorica tega diplomskega dela, ki sem ga napisala pod mentorstvom dr. Nade Zupan, in da dovolim njegovo objavo na fakultetnih spletnih straneh.

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# INTRODUCTION

It is a truism to observe that the world economy is increasingly global and that many of the uncertainties the world faces revolve around culture (Redding, 1987), this being the reason we have witnessed an increasing cultural awareness and cultural adjustment in the businesses worldwide.

Multinational firms need to understand and work successfully within and across different cultures. The ability to manage and communicate effectively cross-culturally is an important factor for multinational corporate survival and success. Understanding cultural values is an essential component of cross-cultural management and for successfully competing in today's interdependent global business environments (Nicholson & Stepina, 1998). However, one of the greatest challenges in international management is how to manage business communication on a global scale.

In communication between different cultures, the assignment of meaning to symbols requires the interpretation of those messages and adapting to the social aspect of each individual culture. A number of problems can occur because of cultural factors such as those that reflect values, beliefs, norms and symbolic meaning. One way to describe effective communication is that which is productive and satisfying to both the communicator and communicatee. It is appropriate that we follow rules and expectations of each participant in the communication. Due to cultural differences, however, the rules and expectations of the participants may differ (Nixon & Dawson, 2002), which leads to miscommunication and misunderstanding. As a consequence multinational corporations face an additional obstacle when managing interior and exterior communications. According to (Ascalon et al., 2008) finding and/or developing employees who can effectively function across cultures presents real challenges for organizations. Managers must be aware that communication effective in one society may be inappropriate in another (Grahn & Swenson, 2000).

Numerous researches have studied culture and cross-cultural management in different ways, depending on their perception of culture and their methodological approach. Communication, as a way of interaction not only in business relations, but also in everyday life has been a subject of several cross-cultural studies. Thus, the focus of this thesis is cross-cultural business communication management.

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the importance of culture and the potential misunderstandings in cross-cultural business communication. Furthermore, actual cross-cultural communication practices are studied on the example of a multinational company Rexam. The aim of the study is to enlighten the impact of culture on cross-cultural communication firstly, by building a theoretical framework and secondly, by empirically researching the communication between different cultures within the company and with its business partners.



Some of the principal research questions are:

- Do the substantial cultural differences within Rexam exist and if so are they consistent with the existing theoretical assumptions?
- Are employees aware of the obstacles in communication related to the culture and how are they managing those obstacles?
- Do employees receive any cross-cultural training and if so does it refer to particular theories about cultures?

In order to find the answers to the research questions, and to clarify this problem a company research was conducted. It is based on a review of available literature concerned with communication, culture and cross-cultural research. The literature review provides a large quantity of information and knowledge which is inevitable for understanding the meaning of cultural influence on communication and is followed by the empirical research about cross-cultural communication on the company's example.

The thesis is roughly divided into two parts, theoretical and empirical, which are further structured into three chapters. The theoretical part is followed by the research conducted through the interviews with the employees from the multinational called Rexam Plc. In the theoretical part various studies and approaches regarding the culture and communication are presented, while in the empirical part a conducted company research concerning cross-cultural communication management is described. The theoretical part begins with Chapter 1, continues till the end of Chapter 2 and is followed by the empirical part in Chapter 3. Finally, the conclusion of the thesis is presented. Introductory part provides the description of the problem, which is followed by the presentation of the purpose and objectives of the thesis. In the end of this part the structure of the thesis is reviewed. Chapter 1 is dedicated to culture as an essential foundation of cross-cultural communication. This chapter aims to define the meaning of culture together with its components. Furthermore, it provides definitions of national culture and dimensions of culture, while reviewing the existing cross-cultural studies conducted by authors, such as Hofstede. Chapter 2 summarises communication as another crucial element of cross-cultural communication. This chapter defines communication including the business communication and the communication process. Furthermore, it describes different types and methods of communication. Empirical part begins with Chapter 3 where firstly the studied company is presented, followed by the goals of the research and the methodology applied in the research. Moreover, the results of the research are analysed and compared to the established findings about cultures. Finally, based on the research and the literature review, the conclusions about the cross-cultural communication management are presented.

# 1 CULTURE

The term culture is used in a wide range of social sciences (e.g. anthropology, sociology, psychology), and it has therefore different meanings in different fields. Nonetheless, each one of us has his own perception of culture. To some it may be a crucial determinant of their habits and way of living, while others may not consider it extremely important. However, we all would probably agree that whether we want it or not culture shapes our character, behaviour and perception of the world around us and is therefore a key element in cross-cultural communication. Thus, it is important to understand this term in order to conclude how it influences cross-cultural communication.

The word culture apparently originates with the Latin culture, which is related to *cultus*, which can be translated as “cult” or “worship.” This meaning is helpful in understanding the use of the term. Members of a cult believe in specific ways of doing things, and thus develop a culture that enshrines those beliefs (Fan, 2000).

## 1.1 Defining culture

Numerous researchers have defined culture in various ways depending on their perception and preferences. According to Sevic (2003) western societies perceive culture as a social category consisting of beliefs, values, ways of thinking, and language, while most Eastern societies discern culture in a much more complex way as consisting of history, tradition, and most importantly, as a way of life. Following some definitions are presented:

**Tylor (1881):** “That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Fan, 2000).

**Kluckhohn & Kelly (1945):** “all the historically created design for living, explicit and implicit, rational, irrational, and nonrational, which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behaviour of men” (Fan, 2000).

**Hofstede & Hofstede (2004, p. 4):** “Culture consists of the unwritten rules of the social game. It is *the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others.*”

**Herbig & Dunphy (1998):** “Culture is the sum total of a way of life, including such things as expected behaviour, beliefs, values, language, and living practices shared by members of a society; it is the pattern of values, traits, or behaviours shared by the people within a region.”

Despite the differences between definitions of different authors, all of them have some points in common. Those commonalities are as follows:

- Culture is learnt and transmitted from one generation to another. (Individual acquires it from other members of his culture).
- Culture imposes certain values and rules for everyday life to the members who belong to that culture.
- Culture is shared by the members of the same society.
- Culture encompasses a wide range of life aspects, such as language, values, beliefs, behaviours, morals which are common to the members of that culture.

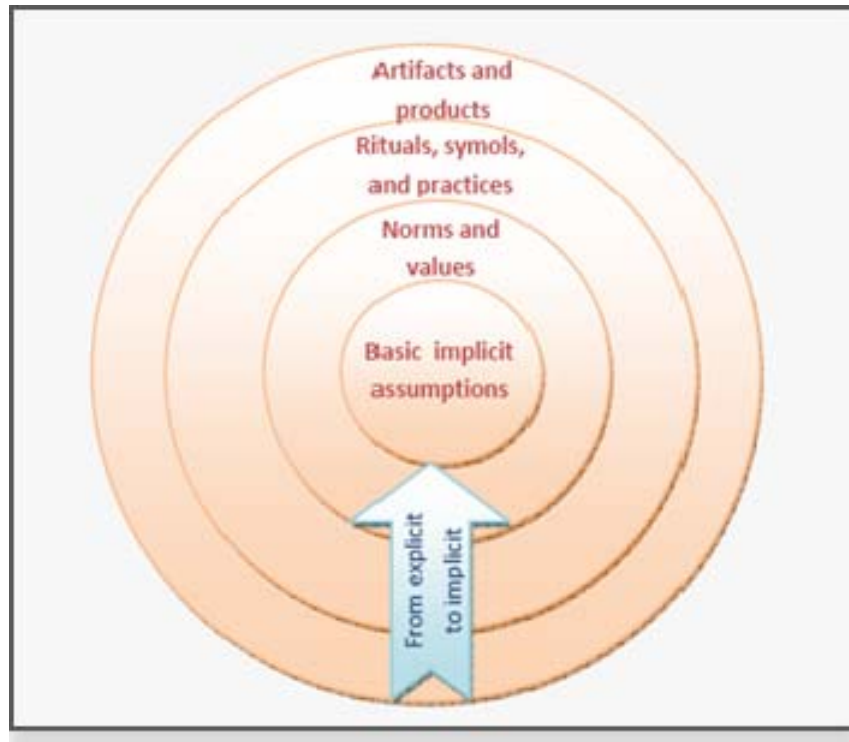
Most authors agree that culture is a very complex term, difficult to define. However, it is clear that culture is a behavioural norm that people sustain as common. Culture consists of both explicit and implicit rules through which experience is interpreted. The function of culture is to establish modes of conduct, standards of performance, and ways of dealing with interpersonal and environmental relations among the members of any society (Herbig & Dunphy, 1998). Culture being a set of rules commonly shared by society assumes that the vast majorities of society subscribe to those values and follow them in everyday life (Sevic, 2003). Shared cultural norms give the people of any society a sense of their common identity and a means of relating to one another (Herbig & Dunphy, 1998). Those cultural norms, customs, practices, and traditions are passed down from one generation to another.

Culture forces people to view and to value differently the many social interactions inherent in fashioning an agreement. One example of differences in culture lies in the importance attached to the group versus the individual. In Japan, the needs of the individual tend to be subordinated to the good of the group. On the other hand, in the United States, any intrusion by the group on the rights of the individual is regarded as unjustifiable. This is an example of vastly different philosophies but equally reasonable, based upon their own respective geographical parameters and historical background (Herbig & Dunphy, 1998).

Certain authors illustrate the important components of culture through the so called “layers of an onion”, modelling a culture as a composite consisting of four layers. The outer layer of the culture is explicit and deals with artefacts and products. Cultural artefacts can be viewed as the most physical creations of culture; examples include the behaviour and the language of members of that culture. The second layer encompasses symbols, rituals, and practices. Underlying this are the norms and values of that culture. Norms prescribe the correct behaviour, while values refer to what is considered “good” and what “bad” in that culture (Harris, 1998). Beneath it all are the basic assumptions which are likely to remain implicit. Basic assumptions are based on stereotypes, myths, judgements and are the most cerebral level of culture. Those basic assumptions taken-for-granted

determine the more explicit system of meanings. Cultures do not really change at this base level unless people become explicitly aware of the need for change in order to survive (Skinner, 2000).

Figure 1 : The layers of culture



Source: Kržišnik, *Comparative analysis of leadership practices in Slovenia and Portugal*, 2007, p.16, Figure 1.

## 1.2 Culture as a system

Culture may be perceived as a system composed of several ingredients. Therefore to comprehend it clearly it is indispensable to take a notice of the crucial ingredients of culture.

### Culture's Ingredients

Some most important ingredients of culture are described as follows (Hrastelj, 2001, p. 297-300):

- **Social organisations and Institutions** – By setting specific social norms social organisations and institutions influence the way people interact with each other in order to achieve common goals or pursue common interests.
- **Norms and values** - Values are the beliefs that people have about what is right and what is wrong, what is the most important in life and what not. These beliefs guide behaviours and actions. One's present attitudes and behaviours are always rooted in the values and choices of the past (Hines,

2008). Hofstede described values as consisting of non-specific feelings of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, normality and abnormality, rationality and irrationality. Values themselves cannot be observed directly, but can be inferred from their manifestations in alternatives of behaviour (Wallace et al., 1999).

- **Religions** - As religion is a subset of culture, virtually all religious systems serve to influence culture by providing the latent function of strengthening social bonds. High levels of religiosity can be indicative of a stronger sense of community, belonging and moral standards. For example, a survey of US attitudes conducted found that Americans equate religious beliefs with personal ethics and behaviour (Cornwell et al., 2005).

- **Language** – To illustrate the role that language plays in culture it is interesting to note that for some linguists the debate is focused on whether culture influences language or whether language influences culture. Traditional wisdom suggests that the cultural identity of a group will influence the language of that group. However, some psychologists such as Miller disagree, suggesting instead, that language is the dominant variable, and that culture is formed through language (Swift, 2002).

- **Educational system** – Different educational systems and specialisations in different countries have a fundamental role in sustaining and transferring the culture.

- **Arts and Aesthetics** - Aesthetics is the study of forms and appearances, and is often associated solely with beauty, although ugliness is part of aesthetics too. Therefore aesthetics of a particular group can reveal how identity is sustained by the symbolic revalorisation, within the group, of phenomena, tasks, objects, activities etc. that are devalued by other groups or wider society. Additionally, art and music enable us to experience insight or revelation resulting in the clearer understanding of culture (Linstead, 2006).

- **Material culture and living standard** – reflects the society's level of economic development and wealth.

### 1.3 National culture

Hofstede defines national culture as the collective mental programming of the people of any particular nationality. Hofstede suggests that people share a collective national character which represents their cultural mental programming. This mental programming shapes the values, attitudes, competences, behaviours, and perceptions of priority of that nationality. Fukuyama defines national culture as inherited ethical habit (Morden, 1999).

Noticing that cross-cultural comparative studies, such as Hofstede's dimensions and GLOBE's dimensions utilise national culture as a base of comparison, it is crucial to understand the term of national culture. According to Morden (1999) in order to be able to view international management from multiple perspectives, it is indispensable to understand and apply the local models of national

culture. Moreover, Brettel (2008) suggests that national culture has a direct impact on individual's behaviour and/or the relationships between individuals.

## **1.4 Dimensions of culture**

To study the cultural influence on societies, one needs typologies (Schein, 1985) or dimensions (Hofstede, 1980) for analyzing the behaviours, the actions and the values of their members (Pheng & Yuquan, 2002). Moreover dimensions enable cross-country comparisons based on the scores attributed to each country's dimension. Although different authors found and analysed different dimensions, similarities can be found between them. In following pages some of the most important dimension models are described.

### **1.4.1 Single dimension models**

The single dimension models are based upon a single dimension or variable. Two types of single dimension models are presented below.

#### **1.4.1.1 High and low context culture**

Anthropologist Edward Hall (1976) developed a theoretical model of cultural variability based on information processing, time orientation and the interaction patterns used by particular cultures (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2001).

Hall differentiates high context and low context cultures. Context is defined by Hall (1989:6) as the "information that surrounds an event" (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2001), which according to Morden (1999) means how an individual and his society seek information and knowledge.

For Hall (1976), at one end of the continuum is a "low-context system" where low levels of programmed information are used to provide context; therefore, a large amount of explicit information must be present to specify meaning. At the other end of the continuum is a "high-context system" where a high amount of programmed information is used to provide context; therefore, more time is required to program and to abstract meaning from the given set of information (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2001).

In low-context societies information tends to be explicit and precise, while in high-context cultures information is implicit and conveyed through verbal and nonverbal codes. In low-context communication, the listener knows very little and must be told practically everything. In high-

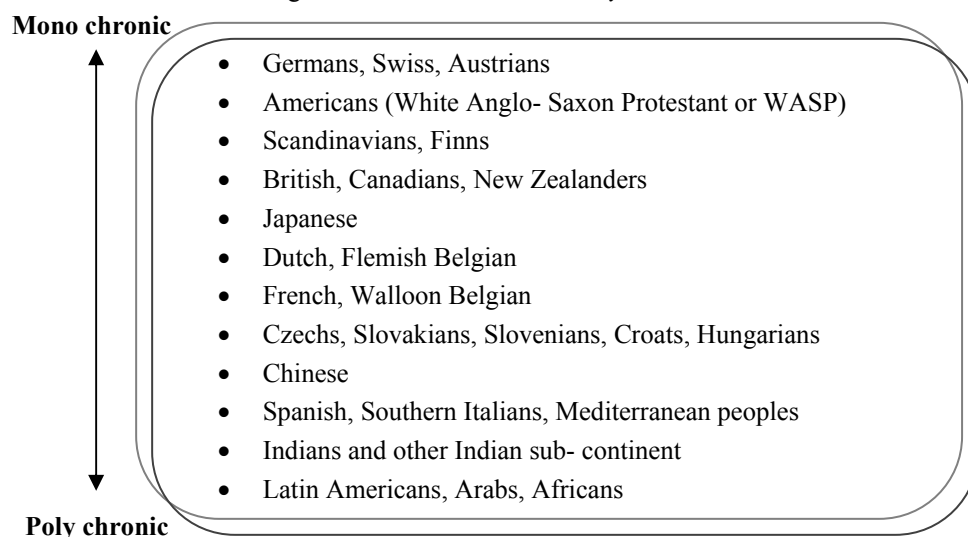
context communication, the listener is already “contextualised” and so does not need to be given much background information. High-context people usually do not specify what exactly is on their mind and expect others to guess. Thus, they are indirect but they try to give indicators to be understood. Therefore gestures and tone are of extreme importance in high-context communication. Moreover high-context cultures tend to be familistic and relationship oriented. Hall proposed that all cultures lie somewhere between low and high information processing continuum, knowing that no culture is exclusively at one or the other end. According to Hall cultures that predominantly use, high context modes are defined as “high-context cultures” and cultures that predominantly use low-context modes as “low-context cultures.” Germany, Switzerland, USA and Scandinavian countries are examples of low-context societies, while China, Japan, Greece, France and Spain belong to the high-context societies (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2001).

#### 1.4.1.2 Monochronic and polychronic cultures

Lewis differentiates monochronic and polychronic cultures. Monochronic cultures act in a focused manner, concentrating on one thing at a time within a set time scale. To such cultures time is a scarce resource which has its opportunity cost.

Polychronic cultures are flexible and unconstrained by concerns with time. Polychronic people do many things at once, often in an unplanned or opportunistic sequence. They may not be interested in time schedules or concepts of “punctuality.” They consider that the “reality” of events and opportunities is more important than adherence to what they perceive to be artificial constructs of planning, schedules, and appointments. Time is neither seen as a resource nor as an opportunity cost that equates to money (Morden, 1999).

Figure 2 : *Monochronic and Polychronic cultures*



Source: Morden, *Models of National Culture: A Management Review*, 1999, p.24, Figure 4.

## 1.4.2 Multiple dimension models

The national culture models described under this heading are based on multiple dimensions or variables. Three models are described below.

### 1.4.2.1 Hofstede's dimensions of culture

Geert Hofstede's (1980) study is the most important piece of cross-cultural research. Hofstede's cultural dimensions are most commonly utilised when it comes to examining the effects of culture in cross-cultural management. In 1980, Hofstede presented the results of his extensive study of national cultures. Based on data from 117,000 IBM employees from 40 different countries, he extracted four dimensions of culture, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. Subsequently, and in collaboration with Bond and a group of Asian scholars, a fifth dimension, long-term orientation (LTO) was added to the framework. Each dimension's score is based on a 1-100 scale and presents an average value of individuals' responses for each country (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003, p. 87).

The five Hofstede's dimensions are presented (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003, p. 87) as follows:

**Power distance (PD)** – which is how society deals with the fact that people are unequal in a social and status sense; and how different societies deal with this reality (Morden, 1999). Individuals dominated by large power distance, according to Hofstede, tend to accept centralised power and depend heavily on superiors for structure and direction. Hofstede also noted that laws and rules which differ for superiors and subordinates are accepted. On the other hand, Hofstede classified the culture of some nations as small power distance. Individuals dominated by this dimension do not tolerate highly centralised power and at least expect to be consulted in decision making (Rodrigues, 1998).

**Uncertainty Avoidance (UA)** - measures the extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguity and uncertainty. Hofstede treats the dimension at the two levels of society and organisation, and he links the two levels by saying that: At the organisational level, the concept of uncertainty is often linked to the concept of environment; the environment which usually is taken to include everything not under direct control of the organisation is a source of uncertainty for which the organisation tries to compensate. The way in which organisations deal with uncertainty does not depend on some objective amount of uncertainty, but on the way in which uncertainties are perceived within the organisation (Schramm-Nielsen, 2000). Hofstede classified many nations as strong uncertainty avoidance cultures (e.g. France, Germany). Individuals in these cultures feel uneasy in situations of uncertainty and ambiguity and prefer structure and direction. On the other hand, Hofstede (1980) classified the culture of some countries as weak uncertainty avoidance (e.g. United Kingdom).



People in these cultures tend to be relatively tolerant of uncertainty and ambiguity and require considerable autonomy and lower structure (Rodrigues, 1998).

**Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV)** – “The individualism-collectivism construct provides a conceptual framework within which the behaviour of individuals from different cultures may be explained. In essence, individualism is based on the super-ordination of personal over group goals, while collectivism is the emphasis of group over personal goals through the derivation of firm and explicit group boundaries” (Abraham, 1997). According to Rodrigues (1998) collectivistic societies are tightly integrated, and individuals belong to “in-groups” from which they can not detach themselves. People think in “we,” as opposed to “me,” terms and obtain satisfaction from a job well done by the group. On the other hand in individualistic societies people look primarily after their own interests. In organisations, IDV is visible in autonomy, individual responsibility for results, and individual level rewards. In the individualistic society the task prevails over relationship. Hiring and promotion decisions are supposed to be based on skills and rules only (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003, p. 42).

**Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS)** – the extent to which people prefer achievement, assertiveness, work centrality, and material success in contrast to relationship, cooperation, group decision making, and quality of life (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003, p. 41). Femininity refers to cultures that have an overlap between the gender roles. In feminine cultures, men and women are equally expected to be tender, modest, and concerned with the quality of life. Yet in masculine cultures, the gender roles are clearly defined. Men are expected to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success whereas women are expected to be tender, modest, and concerned with quality of life issues (Sims, 2006). Masculine societies stress material success and assertiveness and assign different roles to males and females. Males are expected to carry out the assertive, ambitious, and competitive roles in society; females are expected to care for the non material quality of life, for children, and for the weak, in order to perform society’s caring roles (Rodrigues, 1998). On the other hand, societies classified as feminine stress interpersonal and interdependent relationships, a concern for others, the overall quality of life, and define relatively overlapping social roles for males and females. In these cultures, neither male nor female need to be ambitious or competitive; both may aspire to a life which does not assign great value to material success and which respects others - both may perform the society’s caring roles (Rodrigues, 1998).

According to Montebello (2003) masculine pole is associated with stressing the importance of:

- Earnings: Have an opportunity for high earnings.
- Recognition: Get the recognition you deserve when you do a good job.
- Advancement: Have an opportunity for advancement to higher-level jobs.
- Challenge: Have challenging work to do.

While the feminine pole associates the following concepts as important:

- Manager: Have a good working relationship with your direct superior
- Cooperation: Work with people who cooperate well with one another.
- Living area: Live in an area desirable to you and your family
- Employment security: Have the security that you will be able to work for your company as long as you want to.

**Long Term Orientation-** future orientation is related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present. This dimension was found in a research among students in 23 countries around the world by using a Chinese Values Survey that included values common to Asian cultures and Confucianism. It examines an individual's long vs. short term orientation in time (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003, p. 87).

Long Term Orientation is characterized by persistence, ordering relationship by status and observing this order, thrift, and having a sense of shame, whereas short term orientation is characterized by personal steadiness and stability, respect for tradition and reciprocating of greetings, favours, and gifts (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003, p. 87-89). This index is an acceptance of the legitimacy of hierarchy and the valuing of perseverance and thrift (Montebello, 2003).

#### 1.4.2.2 Schwartz's theory of cultural values

Schwartz (1994) shares a similar conceptual view of culture with Hofstede in that they consider each culture, i.e. country, to have a shared set of core values and norms guiding their members' behaviour. However, their views differ in interpreting the values that capture and define these national differences. Schwartz (1994, p. 88) defined human values as "desirable goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives" (Imm et al., 2007). Schwartz's value types were derived from a set of items "developed to measure the content of individual values recognised across cultures" (Imm et al., 2007). A total of 56 values items were developed and distributed to 87 teacher and student samples from 41 cultural groups in 38 nations between 1988 and 1992. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each value as a guiding principle in their lives. Since, individual values reflect an individual's unique experience (individual level value), as well as normative cultural influence (cultural level value), they can be analysed at individual and cultural levels. This distinction of two levels is a major difference compared to Hofstede's study. From collected data, Schwartz derived a total of 10 distinct value types at an individual level analysis.

According to Imm et al. (2007), Schwartz found on the cultural level 7 value types which were summarised into three dimensions, namely:

1. Embeddedness versus autonomy.
2. Hierarchy versus egalitarianism.
3. Mastery versus harmony.

The seven culture level value types Schwartz (1994) and ten individual level value types are presented in the table below:

**Table 1 : The seven culture level value types and ten individual level types**

<b>Culture level value types</b>	<b>Individual level value types</b>
<i>Conservatism</i> : a society that maintains a status-quo and avoids actions that disturb traditional order.	<i>Power</i> . Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.
<i>Intellectual autonomy</i> : A society that recognizes individuals as autonomous entities who are entitled to pursue their own intellectual interests and desires.	<i>Achievement</i> . Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.
<i>Affective autonomy</i> : A society that recognizes individuals as autonomous entities who are entitled to pursue their stimulation and hedonism interests and desires.	<i>Hedonism</i> . Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself.
<i>Hierarchy</i> : A society that emphasizes the legitimacy of hierarchical roles and resource allocation.	<i>Stimulation</i> . Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.
<i>Mastery</i> : A society that emphasizes active mastery of the social environment and individual's rights to get ahead of other people.	<i>Self-direction</i> . Independent thought and action – choosing, creating, exploring.
<i>Egalitarian commitment</i> : A society that emphasizes the transcendence of selfless interests.	<i>Universalism</i> . Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.
<i>Harmony</i> : A society that emphasizes harmony with nature.	<i>Benevolence</i> . Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact.
	<i>Tradition</i> . Respect for, commitment to, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion impose on the self.
	<i>Conformity</i> . Restraint of actions, inclinations, impulses likely to upset or harm others and to violate social expectations or norms.
	<i>Security</i> . Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self.

Source: Imm et al. (2007).

### 1.4.2.3 GLOBE

GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness) is a more recent cross cultural comparative research programme offering researchers an alternative to the previously discussed frameworks. Inspired by the work of Hofstede (1980), the GLOBE research programme was designed to conceptualise, operationalise, test, and validate relationship between culture and leadership effectiveness (House, 1998). The objective of GLOBE is to investigate several theoretical issues.

According to House (1998) these are:

- The relative rankings of the nations studied with respect to nine core dimensions of culture;
- The cognitive and attitudinal processes by which cultural influences affect organisational practices and the exercise of leadership;
- Whether or not there are leader behaviours and organisational practices that are universally accepted and viewed as effective;
- Identification of non-universal culture specific leader behaviours and organisational practices that are accepted and viewed as effective in each of the countries studied;
- The influence of cultural forces on the social status of leaders and the amount of influence granted to leaders;
- The effects of specific environmental and organisational demographic influences on leadership behaviour and organisational practices.

For the purposes of the study over 160 researchers surveyed 17,000 subjects in 62 countries (House, 1998). Middle managers from three industries (financial services, food processing, and telecommunications) were surveyed.

An additional advancement in the GLOBE study is the attempt to capture both: a culture's values, i.e. how members of society believe that it "should be", and current practices in their society, i.e. "as is" (Magnusson et al., 2008). The distinction between the values and practices was incorporated to correspond with Schein's (2004) concepts of artefacts versus espoused values, as two distinct levels of culture. Artefacts are the visible products, processes, and behaviours of a culture. They primarily reflect the "as is" and, as such, the cultural practices. In contrast, espoused values are the individuals' or society's sense of what ought to be, as distinct from what is. They primarily reflect the "should be" and, as such, the cultural values (Okazaki & Mueller, 2007). GLOBE found that in certain cases both levels of culture may even be in conflict. GLOBE proposes researchers an alternative perspective in terms of challenging two a priori assumptions. First, it assumes that measuring individual-level values is not a sufficient measure of the collective culture. Second, it assumes that the link between values and specific perceptions can be generalised to the relationship

between values and general perceptions in the culture. Table summarises the primary differences between the Hofstede and GLOBE frameworks (Okazaki & Mueller, 2007).

*Table 2 : Primary differences between the Hofstede and GLOBE frameworks*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Hofstede</b>	<b>GLOBE</b>
<i>Purpose</i>	To conduct a post-hoc interpretation of the findings from a survey on employee morale.	To design and implement a multiphase and multimethod program to examine the relationship between national culture, leadership effectiveness, and societal phenomena.
<i>General characteristics</i>	Consulting project to address the needs of IBM corporation.	Academic collaboration with over 160 scholars from 62 cultures.
<i>Study period</i>	During the 1960s.	Starting 1993.
<i>Questionnaire development</i>	Questionnaire items generated by a team of six European researchers to cover the issues that were of concern to IBM, identified through interviews with employees.	All research collaborators were directly involved in research design, and conducted individual and focus group interviews with managers in their own countries.
<i>Translation issue</i>	Questionnaire items were translated into local languages without back-translation.	The survey instruments were translated and back-translated in each country.
<i>Theoretical base</i>	Constructs and scales that are developed from pure empiricism.	Constructs and scales that are cross- culturally developed, theoretically driven, and empirically verifiable.
<i>Primary assumptions</i>	Accepts two a priori assumptions: (1) ecological values assumption (knowing the values of members of a culture is a sufficient way of knowing the culture); and (2) onion assumption (knowing values in a culture tells us about what actually happens in that culture).	Decided not to accept ecological values assumption, and to verify the onion assumption.
<i>Structure of cultural dimensions</i>	One level: cultural values based on the onion assumption (desired values).	Two levels: (1) cultural values (as they are); and (2) cultural practices (as they should be).
<i>Psychometric properties of the scales</i>	Ambiguous psychometric instrument design process, which may not satisfy established psychometric requirements. Cross-cultural comparison without evidence for within-country aggregability.	Ample evidence from a multi level, multi-trait, multi-method confirmatory factor analysis, to establish construct validity. Rigorous statistical procedures to verify that the scales are aggregable, unidimensional, and reliable, and to ensure cross cultural differences.

*Source: Okazaki & Mueller, Cross-cultural advertising research: where we have been and where we need to go, 2007, p. 507, Table V.*

GLOBE developed nine independent dimensions of culture (House, 1998):

- **Assertiveness:** the degree to which individuals in societies are assertive, confrontational, aggressive, and straightforward
- **Uncertainty avoidance:** the extent to which members of society strive to avoid uncertainty, by relying on established social norms and practices
- **Power distance:** the degree to which members of society expect and accept that power is distributed unequally
- **Collectivism I (institutional collectivism):** the degree to which societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action, as opposed to individual distribution and individual action
- **Collectivism II (in-group collectivism):** the extent to which members of society express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their groups, organisations, or families
- **Gender egalitarianism:** the degree to which a society minimises gender role differences
- **Future orientation:** the degree to which members of society engage in future-oriented behaviours, such as planning, investing, and delaying gratification
- **Performance orientation:** the degree to which society encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence
- **Humane orientation:** the extent to which society encourages and rewards its members for being fair, altruistic, friendly, caring, and kind to others.

## 2 COMMUNICATION

Communication is utilised daily during the interaction between people not only in business, but also in everyday life. People communicate with each other by using language, gestures, signs and other possible ways of communication.

In companies the effective communication is of utmost importance for the optimal functioning of their business. Thus, the focus of this chapter is to understand the meaning and the different communication types and methods. Moreover, the cultural influence on communication is explored in this chapter.

### 2.1 Defining communication

Oxford Advanced Learner's dictionary (Wehmeier et al., 2005, p. 304) defines the verb to communicate as: "to share information with others by speaking, writing, moving your body or using other signals". Therefore the noun communication is described as: "the act of communicating with

people.” The word communicating originates from the Latin word *communicare*, which can be translated as to consult, to discuss, to ask for advice. Communication in its general form refers to a process where information is shared by two or more persons and has relevance for at least one of the persons involved. Communication, further, implies that individuals who engage in the process perceive or acquire sets of meaningful information, that have been derived from a common and ordered set of interpretations by the participants involved (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2001). Communication is an interactive event during which people assign meaning to messages and jointly create identities and social reality (Asif & Sargeant, 2000).

**Business communication** is defined as “the scholarly study of the use, adaptation, and creation of languages, symbols, and signs to conduct activities that satisfy human needs and wants by providing goods and services for private profit” (Kalla, 2005). Kameda (2005) suggests that business communication is simply the “communication in the workplace with the goal of having fixed, practical efficacy”.

According to Asif & Sargeant (2000) at the intra-organisational level, the communication process has been shown to have a variety of additional roles including:

- Creating a unified corporate identity by improving the insight that individuals have into the overall philosophy of their organisation and its strategic direction
- Encouraging the motivation and commitment of employees by ensuring an understanding of the company's objectives and goals
- Increasing the individual understanding of the process of organisational change as it occurs, and thereby reducing employee resistance
- Reducing the potential for misunderstandings, discrepancies and conflicts, within and between internal departments
- Providing the necessary tools and information to allow employees to function adequately in their job roles
- Enhancing overall levels of service quality by ensuring that an understanding of the needs of the customer is fostered at every level within the organisation.

### **2.1.1 Communication process**

According to Laios & Theodorakis (2001) the communication process involves four different parts:

- (1) Sender: also referred as the transmitter, is the person who leads the communication process and sends the message to the receiver.
- (2) Messages: usually take the form of information, directions, suggestions, expectations or orders.

(3) Communication channel: is the medium that carries out messages.

Communication channels are generally divided into the following three categories:

- Verbal such as speeches, discussions, directions, suggestions or orders.
- Written such as symbols, drawings, plans on boards, paper, signs etc.
- Sounds could be also channels of communication. Such messages come from hand clapping or blowing the whistle etc.

(4) Receiver: is the person who receives the message.

### **2.1.2 Effective communication**

Some authors believe that effective communication only takes place when participants reach a shared understanding, stimulate others to take actions, or influence peoples' opinions. For communication to be effective, a message must be received and understood, and only then can it produce resultant action (Kalla, 2005). However, certain factors can cause the messages to be misunderstood. Unclear or lengthy message is often a source of misunderstanding. Nonetheless, cultural differences between the sender and the receiver can lead to a misunderstanding as well (Možina et al., 2004, str. 75-76).

## **2.2 Types of communication**

Business communication involves different modes of communicating, which are categorised by different criteria, such as its purpose, direction, etc. (Welch & Jackson, 2007). These are the following:

### **2.2.1 Formal and informal communication**

Formal communication is determined by the hierarchical structure and organisation of a company, while informal communication is not determined by already established rules and hierarchical relationships between the employees (Rozman, 1993, p. 229-230). For example informal exchanges of information or rumours are part of informal communication.

### **2.2.2 Horizontal and vertical communication**

Horizontal communication is the communication between the employees of the same hierarchical level. On the other hand, vertical communication involves participants in different hierarchical



levels. An example of a vertical communication is a communication of an employee and their manager (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

### **2.2.3 Direct and indirect communication**

Direct communication is a type of communication used by management, which involves direct face-to-face communication, such as during a meeting. The example of indirect communication is an email or a distribution of internal newspaper (Možina et al., 2004, p. 25-26).

### **2.2.4 One-way and two-way communication**

Two-way communication process is an interactive exchange of information resulting in an action or decision. Two-way communication involves a two-way exchange of messages, while one-way communication is a one-way sending of messages with informational nature, giving of order and/or instructions (Kalla, 2005).

## **2.3 Methods of communication**

The methods of communication are classified into verbal, which includes written and face-to-face communication and non verbal communication, which includes body language, gestures, face expressions, use of personal space, and so forth (Lamb, 2001, p. 3).

### **2.3.1 Verbal communication**

Verbal communication encompasses verbal *face-to-face communication*, as well as *written communication*.

Meetings, presentations and other formal and informal conversations make part of face-to-face communication. The advantage of this method of communication is an immediate feedback the sender can obtain from the receiver and the privacy of the message (Kavčič, 2000, p. 151). Moreover, face-to-face communication is heavily weighted with non verbal communication and therefore provides the greatest amount of information (Fatt, 1998).

Written communication is a communication where the communication channel consists of written symbols (Kavčič, 2004, p. 87). Written communication is possible through emails, phone, letters, internal newspapers, etc. This method of communication is advantageous because of its clarity and the possibility to keep the records of the messages and track those records (Možina et al., 2004, p. 54).

### **2.3.2 Nonverbal communication**

Communication is not conducted entirely with words. Meaning is encoded by uses of nonverbal communication as well and therefore any analysis of interpersonal communication is incomplete without considering beyond the mere use of language alone. Nonverbal communication gives out messages all the time and therefore continuously transmits information. Voice tone, body motion, touching behaviour, use of space, hand gestures, face expressions and so forth are part of the nonverbal communication (Fatt, 1998). According to some research perhaps as much as 93 per cent (out of which 38 per cent by voice and 55 per cent by face, eyes, body movements, hand gestures, etc.) of our communication is considered nonverbal (Kavčič, 2004, p. 201).

### **2.4 Cross-cultural communication**

Communication, can be viewed as a followable prescription that indicates what behaviour (interaction) is obligated, preferred or prohibited in certain context. Thus, culture functions as a frame of reference in which all that occurs is understood. Cultural patterns, therefore, convey meaning only to those who participate in them. The meaning we attribute to symbols is learned and socially agreed upon, rather than somehow inherent in behaviour. Patterns, however, do not continue to exist by themselves once they have been created. They must continually be passed down to a new generation, which is done through various sorts of communication. The relationship between culture and communication, therefore, exists in the fact that the established patterns of meaning, thinking and feeling are perpetuated by the way of communication (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2001).

Knowledge about managing cross-cultural business communication problems has emerged gradually over the past two decades (Sriussadaporn, 2006). International business communication is an academic area of scholarship that considers problems arising from differing culture, language, and systems in international business transactions or within multinational business groups (Kameda, 2005). In order to communicate effectively across cultures, international business communicators need to understand basic features about culture and subculture. Specifically, appropriate and inappropriate kinds of communication in various countries have to be identified underlying the general and specific assumptions associated with national cultural beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations, and norms (Sriussadaporn, 2006). In cross-cultural business communication it is often not only the language fluency, but also the nonverbal communication patterns, social customs and business etiquette that needs to be considered (Holopainen & Björkman, 2005). According to Rakestraw (2005) successful communication is more than a matter of choosing the right words; it also takes into consideration values and ideas that might be foreign to us.

When communicating across cultures a special consideration needs to be attributed to the verbal communication (use of language), as well as to the nonverbal communication, which encompasses greetings, use of personal space, gestures, eye contact, and so forth. Different aspects of non verbal communication that should be considered when communicating cross-culturally are examined as follows Lamb (2001, p. 5):

- Language: This is an obvious, but much neglected area. The general perception is that English is the international language. In reality, however, English is not always spoken in business environment. Nevertheless, not everyone wants to speak it. However, the situation has become more complicated because of the development of local variants of English, for example Hinglish. Business English used in cross-cultural communication should be simple, straightforward with a limited vocabulary, avoiding metaphors, local colloquialisms and slang (Hurn, 2007).
- Greetings: The importance of greeting rituals should not be overlooked. For example, failure to show respect by carefully exchanging and inspecting business cards in Japan can get business negotiations off to a bad start (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003, p. 26). In France, for instance shaking hands is an established business form of greeting. Nonetheless, kissing is approved when greeting well known business partners or colleagues. On the other hand, in Japan people greet by bowing heads.
- Gestures: Body and hand gestures are a very important part of nonverbal communication. It is known that Latin cultures and Arabs use hand gestures a lot, while North Americans, North Europeans and Asians tend not to gesticulate as much.
- Eye contact: It is important to know how much eye contact is acceptable. In Anglo-Saxon cultures one is expected to look the other person in the eye, but in Thailand or South Korea, for example, this would be considered impolite or challenging.
- Touch: Touching is acceptable in certain cultures, such as Mediterranean and Latin cultures. On the other hand, touching is not appreciated and sometimes even considered as offensive in Northern European and Asian cultures. However, in the Middle East greeting by shaking hands or kissing with a woman is completely unacceptable, while kissing between men is common.
- Use of space: Another aspect of nonverbal communication is the amount of physical space considered necessary to feel comfortable. Northern Europeans tend to require a larger personal space than their Latin European counterparts. Northern Europeans feel more comfortable with somewhat greater than arm's length distance. On the other hand, southern Europeans want to move closer than the arm's length distance in order to feel the connection. A Latin European feels rejected when a northern European steps back to re-establish the space (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003, p. 28).
- Content of communication: It is indispensable to take notice about topics which might be considered as offensive or unacceptable in certain cultures. For example, in Gulf countries

talking about women, particularly asking about someone's wife or daughter is not acceptable.

Moreover, in cross-cultural communication it is important to know whether we are dealing with a person coming from a high or a low context culture. Low context cultures value direct confrontation and clarity. Examples of low context cultures include German, Scandinavian, North American and English cultures. On the other hand, high context cultures value indirectness, politeness, ambiguity and group membership. High context cultures include Eastern nationals, such as Japanese, Chinese, Arabs, and Greeks.

In high context cultures, they have low reliance on written words but high reliance on multifaceted communication means including contextual factors, oral agreements, situational cues, and nonverbal behaviours. As opposed to high context cultures, low context cultures emphasise written agreements. There is a high reliance on words, especially in written words, and specific details, but low reliance on contextual factors and nonverbal aspects.

Furthermore, some research findings indicate that collectivists tend to avoid directness in writing. Chinese speakers were found to use spatial and correlational logic writing style, whereas English speakers use linear, cause and effect logic and writing styles. Nonetheless, Individualists' low context nature and collectivists' high context nature influences as well their online communication contexts. Within online communication contexts, individualists are predicted to write short and succinct email messages, as opposed to collectivists who are predicted to show more resistance to online communication (Fujimoto et al., 2007).

In order to improve intercultural and international communication, communicators first need to understand the cultural uniqueness of a country before they can identify the most appropriate and effective message, format, and channel of communication. This includes understanding both the language and the style of communication (Kameda, 2005).

### **3 CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT IN REXAM**

In this chapter the actual cross-cultural communication management practices are illustrated on the example of the company called Rexam. The cross-cultural communication practices in Rexam are examined through the empirical research, which was conducted by interviewing four of Rexam's employees.

### **3.1 About Rexam**

Rexam is the world's second largest consumer packaging company, the leading global beverage can maker and one of the global leaders in rigid plastic packaging. The company's turnover accounts for approximately £3.6 billion. Rexam's ordinary shares are listed with the UK Listing Authority and trade on the London Stock Exchange under the symbol REX.

Their principal business operations are Beverage Packaging and Plastic Packaging. 70% of their sales come from Beverage Packaging. Plastic Packaging business is structured in three divisions as follows:

- Healthcare: Pharma, Primary Packaging, Prescription
- Closures: Beverage, Specialty, High Barrier Food
- Personal Care: Dispensing Systems, Make-up, Home and Personal Care.

Rexam currently operates in more than 20 countries in Europe, North and South America and the Asia-Pacific rim, with some 23.000 employees working in approximately 100 plants. The majority of Rexam's customers are large consumer products companies, such as Anheuser-Busch, Cadbury-Schweppes ABC, Carlsberg, Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble, L'Oreal, etc. Rexam's main objective is to create value for their shareholders and other stakeholders through their vision of becoming the leading global consumer packaging company. To achieve their objectives, Rexam's strategy is to consolidate their presence in a number of carefully selected growth markets, such as South America, Asia and Russia, while focusing on quality, service, innovation and reliability for their customers and continuous improvement in manufacturing and operational excellence. The company aims to consolidate its position by growing organically using its cash generation to invest in growth projects; building positions in growth markets and product segments through disciplined acquisitions; strengthening its relationships with its customers and suppliers and accelerating the rate of innovation to enhance its existing offering to its customers (Rexam, 2008).

### **3.2 The goals of the research**

The cross-cultural company research has been widely used among various management researchers, sociologists and anthropologists. One of the most important cross-cultural studies - the Hofstede's cross-cultural research - was conducted on the example of a company as well (extensive study of national cultures on 117,000 IBM employees from 40 different countries).

The aim of the company research conducted for this thesis was to investigate the communication issues between different cultures on a practical example. Nevertheless, this research attempts to

verify if the employees are confronting communicational problems with their colleagues from other cultures and how they are managing those problems. At the same time, the research aspires to analyse each participant's cultural and communicational traits and to compare them to the theoretical assumptions about cultures.

This research consists of three mutually connected sections. The first section explores the cultural background of each interviewee and his personal interpretations of other cultures, which he obtained through the experience of working with the members of those cultures. The second section investigates interviewees' awareness and opinions about cross-cultural management in Rexam. Finally, the third section examines the cross-cultural communication management in Rexam.

### **3.3 Methodology applied in the research**

The data for the purpose of the research was collected through qualitative procedures. The reason I opted for the qualitative methods was due to the fact that greater depth can be derived from them. Qualitative research properly seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. Qualitative research aims to demonstrate how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, and so on (Berg, 2007, p. 8).

Precisely, I have chosen the semistandardised in-depth interview, which can be located somewhere in between the completely standardised and unstandardised interview structures. This type of interview involves the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and special topics in a systematic and consistent order, (Berg, 2007, p. 95) but which at the same time allows me to probe beyond the prepared questions in order to include emotions, motivations, empathy and other subjective aspects associated with each person. Nonetheless, certain elements of meaning or understanding usually require consideration of the individual's perceptions and subjective apprehensions (Berg, 2007, p. 97).

Face-to-face interviews were used rather than e-mail or phone interviews, for they play an important part in the achievement of a more accurate and fulfilled communication and exchange of ideas between me and respondents.

### **3.4 The preparations and the process of research**

The first version of the questionnaire was tested on one interviewee and turned out to be slightly too long and time consuming, therefore the least relevant questions were dropped out. The final version

of the questionnaire consists of 27 questions, which are divided into four different sections, the first one being the introductory section. Each section attempts to clarify certain essential questions and the central focus of the study. The introductory section provides some general personal information about the respondent for research purposes. The first section investigates the interviewee's personal international experiences and their cross-cultural perceptions, while the second section examines intercultural issues in the company itself. Finally, the last section explores the cross-cultural communication practices and problems in Rexam. The final version of the questionnaire was tested successfully before the beginning of the research.

Each potential interviewee has received an email inviting them to participate in the research and explaining them the purpose and objectives of the research. A questionnaire example was attached to the email in order to enable the respondents to familiarise themselves with the questions and eventually prepare for the interview. The interviews were conducted between 25<sup>th</sup> of June and 3<sup>rd</sup> of July and each one of them lasted on average 45 minutes. The longest interview required one hour, while the shortest lasted for about half an hour.

The semistructured face-to-face in-depth interview brought about some interesting personal views and issues and enabled me to attain a deeper insight into the importance of the nonverbal communication. Probing questions, such as "Could you tell me more about that?" or "Why do you think so?" were used in order to draw out broader stories from the respondents. Furthermore, uncomfortable silence, a technique which involves consciously creating a long, silent pause after asking the interviewee a question, even if an interviewee offers only a word or a cryptic response, was used (Berg, 2007, p. 101). Another technique that I utilised is echoing; a tendency in interviewing to try and communicate that you understand what the interviewee is talking about by using phrases such as "I know what you mean" or "It happened to me as well".

The data gathered through the interviews allowed me to identify certain parallels with the already established findings about the examined cultures. However, it should be taken into consideration that the sample was rather small and thus the conclusions may not be reliable.

### **3.5 Sampling**

The utilised sample is a purposive or judgemental sample, which means that the subjects have been selected based on the assumption that they are appropriate representatives of a wider population (Berg, 2007, p. 44). The target population is an employee with a considerable international experience who communicates daily with the people coming from different cultures than his own. The final sample includes four respondents, three women and one man in the age between 27 and 38 years. All of the subjects are Rexam's employees. Two of the potential respondents were not able to

participate in the research, one of them due to the lack of time and the other had left on yearly vacation.

### 3.6 Research Analysis

In this subchapter the analysis and the findings of the research are presented and explained. The table below illustrates the basis of my research. The research questions were analysed according to the three sections from the table below and based on the components in each of those sections.

*Table 3 : Cross-cultural study – the basis for the research analysis*

<b>Cultural traits and differences</b>	<b>Cross-cultural management in Rexam</b>	<b>Cross-cultural communication in Rexam</b>
Power distance	Interviewees’ opinions and awareness about culture	Types of communication
Uncertainty avoidance	Rexam Advanced Management Programme	Nonverbal communication
Individualism vs. Collectivism		Communication problems
Masculinity vs. Femininity		Language barriers
High vs. Low-Context cultures		
Monochronic vs. Polychronic cultures		

*Source: Personal research, July 2009.*

#### 3.6.1 Cultural traits and differences

In this section of the research the inferences that could be made about each participant’s culture and about the cultures they interact with are presented. The results are compared with the established cross-cultural theories and findings.

##### 3.6.1.1 Power distance

The research results are somewhat similar to Hofstede’s rankings. The findings suggest that the Dutch interviewee belongs to the low power distance culture. He did not seem to tolerate centralised power and expected to be consulted in decision making. He said the following about the organisation of the company: “Before it was extremely decentralised and now they are trying to centralise it to London. I don’t like it at all. It was better before.” Furthermore, he compared his Hispano-American manager to his former Dutch manager: “My manager is not consulting enough; her whole team is like that. I absolutely feel the difference compared to my former position. My



former manager was really consulting. He was extremely team-oriented.” Even though, Latin Americans belong to high power distance cultures, as they accept centralised power and depend on their superiors for directions, it is difficult to typify the Venezuelan respondent, since she is not in favour of the centralised organisation and inequalities, while on the other hand she is very relationship-oriented. Moreover, the Chinese interviewee seems to belong to low power distance cultures, which is not in the accordance with Hofstede’s findings. The Ukrainian respondent could be clearly sorted to low power distance concept, as she mentioned that she appreciates change, autonomy and decision making.

### 3.6.1.2 Uncertainty Avoidance

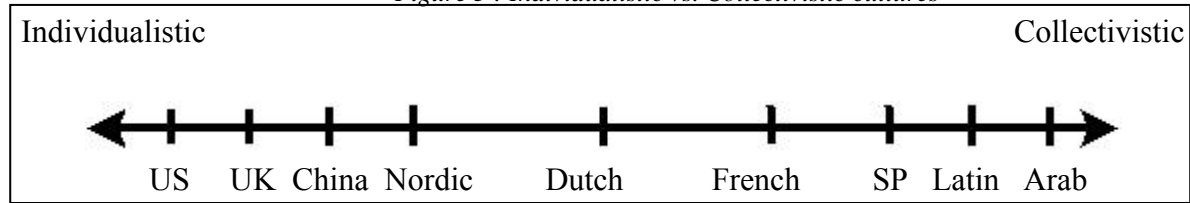
The conclusions that can be drawn based on the interviewees’ responses are similar to Hofstede’s findings about the extent to which different cultures feel threatened by ambiguity and uncertainty. The responses of the Venezuelan participant suggest that she tends to avoid conflicts, seeks for precise answers and instructions and dislikes ambiguous situations, which means that she belongs to the high uncertainty avoidance culture. On the other hand, the answers of the Dutch and the Ukrainian respondents indicate that they value new ideas, changing environment, the ability to take decisions, and innovation, which suggests that they belong to the low uncertainty avoidance cultures. The Chinese respondent answered that a stable job and the security of employment is of crucial importance to her, which indicates that she belongs to high uncertainty avoidance culture, despite of the fact that Chinese uncertainty avoidance score according to Hofstede is not high.

### 3.6.1.3 Individualism vs. Collectivism

Based on the answers of the respondents certain deductions can be drawn regarding the individualistic or collectivistic belongings of the examined cultures. Venezuelan respondent answered: “Venezuelans really try hard to welcome a new colleague, while here in France they barely notice you and it is the new person who has to make the first step.” Furthermore, when asked what would be the most important for her in an ideal job, she commented: “Harmony, good atmosphere, good communication, no conflicts...”

If we suppose that the task versus the relationship orientation could be an indicator whether a culture is individualistic or collectivistic, then the results of the research can be presented in the figure below.

Figure 3 : Individualistic vs. Collectivistic cultures

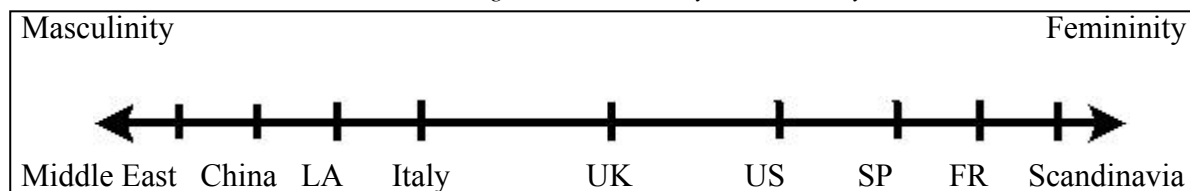


Source: Personal research, July 2009.

### 3.6.1.4 Masculinity vs. Femininity

All the interviewees answered that they felt they were working in an equal environment where men and women are equally valued and their career success is not gender dependent. Moreover, some participants said that in French culture interpersonal relationships and the overall quality of life are important, which suggest that French society is rather feminine. However, when comparing French society to their native environment or to their clients' societies, they classified some countries as more masculine oriented than others. In general the findings were similar to the Hofstede's findings. Middle Eastern, Chinese, Latin American and Italian cultures were labelled as masculine, while French, Spanish and Scandinavian were considered to be more feminine. The United Kingdom was considered to be somewhere in the middle. The United States were classified as feminine society, which is not in accordance with Hofstede's scores.

Figure 4 : Masculinity vs. Femininity



Source: Personal research, July 2009.

### 3.6.1.5 High and Low Context cultures

The analysis of respondents' personal regards and comparisons of information processing, time orientation and interaction patterns used by the cultures they deal with is similar to Hall's suggestions.

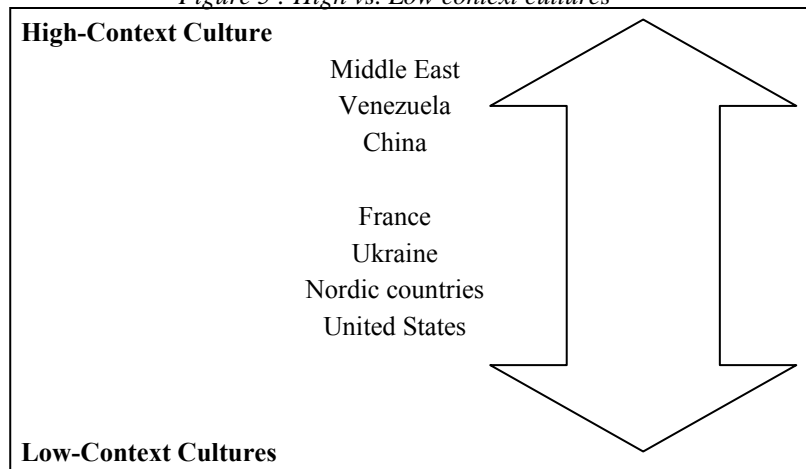
In accordance with the Hall's theory of high and low-context cultures, the Chinese interviewee labelled French as more explicit, precise and direct when compared to Chinese. Nonetheless, the Dutch respondent said about the Chinese: "Chinese are very straightforward but you never know what they truly think." According to Hall, Chinese are high-context people and usually do not

specify what exactly is on their mind and expect others to guess. On the other hand, the Americans were thought to be very direct, very straight to the point, which confirms that they do belong to the low-context cultures.

Regarding the importance of the tone and the gestures in communication it turned out that all the participants considered the nonverbal communication very important. Also, they described their nonverbal communication differently as compared to their colleagues from other cultures. The Ukrainian interviewee has said of herself: “Sometimes people might find me distant or cold because I am not so expressive but it is only because of my culture. Italians and Spanish are really expressive and make a lot of gestures with their hands.” On the other hand the Venezuelan respondent said about herself: “I use nonverbal communication a lot. I am very expressive, my eyes, my face. I make a lot of gestures with my hands, I hug people. Once I was told at work that it is not good to show emotions and to be so expressive that others can see right away what I am thinking about.”

In general the answers have given similar results as the Hall’s suggestions about high and low-context cultures.

*Figure 5 : High vs. Low context cultures*



*Source: Personal research, July 2009.*

### 3.6.1.6 Monochronic and Polychronic cultures

The interviewees’ concerns of and attitude towards time varied depending of their cultural background and their preconceptions. This was proved by their contradicting views regarding the punctuality of the French. Three of the respondents labelled French as unconcerned with time and unpunctual. However, the Venezuelan respondent, was of the opinion that French are much more punctual than Venezuelans. Moreover, the Ukrainian respondent thought of Scandinavian clients to be extremely punctual. On the other hand, she said of Middle Eastern clients that time for them has

absolutely no value and that taking appointments on a certain day at a certain hour is not common there.

In general all the answers concerning time were in accordance with the theory about Monochronic and Polychronic cultures with the exception of Dutch interviewee's opinion who found French "notoriously late" despite the fact that Dutch and French cultures have similar regards on time according to Morden (see Figure 2).

### **3.6.2 Cross-cultural management in Rexam**

The findings in this section refer to the interviewees' knowledge and awareness about the cross-cultural management in Rexam. Moreover, some essential chapters from the book which is used in Rexam for cultural training of their employees are explained.

#### **3.6.2.1 Interviewees' opinions and awareness about culture**

None of the respondents was aware of any existing cultural training within the company. None has ever received such training, with the exception of the language courses. However, all the respondents answered that the cultural differences require greater effort and cautiousness during the daily business interactions. The Dutch respondent stated: "You have to change your attitudes when dealing with each culture. You have to put yourself in their state of mind and think how they would act in certain situation and what do they expect. You have to adjust." While the Chinese interviewee explained: "We don't understand each other if we don't really explain well what we mean and even in that case there is communication and understanding problems."

However all the interviewees feel that their colleagues, subordinates or managers do not take into account that they come from a different culture during their daily business interactions.

#### **3.6.2.2 Rexam Advanced Management Programme**

Rexam Advanced Management Programme is a cross-cultural training programme for managers on higher international positions, which is aimed to teach them how to bridge cultural and language barriers in order to achieve more effective cross-cultural business relationships and improve global performance of Rexam. The training is based on a book "Understanding cross-cultural differences"

(Lamb, 2001) and includes chapters about Hofstede's dimensions of culture, Hall's theory of High and Low Context cultures, theory of Monochronic and Polychronic cultures and so forth. Moreover, the training includes a chapter called "Communicating across culture and Language Barriers". This chapter examines issues such as how to recognise how countries differ in the way they communicate and how to identify the impact of nonverbal communication on cross-cultural interactions. Furthermore, it suggests how to minimise misunderstandings due to the language barriers.

The communication training consists of short group exercises that put a manager in the potential situations of miscommunication, to which a solution within a group has to be proposed. Nevertheless, the cross-cultural communication chapter includes practical tips, such as to speak slowly and not to use slang.

### **3.6.3 Cross-cultural communication management in Rexam**

The last section of the research examines how the cross-cultural communication is managed in Rexam.

#### **3.6.3.1 Types of communication**

The respondents are using various types of communication in different business situations and for different business purposes. However, the research suggests that the type of communication utilised depends on the cultural background of the person which they are communicating with.

##### *3.6.3.1.1 Face-to-face communication*

According to the findings, most of the interviewees answered they preferred the face-to-face communication to other types of communication and they judged it to be the most effective way of communicating. However, due to the geographical distance it is often impossible to communicate face-to-face. Ukrainian interviewee commented: "In the Middle East face-to-face communication is extremely important. When I went to the saloon in Dubai it went well but I had to be dressed properly (which means long sleeved clothes, nothing short or transparent)."

##### *3.6.3.1.2 E-mail*

E-mail was judged to be an indispensable way of communicating. The interviewees responded it is a very practical way of communicating. They are using it with their colleagues on the same site and

from the same culture, as well as with the colleagues and clients all over the world coming from various cultural backgrounds. However, some respondents answered that the use of e-mail is the most effective when communicating with Americans, Chinese, Dutch and Scandinavians, as they respond quickly.

#### *3.6.3.1.3 Phone*

The Venezuelan interviewee responded: “With Spain and Italy I mostly use the phone because you have to use the phone with them if you want a fast response. When you send them e-mails, sometimes it takes them ages to answer. Apart from that, they like to talk on the phone and a friendly relationship is extremely important to them. You can not call a Spanish guy and get straight to the point. First you have to ask those couple of questions, which have nothing to do with work. I think that the phone is the most effective way of communicating when you need an immediate answer.”

#### *3.6.3.1.4 Videoconferencing*

Videoconferencing is mostly used when holding business meetings with the colleagues overseas and the use of it does not depend that much on the culture. This type of communication is mostly used by higher management for global team meetings.

#### *3.6.3.1.5 Business meeting*

Surprisingly, all of the interviewees labelled the meetings in Rexam as rather unsuccessful. Most of the participants thought that the meetings are being too long and without clear objectives. Their answers suggest that they believe French are not communicating successfully during the meetings. “In Netherlands the meetings are short, straight to the point, we don’t go into details. It is more management of exception rather than task management,” said the Dutch interviewee.

The Ukrainian respondent answered: “For example Italians talk a lot and the meetings with them are long. Germans are much more organised and stick to the agenda. In the Middle East it is completely different. There people bring out any subject that comes to their mind including personal subjects.”

Chinese interviewee said of French compared to the Chinese: “French always criticise, they always express their opinion and say what they think is good and what is bad. In China this is not the case. We always listen carefully till the end when one is speaking. We never interrupt the speaker and if we want to make some comments, we never make them in front of everyone. We wait for the right moment to talk to the person in private if we want to give them our opinion about something.”

### 3.6.3.2 Nonverbal communication

All of the interviewees consider the nonverbal communication as an extremely important part of communication. Nevertheless, three out of four respondents answered that they already misinterpreted certain gestures. In accordance with the Hall's theory of high and low context cultures, the research suggests that the Venezuelan, Spanish and Italian cultures are closer to the extreme of high context cultures and therefore use the nonverbal communication more, while the Swedish, Dutch and Eastern Europeans use it less.

The Ukrainian interviewee responded about the nonverbal communication: "When I started working in France I was surprised that people at work kiss each other when they greet rather than just offering a hand. In my culture this is not common. For me there has to be a certain professional distance with people I work with. Finally, I got used to kissing and it does not bother me anymore, but in the beginning it was honestly annoying me." On the other hand, the Venezuelan respondent answered: "In Venezuela we shake hands with someone only the first time we meet the person, after that we only say hi or kiss. Here people shake hands each time they meet each other. I did not know that in the beginning, so it happened to me that someone offered me a hand and I did not understand why they are doing this." According to Schneider & Barsoux (2003, p. 26) in France greetings are highly personal and individual. French co-workers expect to be greeted individually, shaking hands and making eye contact, which is in accordance with the research findings.

### 3.6.3.3 Communication problems

All of the interviewees responded they confront some major or minor communication problems. With the exception of the Dutch respondent, who claimed to face minor communication problems on a daily basis, all other respondents answered that communication problems and conflicts are rare. They believe that cultural differences definitely are one of the reasons for communication problems. Furthermore, the Chinese interviewee answered: "I would say that the cultural differences are a major reason for communication problems since different cultures imply different mentalities leading to different perceptions and understandings of the same things."

### 3.6.3.4 Language barriers

Rexam is a large international group with the headquarters in London and as the global business language is English, it is also the official language of the company.

All of the interviewees use at least two languages at work, two of them use four. Three of the interviewees share an opinion that working in a language which is not your mother tongue requires more effort and can often cause misunderstandings.

The Venezuelan interviewee commented: “Many times my colleagues misunderstood my emails in French.” Also, the Chinese respondent answered: “About 70% of misunderstandings are due to the language as the inappropriate way of saying something can cause misinterpretation.”

#### **3.6.4 Suggestions for improvement of the cross-cultural communication management in Rexam**

The research suggests that the obstacles in communication due to the cultural differences are common in Rexam. Moreover, all of the interviewees consider that differences in cultures are often the reason for misunderstandings and misinterpretations. In addition, respondents are aware of the communication barriers due to the use of a foreign language.

The fact that none of the interviewees is aware of any existing cultural training and has never received such training indicates that cross-cultural communication in Rexam is not managed extremely effectively. The findings recommend the improvement of cross-cultural interactions within Rexam.

There are several options for the progress of cross-cultural business communication in Rexam. Firstly, some lessons about the employee’s host culture and the cultures they deal with in their working environment are of crucial importance. Secondly, a training programme which considers various approaches to cultures and cross-cultural communication management would be beneficial.

Moreover, as most of the misunderstandings are due to the language, studying the language of the country, to which an employee is transferred to, should be indispensable. Language lessons are of utmost importance for improving communication cross-culturally. Nonetheless, certain human resource management practices could improve the business communication between different cultures in Rexam. For example, hiring people who have an excellent grasp of English and an international profile would increase the effectiveness of daily cross-cultural interactions.

### **3.7 Limitations of the research**

This research is limited in several ways. The study could be expanded by including other companies and expanding the size of the sample. The sample of four employees is small and therefore not extremely reliable. The research could be improved by using a different sample, for example different levels of management, particularly the representatives of highest management, and different industries which would perhaps reveal different results.



I conducted the interviews in French or English, this being another important limitation of the research, since none of the two languages are a mother tongue neither to me nor to the interviewees. A more thorough and complete responses would have been attained from the interviewees, were they able to express themselves in their mother tongue.

The assessment of cross-cultural communication practices was limited only to the comparisons with Hofstede's dimensions, the Hall's theory of high and low-context cultures and the theory of monochronic and polychronic cultures. Were the findings compared to other cultural theories and approaches, more reliable and complete results would have been produced.

Therefore, the findings may only be generalised with limitations. Finally, the research focused mostly on the cross-cultural communication and did not consider other aspects of cross-cultural management.

## **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the crucial impact the culture has on interpersonal business communication and therefore the necessity of the cultural awareness in today's global business environment. Moreover, this thesis helps to understand how the culture shapes one's way of communicating and how the communication obstacles due to the cultural differences can be reduced.

The cross-cultural communication field has been studied by various cultural and management researchers, who developed numerous theoretical approaches and suggestions regarding these issues. In this thesis some of the most important approaches to culture and communication are presented. By conducting in-depth interviews, the theoretical assumptions about communicating across cultures have been examined on a practical example of a multinational group.

After conducting the company research, I have concluded that culture certainly affects different aspects of communication and that the cross-cultural communication requires greater efforts and understanding at work. Nonetheless, most of the research findings have proven to be in accordance with the theoretical assumptions about cultures and the communication across cultures.

The interviews with the employees have confirmed that they are highly aware of the misunderstandings caused by the cultural differences and that they are daily confronting communication problems due to the differences in cultures. Moreover, their responses indicate their willingness to learn, understand and adapt to different cultures in their work environment. The research suggests that in order to minimise the communication obstacles mentioned above, the cultural training within the company should be emphasised to greater extend.

As the businesses are becoming increasingly globalised and internationalised, the cultural awareness is gaining an indispensable role for business success. Most of the multinational groups are dedicating particular attention to their employees' cultural training, and will increasingly continue to do so, in order to enable them to communicate effectively across cultures.

# POVZETEK DIPLOMSKEGA DELA V SLOVENŠČINI

Diplomsko delo z naslovom *Medkulturni management poslovnega komuniciranja v podjetju Rexam* (angleški naslov se glasi: *Cross-cultural communication managament in company Rexam*) obravnava komunikacijske težave, do katerih prihaja zaradi kulturoloških razlik tako med zaposlenimi znotraj podjetja, kot z njihovimi poslovnimi partnerji.

Poslovanje v zadnjih desetletjih se je močno spremenilo. Poslovni trgi so postali bolj odprti, podjetja pa vse bolj mednarodno usmerjena. Mednarodna podjetja v današnjem času zaposlujejo ljudi z vseh koncev sveta. Pogosto se dogaja, da v enem teamu ne najdemo niti dveh enakih nacionalnosti. Pri takem poslovanju je določeno znanje o kulturi in poznavanje kulturoloških razlik bistvenega pomena za uspešno sodelovanje.

Diplomsko delo se osredotoča predvsem na težave, ki nastanejo pri komuniciranju zaradi kulturoloških razlik. Posamezniki različnih kultur imajo različne navade, izraze in kretnje, kar pogosto vodi do nesporazumov pri medkulturnem poslovnem komuniciranju.

Namen diplomskega dela je opozoriti na pomembnost kulture in kulturoloških razlik pri medkulturnem poslovnem komuniciranju in na nekatere komunikacijske težave, s katerimi se srečujejo zaposleni v podjetju zaradi kulturoloških razlik. Cilj diplomskega dela je ugotoviti kakšen je dejanski vpliv kulture na medkulturni management poslovnega komuniciranja in kako bi se ga lahko izboljšalo.

## KULTURA

Kultura je zelo širok in obsežen pojem, ki vključuje vrednote določene družbe, skupek njenih dosežkov, znanj, umetnosti ter vsa druga znanja in običaje. Različni raziskovalci so skozi čas različno opredeljevali pojem kulture, kar je razlog za veliko število definicij kulture. Ena izmed definicij je naslednja:

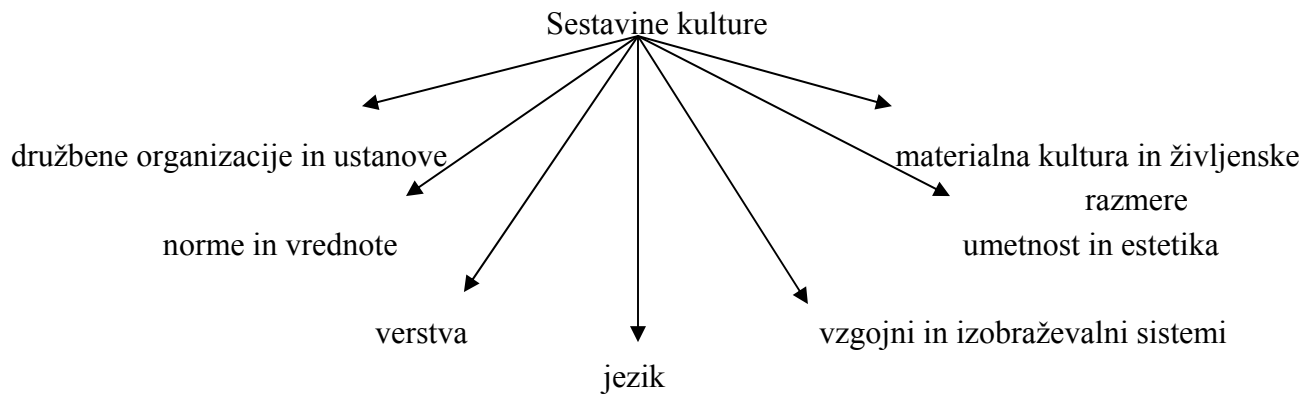
**Herbig & Dunphy (1998):** Kultura je skupek, ki vključuje način življenja, primerno obnašanje, verovanja, vrednote, jezik in običaje, ki so skupni članom določene družbe.

Kljub različnim definicijam kulture, imajo le-te nekatere skupne točke:

- Kultura je priučena in se prenaša iz roda v rod. (Posameznik se je nauči od drugih članov te kulture.)
- Kultura narekuje določene vrednote in pravila za vsakdanje življenje članov te kulture.
- Kultura vključuje jezik, vrednote, prepričanja, obnašanja, ki so skupna njenim pripadnikom.

Kulturo lahko obravnavamo kot skupek, ki vključuje številne sestavine, ki pomembno vplivajo na kulturološko okolje in poslovanje v le-tem. Skica spodaj prikazuje sedem pomembnejših sestavin kulture:

*Slika 1: Sestavine kulture*



*Vir: Hrastelj (2001, str. 29).*

## **Dimenzije kulture**

Dimenzije kulture predstavljajo kriterije, po katerih lahko razvrstimo države glede na njihove kulturološke značilnosti. Dimenzije kulture so uporabne za analiziranje vrednot in obnašanj posamezne kulture ter za primerjavo kulturoloških značilnosti med različnimi državami. Poznamo eno-dimenzijske in več-dimenzijske modele. Pomembnejša eno-dimenzijska modela sta Hallov in Lewisov, primeri več-dimenzijskih modelov pa so Hofstedejev, Schwartzov in GLOBE.

## **Hallov model visokokontekstnih in nizkokontekstnih kultur**

Model visokokontekstnih in nizkokontekstnih kultur kulturo deli glede na način komuniciranja. Pri nizkokontekstnih kulturah so sporočila neposredna, neverbalna komunikacija pa se uporablja v manjši meri. V takih kulturah so vezi med posamezniki dokaj krhke. Za visokokontekstne kulture pa je značilno, da so sporočila posredna, poleg vsebine sporočila pa je pomembna tudi barva glasu, mimika in vedenje sogovornika (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2001). Slika spodaj prikazuje primere držav z nizkokontekstno in visokokontekstno kulturo:

Slika 2: Visoko in nizkokontekstne kulture



Vir: Lamb, *Understanding Cross Cultural Differences*, 2001, str. 4, *Context Communication Continuum*.

### Hofstedejeve dimenzije kulture

Na osnovi raziskave medkulturnih razlik, ki je zajela 117,000 zaposlenih v podjetju IBM v 40 državah, je raziskovalec Hofstede razvil štiri dimenzije kulture, katerim je bila kasneje dodana tudi peta. Spodaj je opisanih pet Hofstedejevih dimenzije kulture (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003, str. 87-89):

- Odmik moči (ang. *Power distance*): je stopnja do katere posamezna kultura sprejema neenako porazdelitev moči med posamezniki, ustanovami in organizacijami.
- Izogibanje negotovosti (ang. *Uncertainty avoidance*): je pokazatelj, koliko se posamezna kultura čuti nelagodno oziroma ogroženo ob negotovih situacijah.
- Individualizem-kolektivizem (ang. *Individualism vs. Collectivism*): za individualistične kulture je značilno, da vsak posameznik skrbi zase in za svojo ožjo družino. Vezi med posamezniki v takih kulturah so razmeroma krhke. Nasprotje individualizma pa je kolektivizem, kjer si posamezniki prizadevajo predvsem za skupno dobro, skupni interesi prevladajo nad posameznikovimi. Vezi v takih kulturah so običajno močne.

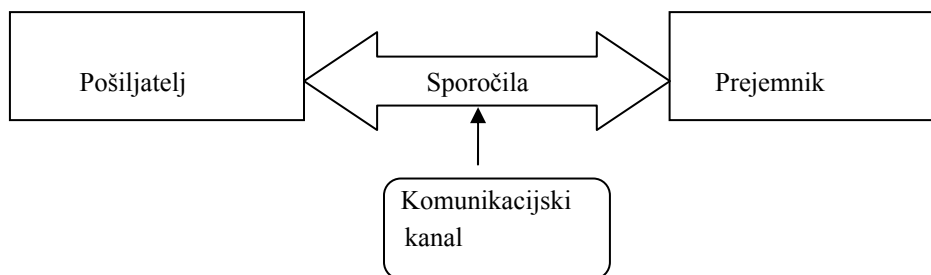
- Moškost-ženskost (ang. *Masculinity vs. Femininity*): Za moške kulture je značilna jasna opredelitev moških in ženskih vlog v družbi. V moških družbah je za moške značilno, da so trdi, ambiciozni in agresivni, medtem ko so ženske nežne, krke in skrbne. V takih kulturah so materialne dobrine in uspeh izredno pomembne. V ženskih kulturah so lahko moški pravtako kot ženske skrbni in nežni. Pomembne vrednote pa so socialna gotovost in skrb.
- Dolgoročna-kratkoročna usmerjenost (ang. *Long vs. Short term orientation*): Za dolgoročne kulture je značilno poudarjanje dolžnosti, reda in morale. Te kulture se osredotočajo predvsem na prihodnost in podpirajo vrednote, ki prinašajo koristi v daljni prihodnosti. Nasprotje dolgoročnih kultur so kratkoročne kulture, ki so usmerjene predvsem na kratkoročne rezultate in sedanjost.

## KOMUNIKACIJA

Pojem komuniciranje je definiran kot izmenjavanje informacij z govorjenjem, pisanjem, govorico telesa ali s pošiljanjem drugih signalov (Wehmeier et al., 2005, str. 304). Poslovno komuniciranje je komuniciranje v poslovnem okolju z namenom dosega učinkovitih poslovnih rezultatov (Kameda, 2005).

Potek komunikacije je predstavljen s sliko spodaj:

Slika 3: Potek komunikacije



Source: (Laios & Theodorakis, 2001).

## Vrste komunikacij

Poznamo več vrst komunikacij v podjetju (Rozman, 1993, str. 229-232):

- Formalne in neformalne komunikacije: Formalne komunikacije so določene s hierarhično strukturo in drugimi strukturami v podjetju, medtem ko neformalne komunikacije ne izvirajo iz nekih vnaprej določenih vlog zaposlenih.

- Navpične in vodoravne komunikacije: Vodoravne komunikacije potekajo med zaposlenimi na enakih hierarhičnih ravneh, medtem ko navpične komunikacije potekajo med zaposlenimi na različnih hierarhičnih ravneh organizacije (Welch & Jackson, 2007).
- Enosmerno in dvosmerno komuniciranje: Enosmerno komuniciranje je pošiljanje sporočil z namenom informiranja prejemnika, dajanja ukazov ali navodil. Dvosmerno komuniciranje pa je dvosmerna izmenjava informacij med pošiljateljem in prejemnikom (Kalla, 2005).

## **Načini komuniciranja**

Načine komuniciranja delimo na dve večji skupini: besedno in nebesedno komuniciranje. Pod besedno komuniciranje štejemo govorno in pisno komuniciranje, medtem ko govorico, telesa, barvo glasu, mimiko in prostor uvrščamo med nebesedne oblike komuniciranja (Lamb, 2001).

## **Medkulturno komuniciranje**

Kultura ima bistven vpliv na posameznikov način razmišljanja, razumevanja in vedenja ter tako vpliva na posameznikov način komuniciranja. Medkulturni management poslovnega komuniciranja obravnava težave, ki se pojavljajo pri komuniciranju zaradi različnih kultur, jezikov in sistemov v mednarodnem poslovnem okolju ali znotraj mednarodnih podjetij (Kameda, 2005). Zaposleni, ki komunicirajo medkulturno, morajo biti seznanjeni s primernimi in neprimernimi oblikami komuniciranja v različnih državah v skladu z vrednotami, verovanji, vedenjskimi vzorci in normami le-teh (Sriussadaporn, 2006). Pri medkulturnem poslovnem komuniciranju moramo biti poleg jezika pozorni tudi na neverbalne vzorce komuniciranja, običaje in navade (Holopainen & Björkman, 2005). Lamb (2001, str. 5) je mnenja, da je pri medkulturnem poslovnem komuniciranju potrebno paziti predvsem na:

- Jezik: Mnogi menijo, da je angleščina jezik mednarodnega komuniciranja, vendar pogosto to ni res. Mnogi ne govorijo ali pa nočejo govoriti angleško. Med uporabo poslovne angleščine pri medkulturnem poslovnem komuniciranju bi se morali izogibati prispodobam in slengu (Hurn, 2007).
- Pozdravljanje: Načini pozdravljanja so po različnih državah različni. V Franciji je uveljavljena oblika pozdravljanja stisk roke, medtem ko je na Japonskem tradicionalen način pozdravljanja priklon.
- Geste: Znano je, da Južno Američani, Mediteranci in Arabci uporabljajo geste v večji meri kot Severni Američani, Azijci in Evropejci.
- Stik z očmi: Pomembno je vedeti, koliko stika z očmi je sprejemljivo. Na primer, na Tajskem in v Južni Koreji stik z očmi pomeni izzivanje sogovornika.
- Dotik: Ponavadi je dotikanje bolj pogosto v Južno Evropskih in Latinskih kulturah, medtem ko je v Severno evropskih kulturah manj sprejemljivo.

- Uporaba prostora: Pomembno je vedeti, koliko se lahko sogovorniku približamo. Običajno severno Evropejci potrebujejo več prostora kot pa Mediteranci (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003, str. 28).
- Vsebina pogovora: Nekatere teme pogovora so v določenih državah žaljive. Na primer, v arabski kulturi se je treba izogibati pogovora o ženskah. Spraševanje po sogovornikovi ženi ali hčerki je nesprejemljivo.

## **MEDKULTURNI MANAGEMENT POSLOVNEGA KOMUNICIRANJA V PODJETJU REXAM**

### **Predstavitev podjetja**

Rexam je drugi največji proizvajalec embalaže na svetu in vodilni proizvajalec pločevink ter poslovni partner nekaterim svetovno znanim in uspešnim potrošniškimi znamkam (LVMH, Red Bull, Coca-Cola, L'oreal, Procter & Gamble, Pepsi, Heineken ...). Podjetje ima v lasti okoli 110 proizvodnih enot v več kot dvajsetih državah v Evropi, Severni in Južni Ameriki ter v Aziji.

Rexam zaposluje okoli 22.000 ljudi v več kot dvajsetih državah s prometom v približni vrednosti 3,6 milijarde britanskih funtov.

Organizacijsko je podjetje razdeljeno na proizvodnjo pločevink, t.i. *Beverage Packaging* in proizvodnjo plastične embalaže, t.i. *Plastic Packaging*. Poslovna enota *Plastic Packaging* je dalje strukturirana na sledeče tri divizije (Rexam, 2008):

- **Zdravstvena nega (*Health Care*):** Farmacevtska embalaža (*Pharma*), posebna embalaža (*Primary Packaging*), po naročilu (*Prescription*)
- **Zamaški in pokrovi (*Closures*):** za pijačo, za hrano
- **Osebna nega (*Personal Care*):** razpršilci (*Dispensing Systems*), ličila (*Make Up*), Domača in osebna nega (*Home and Personal care*).

### **Raziskava**

Raziskavo sem izvedla z namenom pridobitve vpogleda v medkulturno poslovno komuniciranje ter ugotovitve glede ustreznosti obstoječe literature o medkulturnem poslovnem komuniciranju v primerjavi s prakso.

Cilj je ugotoviti, kako poteka medkulturni management poslovnega komuniciranja v podjetju Rexam, ali se zaposleni soočajo s težavami pri komuniciranju zaradi kulturoloških razlik in kako take težave rešujejo. Nenazadnje sem želela tudi ugotoviti, ali se kulturološke značilnosti vsakega



intervjuvanca ujemajo s teoretičnimi predpostavkami o njegovih kulturnih značilnostih. Podatke za raziskavo sem zbrala s pomočjo delno strukturiranih globinskih intervjujev. Vprašalnik, ki sem ga uporabila, vsebuje 27 vprašanj razdeljenih v štiri sklope. V uvodnem sklopu so vprašanja, ki se nanašajo na nekaj osnovnih informacij o intervjuvancu, kot na primer nacionalnost in spol. Vprašanja v prvem sklopu raziskujejo intervjuvančeve mednarodne izkušnje pravitako kot tudi njegova mnenja o različnih kulturah. Vprašanja v drugem sklopu obravnavajo medkulturni management v podjetju Rexam. Zadnji sklop pa raziskuje medkulturni management poslovnega komuniciranja v podjetju Rexam. Vzorec za globinski intervju zajema štiri intervjuvance, tri ženske in enega moškega, ki na svojem delovnem mestu dnevno komunicirajo z ljudmi iz različnih kulturnih okolij. Vsi intervjuvanci so zaposleni v podjetju Rexam.

### **Analiza raziskave**

Empirično raziskavo sem razdelila na tri medsebojno povezane dele. V prvem delu sem analizo usmerila na kulturološke značilnosti vsakega intervjuvanca in na njegovo mnenje o kulturah, s katerimi komunicira v svojem delovnem okolju. Rezultate sem nato primerjala s Hofstedeovimi, Hallovimi in Lewisovimi ugotovitvami o medkulturnih razlikah. V drugem delu analize sem se osredotočila na intervjuvančeve izkušnje in mnenja o medkulturnem managementu v Rexamu. Nenazadnje sem tudi predstavila t.i. “*Rexam Advanced Management Programme*”, ki je izobraževalni program o medkulturnem managementu v Rexamu. V zadnjem delu analize pa sem se posvetila medkulturnem poslovnem komuniciranju v podjetju Rexam. V tem delu sem želela ugotoviti, ali je izbrana metoda komuniciranja pogojena s kulturološkimi značilnostmi, ali uporaba tujega jezika predstavlja oviro pri komuniciranju in kako pogosto se intervjuvanci srečujejo s težavami pri komuniciranju.

Rezultati analize se večinoma ujemajo s Hofstedeovimi, Hallovimi in Lewisovimi predpostavkami. Na osnovi odgovorov intervjuvancev lahko predpostavim, da Nizozemska, Kitajska in Ukrajina sodijo med države z dokaj nizkim odmikom moči, medtem ko se Venezuela nahaja nekje na sredini. Te ugotovitve niso povsem v skladu s Hofstedeovimi. Pravitako lahko na osnovi odgovorov sklepam, da Nizozemci in Ukrajinci sodijo med kulture z nizkim izogibom negotovosti, medtem ko Kitajsko in Venezuelo lahko uvrstim med kulture z visokim izogibom negotovosti. Po odgovorih lahko uvrstim Američane, Angleže in Kitajce med individualistično zasnovane kulture, medtem ko Francozi, Italijani in Španci spadajo med kolektivistično zasnovane kulture. Nekje na sredini se nahajajo Nizozemci, skrajno individualistični so Američani, skrajno kolektivistični pa Arabci. Srednji Vzhod je bil opredeljen kot skrajno moška kultura, Skandinavske države pa kot skrajno ženske, Velika Britanija se nahaja nekje na sredini, medtem ko so Kitajska, Latinska Amerika in Italija uvrščene med moške, ZDA, Španija in Francija pa med ženske.

V drugem delu empirične analize sem ugotovila, da se nihče od intervjuvancev še nikoli ni udeležil izobraževanja o medkulturnem managementu in medkulturnem poslovnem komuniciranju. Kljub temu, da "*Rexam Advanced Management Programme*" (izobraževalni program o medkulturnem managementu) obstaja, nihče od intervjuvancev še nikoli ni slišal za takšno izobraževanje v podjetju Rexam.

V zadnjem delu raziskave se je izkazalo, da intervjuvanci najraje uporabljajo medosebno verbalno komuniciranje, e-mail in telefon pa označujejo za praktična in priljubljena načina komuniciranja. Nekateri intervjuvanci so mnenja, da je e-mail učinkovit način komuniciranja z Američani, Kitajci, Nizozemci in Skandinavci, medtem ko je z Italijani in Španci bolj smiselno uporabljati telefon.

Večina intervjuvancev je poslovne sestanke v podjetju Rexam označila kot predolge, nejasne in neučinkovite. Moč je sklepati, da so udeleženci mnenja, da je razlog za neučinkovitost sestankov vpliv francoske kulture, ki naj bi povzročevala slabšo organiziranost, kritiziranje in zamudnost.

Vsi intervjuvanci so mnenja, da je neverbalna komunikacija zelo pomembna. Trije od štirih intervjuvancev so priznali, da so v preteklosti že naleteli na težave in nesporazume zaradi napačne interpretacije neverbalnega komuniciranja. Izkazalo se je, da Latinski Američani, Italijani in Španci precej uporabljajo geste, Skandinavci in Ukrajinci pa veliko manj.

Udeleženci intervjujev so odgovorili, da se pogosto srečujejo z manjšimi ali večjimi komunikacijskimi težavami ali konflikti. Intervjuvanci se zavedajo, da so eden od vzrokov za nesporazume kulturološke razlike ter menijo, da se je pri medkulturnem poslovnem komuniciranju potrebno prilagajati sogovornikovi kulturi.

Mnenje treh od štirih intervjuvancev je, da je raznolikost v jeziku ovira. Ena izmed intervjuvank je odgovorila, da so bili nekateri od njenih e-mailov napačno razumljeni zaradi nepravilne uporabe francoščine.

### **Predlogi za izboljšanje medkulturnega managementa poslovnega komuniciranja v podjetju Rexam**

Na osnovi odgovorov je moč sklepati, da se zaposleni v Rexamu pogosto srečujejo s komunikacijskimi težavami zaradi kulturoloških razlik. Pravtako pa se intervjuvanci zavedajo, da medkulturno komuniciranje lahko pripelje do nesporazumov in da zato zahteva večjo pozornost.

Medkulturni management poslovnega komuniciranja v podjetju Rexam bi se lahko izboljšal na več načinov. Zaposleni, ki so premeščeni na novo delovno mesto v drugo državo, bi bili lahko deležni nekaj napotkov glede kulture in običajev države, kamor odhajajo. Naslednja možnost za izboljšanje

medkulturnega komuniciranja je izobraževalni program o kulturi, medkulturnih razlikah in medkulturnem poslovnem komuniciranju. Izredno pomembne so učne ure jezika. Nazadnje pa lahko podjetje, ko zaposluje, išče kandidate, ki že imajo določene mednarodne izkušnje in odlično znanje angleškega jezika.

## **SKLEP**

Poznavanje kulturoloških značilnosti je v današnjem poslovnem okolju nujno, saj je večina večjih podjetij razširjena izven svojih državnih meja. Poleg tega pa mednarodna podjetja pogosto zaposlujejo ljudi z vseh koncev sveta. Pri takem poslovanju je pomembno, da medkulturno komuniciranje poteka učinkovito, s čim manj nesporazumov.

Empirični del mojega diplomskega dela se večinoma sklada s teoretičnimi iztočnicami avtorjev Hofstede, Hall in Lewis. Pravitako sem s pomočjo empirične analize ugotovila, da medkulturno poslovno komuniciranje v podjetju pogosto pripelje do nesporazumov in tako zahteva posebno pozornost. Na to kaže tudi dejstvo, da se vsi intervjuvanci zavedajo težav pri komuniciranju, ki nastajajo zaradi kulturoloških razlik. Nenazadnje je na osnovi empirične analize moč sklepati, da bi bilo medkulturni management poslovnega komuniciranja v podjetju Rexam mogoče izboljšati s pomočjo izobraževalnih programov in učenjem tujih jezikov.

Uspešno komuniciranje ima v poslovnem svetu izredno veliko vlogo zato je pomembno, da se podjetja zavedajo dejavnikov, ki lahko negativno vplivajo na le-to. Eden izmed pomembnejših dejavnikov, ki vplivajo na uspešnost oziroma neuspešnost poslovnega komuniciranja so kulturološke razlike, zato jim morajo podjetja, ki poslujejo v mednarodnem okolju nameniti veliko pozornost.

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# **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX 1 : HOFSTEDE'S DIMENSIONS CUES

*Table 1 : Hofstede's dimensions*

<p><b>Small power distance</b>            Hierarchy in organisations constitutes an inequality of roles, established for convenience.            Decentralisation is popular.            Subordinates expect to be consulted.            The ideal boss is a resourceful democrat.</p>	<p><b>Large power distance</b>            Hierarchy in organisations reflects an existential inequality between higher-ups and lower-downs.            Centralisation is popular.            Subordinates expect to be told what to do.            The ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat or good father.</p>
<p><b>Collectivist</b>            Relationship between employer and employee is perceived in moral terms, like a family link.            Relationship prevails over task.</p>	<p><b>Individualist</b>            Relationship between employer and employee is a contract supposed to be based on mutual advantage.            Task prevails over relationship.</p>
<p><b>Feminine</b>            Managers use intuition and strive for consensus            Focus on equality, solidarity and quality of work life.            Resolution of conflicts by negotiations and compromises.</p>	<p><b>Masculine</b>            Managers expected to be decisive and assertive.            Focus on equity, competition among colleagues and performance.            Resolution of conflicts by fighting them out.</p>
<p><b>Strong uncertainty avoidance</b>            Emotional need for rules, even if these will never work.            Suppression of deviant ideas and behaviour.            Motivation by security.</p>	<p><b>Weak uncertainty avoidance</b>            There should not be more rules than strictly necessary.            Tolerance of deviant ideas and behaviour.            Motivation by achievement.</p>

*Source: Lagrosen, Exploring the impact of culture on quality management, 2003, p.478, Table 1.*



## APPENDIX 2 : UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE CUES

*Table 2: Uncertainty avoidance cues*

<b>Low UA</b>	<b>High UA</b>
Few rules and laws	Many rules and laws
Citizens protests acceptable	Citizen protests unacceptable
Tendency to integrate minorities	Tendency to repress minorities
Make decisions without precise answers or clear structure	Hesitant to make decisions until all questions answered and clear structure in place
Low anxiety with ambiguity and risk	High anxiety with ambiguity and risk
Change jobs for personal growth	Prefer to stay with one organisation
What is different is interesting	What is different is dangerous

*Source: Lamb, Understanding Cross Cultural Differences, 2001, p. 22.*

## APPENDIX 3 : HOFSTEDE 'S COUNTRY RANKINGS

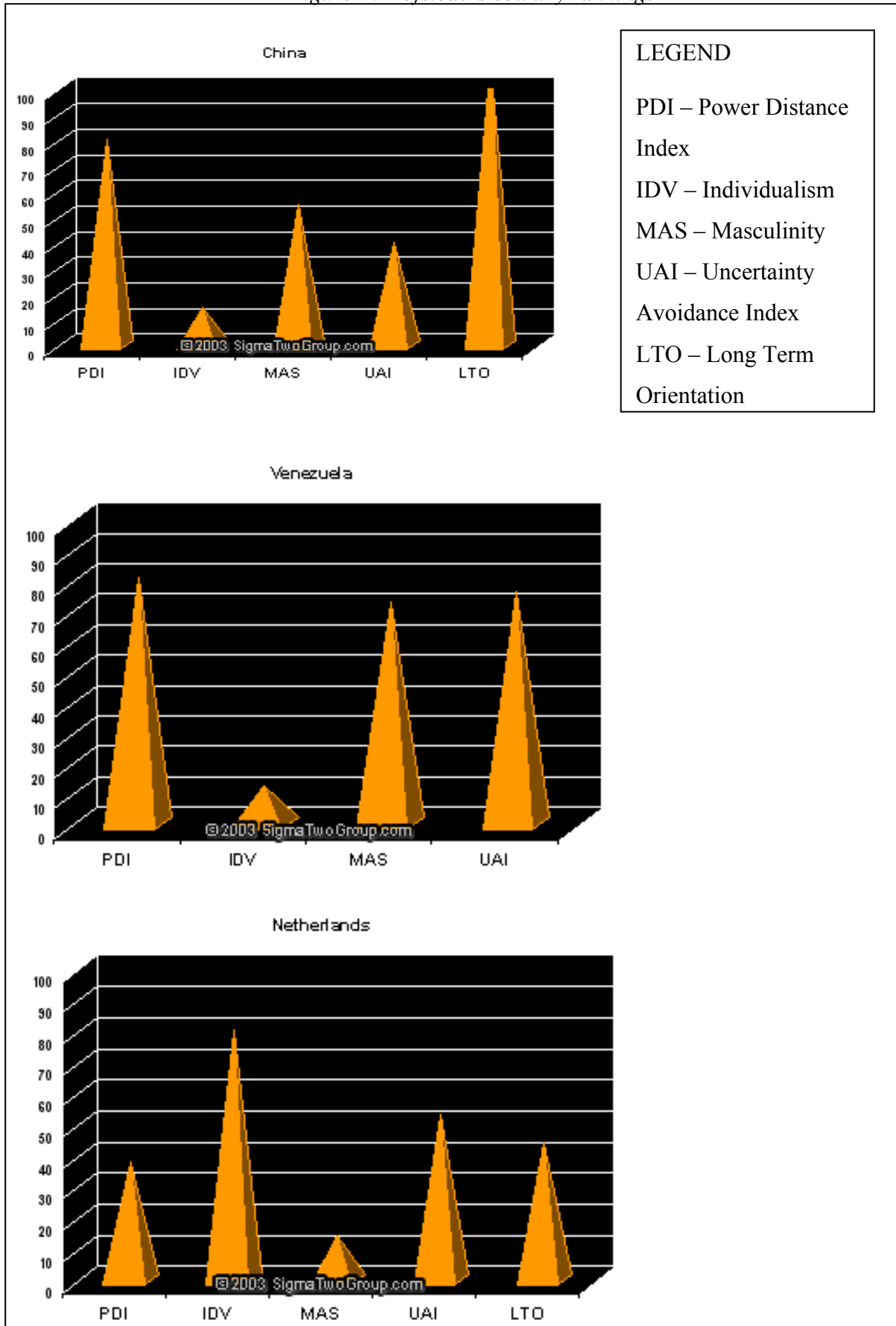
*Table 3: Hofstede 's rankings*

<i>Country</i>	<i>Power distance</i>	<i>Individualism</i>	<i>Masculinity</i>	<i>Uncertainty avoidance</i>
Brazil	14	26-7	27	21-2
France	15-16	10-11	35-6	10-15
Germany	42-4	15	9-10	29
Great Britain	42-4	3	9-10	47-8
Italy	34	7	4-5	23
Netherlands	40	4-5	51	35
Spain	31	20	37-8	10-15
Sweden	47-8	10-11	53	49-50
United States	38	1	15	43
Venezuela	5-6	50	3	21-2

Rank numbers: 1 – Highest; 53 – Lowest.

*Source: Schneider & Barsoux, Managing across cultures, 2003, p. 88, Table 4.1 Hofstede 's rankings.*

Figure 2: Hofstede's country rankings



Source: <http://www.geert-hofstede.com>

## **APPENDIX 4 : INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN REXAM CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT RESEARCH**

Hello everyone,

Currently I am writing a thesis with a title “Cross-cultural business communication management in company Rexam” for my University in Ljubljana. The first (theoretical) part of the thesis is a review of various theoretical approaches about culture, cross-cultural management and communication. In the second (empirical) part of the thesis I am planning to conduct a research based on the interviews with Rexam’s employees. This research would offer an insight into daily cross-cultural communication practices in a company and help me analyse the actual cross-cultural communication problems.

Therefore, I would be very grateful if you could participate in the interview. I suggest that you choose a date which suits you from now until the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July.

For better understanding of my work I have attached an example of the questionnaire.

Kindest regards,  
Aziza Dobardzic

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### **THE BASIS FOR THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

A) Information about yourself for statistical purposes.

1. What is your nationality?
2. What was your citizenship at birth?
3. Are you a male or a female?
4. What is your current working position?

B) Questions regarding the cultural differences and their influence on business interactions.

5. Is your current working position in your home country? If no, how long have you been working in your current country? If yes, have you ever worked outside your home country? Please comment specifically on your international working experiences.
6. Did you experience anything surprising or odd during these experiences which you attribute to the differences between the cultures?
7. Please think of an ideal job, disregarding your present job. In choosing an ideal job, what would be the most important to you?

8. From which countries different than yours do the colleagues you interact with come from?
9. What would you say about the task vs. relationship orientation of the people you work with compared to yourself? Do you think that these differences are culture specific?
10. What do you think about the organisational structure of the company (is it too centralised/ too structured)?
11. Do you feel that you are being consulted enough by your managers when it comes to taking decisions concerning the projects you work on? Do you feel the difference regarding this subject on your current position compared to the position in your home country?
12. What would you say regarding the attitude towards time of your colleagues to yours? Are they usually on time?
13. What would you say concerning their regards on male vs. female roles in business communications?

C) Questions regarding the cross – cultural management in Rexam

14. If you are/were working in a foreign country have you received any particular training on cross-cultural management before moving to that position? Please comment.
15. Are you aware of any existing protocols, modes or trainings within the company related to the cultural differences?
16. According to you do the cultural differences within the company require a greater effort during the daily business interactions?
17. Have you ever studied the culture of the foreign country where you are/were working? Why (for business purposes, personal culture, everyday life, etc.)?
18. Would you say that your colleagues/managers/subordinates take/took into consideration that you are/were coming from a different culture?

D) Communication management questions

19. Which methods of communication (face-to-face communication, e-mails, videoconferencing, etc.) are the most commonly used between you and your colleagues of same or from a different culture? Which method do you find the most effective?
20. Have you ever find anything surprising (for example: length, topic, content) in an e-mail, a phone conversation or a videoconference with a colleague from a different culture?
21. Is the nonverbal communication important to you? Have you ever found anything different or confusing in the nonverbal communication with a colleague from a different culture?
22. When having communication problems is it usually with your manager, subordinate or colleague?
23. How often do you have conflicts with your co-workers of same or from a different culture?

24. What are the most common reasons for conflicts? Would you say that the cultural differences are one of them?
25. Which language(s) do you use at work? Would you say that some of the misunderstandings are due to the use of a foreign language?
26. How successful are the business meetings? Do you sense any difference between the business meetings with the colleagues from your cultural background and the international business meetings regarding the successfulness, length, atmosphere, and understanding?
27. What do you think about the information sharing between you and your managers/colleagues? Have you found anything surprising about it when communicating with managers/colleagues/subordinates from another culture?

## **APPENDIX 5 : IN- DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH REXAM'S EMPLOYEES**

### **INTERVIEW 1**

A) Information about yourself for statistical purposes.

1. What is your nationality? Ukrainian
2. What was your citizenship at birth? Ukrainian
3. Are you a male or a female? Female
4. What is your current working position? Sales Manager Export zone

B) Questions regarding the cultural differences and their influence on business interactions.

5. Is your current working position in your home country? If no, how long have you been working in your current country? If yes, have you ever worked outside your home country? Please comment specifically on your international working experiences.

I came to France five years ago. I obtained my master degree here and I have been working here since four years, out of which two years in Rexam.

6. Did you experience anything surprising or odd during these experiences which you attribute to the differences between the cultures?

I do not think so. I never worked in my home country. Rexam is not a purely French company. It really has a multinational culture. I really like this a lot.

7. Please think of an ideal job, disregarding your present job. In choosing an ideal job, what would be the most important to you?

Possibility to evolve intellectually, changing environment, to have certain autonomy at work, to have an influence on what I am doing, creativity.

8. From which countries different than yours do the colleagues you interact with come from?

My clients: Eastern Europe (Russia, Ukraine, Poland...), Scandinavian countries, Benelux, Middle East (Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia...), Greece and Balkans.

People on my team: Venezuela, Italy, Germany, UK, and France.

9. What would you say about the task vs. relationship orientation of the people you work with compared to yourself? Do you think that these differences are culture specific?

If I sort them I would say that Middle East is extremely relationship oriented, after are Italy and Spain, then France, then Scandinavia and finally UK.

10. What do you think about the organisational structure of the company (is it too centralised/ too structured)?

I think that on the global level is clear but the dispensing division is too complex and too complicated. It is too structured. I believe that it was not a good choice to structure our division by products.

11. Do you feel that you are being consulted enough by your managers when it comes to taking decisions concerning the projects you work on? Do you feel the difference regarding this subject on your current position compared to the position in your home country?

Yes. I have a very good manager. I never worked in my home country.

12. What would you say regarding the attitude towards time of your colleagues to yours? Are they usually on time?

French are not on time in general. I would not say that time is really an important value for them. Scandinavians are always punctual. In the Middle East time is not important at all. There you do not take appointments on a certain day at a certain hour. You just go there and call them and if they have time to have an appointment with you, they will say yes if not then next time.

13. What would you say concerning their regards on male vs. female roles in business communications?

I think that in France the society is quite egalitarian. We are really lucky to live in a country where women can fulfil their personal and professional goals and have enough freedom. Although there is still some improvement to be done. For example men still gain higher salaries for the same work. If I compare France to my country, I think it is quite similar. I was raised up under communism in the Soviet Union and one of the values imposed by that system was equality. Women had the right to work and do same jobs like men. I never got the impression that we are inferior to men. In the Middle East is completely different. I work with Saudi Arabia but I can not get a professional visa to go there because women do not have a right to work in that country, so a professional visa for a woman is something that does not exist. When I went to the saloon in Dubai it went well but I had to be dressed properly (which means long sleeved clothes, nothing short, tight or transparent). However, I could sense that they listen more carefully and give more consideration to men when we were talking.

### C) Questions regarding the cross – cultural management in Rexam

14. If you are/were working in a foreign country have you received any particular training on cross- cultural management before moving to that position? Please comment.

No.

15. Are you aware of any existing protocols, modes or trainings within the company related to the cultural differences?

I do not know.

16. According to you do the cultural differences within the company require a greater effort during the daily business interactions?

I guess so. I am so used to different cultures that I can not tell anymore. I work in a really multicultural environment.

17. Have you ever studied the culture of the foreign country where you are/were working? Why (for business purposes, personal culture, everyday life, etc.)?

Yes. Before I moved to France I studied language and culture.

18. Would you say that your colleagues/managers/subordinates take/took into consideration that you are/were coming from a different culture?

Not really.

#### D) Communication management questions

19. Which methods of communication (face-to-face communication, e-mails, videoconferencing, etc.) are the most commonly used between you and your colleagues of same or from a different culture? Which method do you find the most effective?

Face-to-face communication, emails, phone. Face-to-face communication is definitely the most efficient. With clients I mostly use emails but I prefer to use face-to-face communication whenever possible disregarding the culture. In the Middle East for example face-to-face communication is extremely important.

20. Have you ever find anything surprising (for example: length, topic, content) in an e-mail, a phone conversation or a videoconference with a colleague from a different culture?

No. Not really.

21. Is the nonverbal communication important to you? Have you ever found anything different or confusing in the nonverbal communication with a colleague from a different culture?

Very important. When I started working in France I was surprised that people at work kiss each other when they greet rather than just offering a hand. In my culture this is not common. For me there has to be a certain professional distance with people I work with. Finally I got used to kissing and it does not bother me anymore but in the beginning it was honestly annoying me. Sometimes people might find me distant or cold because I am not so expressive but it is only because of my culture. With Scandinavians we have the same nonverbal communication and we understand each other perfectly. Italians and Spanish are really expressive and make a lot of gestures with their hands.

22. When having communication problems is it usually with your manager, subordinate or colleague?

Could be with anyone. Usually it is rather misunderstandings than conflicts.



23. How often do you have conflicts with your co-workers of same or from a different culture?

I have conflicts very rarely.

24. What are the most common reasons for conflicts? Would you say that the cultural differences are one of them?

Often it is different points of views on the solutions of the same problem. One part of these reasons is certainly attributed to culture but I think that the culture is not the major reason for conflicts. Probably because we are a multicultural company.

25. Which language(s) do you use at work? Would you say that some of the misunderstandings are due to the use of a foreign language?

English, French, Russian, Ukrainian. Yes, sometimes there are misunderstandings because of the language.

26. How successful are the business meetings? Do you sense any difference between the business meetings with the colleagues from your cultural background and the international business meetings regarding the successfulness, length, atmosphere, and understanding?

Team meetings are very successful but that is because we have a great manager. He established a real team culture which is common to all the members of our team. In other meetings there are always differences between different cultures. For example Italians talk a lot and the meetings with them are long. Germans are much organised and stick to the agenda. In the Middle East is completely different. There people bring out any subject that comes to their mind including personal subjects.

27. What do you think about the information sharing between you and your managers/colleagues? Have you found anything surprising about it when communicating with managers/colleagues/subordinates from another culture?

I think it comes naturally. People talk about everything that happens at work during the day. In my team the information sharing is very good. I did not really sense some differences on this question when it comes to information sharing between different cultures in the company. I would say only that we could share more between different divisions within the company.

## **INTERVIEW 2**

A) Information about yourself for statistical purposes.

1. What is your nationality? Dutch.
2. What was your nationality at birth (if different)? Dutch.
3. Are you a male or a female? Male.
4. What is your current working position? Marketing Director for Personal Care

B) Questions regarding the cultural differences and their influence on business interactions.

5. Is your current working position in your home country? If no, how long have you been working in your current country? If yes, have you ever worked outside your home country? Please comment specifically on your international working experiences.  
No. It's been about one year and a half since I'm working in France. I had to move here when I evaluated to the position of Marketing Director which is based in Paris and not in Netherlands.
6. Did you experience anything surprising or odd during these experiences which you attribute to the differences between the cultures?  
Yes. Dutch are much more open, less formal than French.
7. Please think of an ideal job, disregarding your present job. In choosing an ideal job, what would be the most important to you?  
Ability to work with people, fun, innovation, new ideas, and it has to be international.
8. From which countries different than yours do the colleagues you interact with come from?  
US, UK, China, Brazil, France.
9. What would you say about the task vs. relationship orientation of the people you work with compared to yourself?  
Americans are completely task oriented, Chinese as well. French and Brazilians are more relationship oriented and Dutch are somewhere in the middle.
10. What do you think about the organisational structure of the company (is it too centralised/ too structured)?  
It is changing. Before it was extremely decentralised and now they are trying to centralise it to London. I don't like it at all. Before it was better.
11. Do you feel that you are being consulted enough by your managers when it comes to taking decisions concerning the projects you work on? Do you feel the difference regarding this subject on your current position compared to the position in your home country?  
No. My manager is not consulting enough; her whole team is like that. I absolutely feel the difference compared to my former position. My former manager was really consulting. He was extremely team oriented.
12. What would you say regarding the attitude towards time of your colleagues to yours? Are they usually on time?  
French are night mare when it comes to time. They are notoriously 15 minutes late. For the meetings you always have keep in mind that they will arrive at least 15 minutes later. Dutch are punctual.
13. What would you say concerning their regards on male vs. female roles in business communications?  
Neutral. Females are accepted in higher positions in France and Netherlands. I think that in US even more.

C) Questions regarding the cross – cultural management in Rexam

14. If you are/were working in a foreign country have you received any particular training on cross- cultural management before moving to that position? Please comment.  
No.
15. Are you aware of any existing protocols, modes or trainings within the company related to the cultural differences?  
I don't think so. Maybe only the language courses.
16. According to you do the cultural differences within the company require a greater effort during the daily business interactions?  
Yes, absolutely. Dealing with Americans is completely different than dealing with French or Chinese. Americans are very direct, very straight to the point, while Chinese are extremely indirect. You have to change your attitudes when dealing with each culture. You have to put yourself in their state of mind and think how they would act in certain situation and what do they expect. You have to adjust.
17. Have you ever studied the culture of the foreign country where you are/were working? Why (for business purposes, personal culture, everyday life, etc.)?  
No. I learn about French culture in every day life. I didn't study it particularly or from some book.
18. Would you say that your colleagues/managers/subordinates take/took into consideration that you are/were coming from a different culture?  
No. It was not really relevant.

#### D) Communication management questions

19. Which methods of communication (face-to-face communication, e-mails, videoconferencing, etc.) are the most commonly used between you and your colleagues of same or from a different culture? Which method do you find the most effective?  
Face-to-face, e-mails, phone and videoconferencing. I think that most of the time face-to-face communication is the most effective. The use of e-mails is very effective with Americans, Chinese and Dutch because they respond quickly. With French it is better to use face-to-face communication.
20. Have you ever found anything surprising (for example: length, topic, content) in an e-mail, a phone conversation or a videoconference with a colleague from a different culture?  
Yes. French are more explanatory, their emails are long. We write short and clear emails by bullets. Americans and Chinese are like us. Chinese are very straightforward but you never know what they truly think.
21. Is the nonverbal communication important to you? Have you ever found anything different or confusing in the nonverbal communication with a colleague from a different culture?  
Very important. Not really.

22. When having communication problems is it usually with your manager, subordinate or colleague?  
More with my colleagues. My manager is not communicating enough.
23. How often do you have conflicts with your co-workers?  
Daily. We have major conflicts about once a month.
24. What are the most common reasons for conflicts? Would you say that the cultural differences are one of them?  
People don't respect the deadlines. They don't do what was expected. Cultural differences are definitely one of the reasons for misunderstandings and therefore conflicts.
25. Which language(s) do you use at work? Would you say that some of the misunderstandings are due to the use of a foreign language?  
English. Not really because all the people I'm dealing with are good in English.
26. How successful are the business meetings? Do you sense any difference between the business meetings with the colleagues from your cultural background and the international business meetings regarding the successfulness, length, atmosphere, and understanding?  
Not extremely successful. There is too many meetings, no clear objective, the meetings are very long. In Netherlands the meetings are short, straight to the point, we don't go into details. It is more management of exception rather than task management.
27. What do you think about the information sharing between you and your managers/colleagues? Have you found anything surprising about it when communicating with managers/colleagues/subordinates from another culture?  
They share information when decisions have been made. With Americans and Chinese you agree on A, they do B.

### **INTERVIEW 3**

#### **A) Information about yourself for statistical purposes.**

1. What is your nationality? Double nationality Venezuelan, Italian
2. What was your citizenship at birth (if different)? Peruvian
3. Are you a male or a female? Female.
4. What is your current working position? Sales Assistant Export zone

#### **B) Questions regarding the cultural differences and their influence on business interactions.**

5. Is your current working position in your home country? If no, how long have you been working in your current country? If yes, have you ever worked outside your home country? Please comment specifically on your international working experiences.

I started working in France 7 years ago. I started in a company called CEBAL as a French- Italian translator and after six months they offered me a post as a sales assistant. In 2005 I started working in Rexam.

6. Did you experience anything surprising or odd during these experiences which you attribute to the differences between the cultures?

Yes, especially when I first started working in France. Venezuelan culture is completely different. In Venezuela when someone new comes to a company colleagues invite them for lunch everyday, ask them questions about themselves, explain them everything they know about the company and the work. Venezuelans really try hard to welcome a new colleague, while here in France they barely notice you and it is the new person who has to make first steps. Furthermore, in France no one explains you clearly your rights and obligations at work, sometimes you get the impressions that people hide things from each other. Many things you learn by coincidence through conversations with your colleagues. Beginning working in France was really difficult. It took me time to adapt.

7. Please think of an ideal job, disregarding your present job. In choosing an ideal job, what would be the most important to you?

Harmony, good atmosphere, good communication, no conflicts, equality, motivation, interesting work.

8. From which countries different than yours do the colleagues you interact with come from?

Ukraine, Italy, France, Germany. My clients come from: Spain, Middle East, Africa, Portugal and India.

9. What would you say about the task vs. relationship orientation of the people you work with compared to yourself? Do you think that these differences are culture specific?

If I compare to myself I would say that French are more task oriented, Eastern Europeans even more than French, while Spanish are relationship oriented.

10. What do you think about the organisational structure of the company (is it too centralised/ too structured)?

There is too much changes. Not stable. Volatile. It could be better.

11. Do you feel that you are being consulted enough by your managers when it comes to taking decisions concerning the projects you work on? Do you feel the difference regarding this subject on your current position compared to the position in your home country?

Yes, he consults us a lot but not on every subject. There is a difference compared to Venezuela. In Venezuela my manager was more sincere and direct. Here in France I am a bit careful, I do not trust that much.

12. What would you say regarding the attitude towards time of your colleagues to yours? Are they usually on time?

French are much more on time than Venezuelans but I have the impression that here people do less than in Venezuela. People take their time here to have coffee or lunch or sometimes they just waste time and postpone the today's work on tomorrow. In the

beginning I was surprised that people at work take half an hour break to have coffee. After I got used to it and now I do it sometimes.

13. What would you say concerning their regards on male vs. female roles in business communications?

France is maybe still a bit masculine society although Venezuela is even more. Middle East is completely masculine. With them I communicate only by emails because they would not like talking to a woman on the phone.

#### C) Questions regarding the cross – cultural management in Rexam

14. If you are/were working in a foreign country have you received any particular training on cross- cultural management before moving to that position? Please comment.

No.

15. Are you aware of any existing protocols, modes or trainings within the company related to the cultural differences?

I do not know.

16. According to you do the cultural differences within the company require a greater effort during the daily business interactions?

Yes, especially in the beginning.

17. Have you ever studied the culture of the foreign country where you are/were working? Why (for business purposes, personal culture, everyday life, etc.)?

Yes. For my personal culture.

18. Would you say that your colleagues/managers/subordinates take/took into consideration that you are/were coming from a different culture?

Yes, some of them. They tried to explain me more about the products, the procedures, my rights.

#### D) Communication management questions

19. Which methods of communication (verbal, e-mails, videoconferencing, etc.) are the most commonly used between you and your colleagues of same or from a different culture? Which method do you find the most effective?

Email, phone, face-to-face. With Spain and Italy I mostly use the phone because you have to use the phone with them if you want a fast response. When you send them emails, sometimes it takes them ages to answer. Apart from that, they like to talk on the phone and a friendly relationship is extremely important to them. You can not call a Spanish guy and get straight to the point. First you have to ask those couple of questions, which have nothing to do with work. Anyways, this suits me because I am relationship oriented as well and we share the same culture. With French people I use emails and phone but we do not talk about other things than work much. I think that phone is the most effective when you need an immediate answer.

20. Have you ever find anything surprising (for example: length, topic, content) in an e-mail, a phone conversation or a videoconference with a colleague from a different culture?  
Not really. I adapt myself. When writing to Middle East I make it very formal and respectful. With Spanish is very relaxed and informal, and with Italians it's a bit more formal than Spanish.
21. Is the nonverbal communication important to you? Have you ever found anything different or confusing in the nonverbal communication with a colleague from a different culture?  
Yes. I use non verbal communication a lot. I am very expressive, my eyes, my face. I make a lot of gestures with my hands, I hug people. Once I was told at work that it is not good to show emotions and to be so expressive that others can see right away what am I thinking about. In Venezuela we shake hands with someone only the first time we meet the person, after that we only say hi or kiss. Here people shake hands each time they meet each other. I did not know that in the beginning so it happened to me that someone offered me a hand and I did not understand why they are doing this.
22. When having communication problems is it usually with your manager, subordinate or colleague?  
In the beginning I had some small conflicts with my manager and after sometimes with my colleagues.
23. How often do you have conflicts with your co-workers of same or from a different culture?  
Rarely. I do not like conflicts.
24. What are the most common reasons for conflicts? Would you say that the cultural differences are one of them?  
Yes. Often it is because French take too much time to get things done.
25. Which language(s) do you use at work? Would you say that some of the misunderstandings are due to the use of a foreign language?  
Spanish, Italian, French, English. Definitely. Many times my colleagues misunderstood my emails in French because I misused the language.
26. How successful are the business meetings? Do you sense any difference between the business meetings with the colleagues from your cultural background and the international business meetings regarding the successfulness, length, atmosphere, and understanding?  
Not successful but it is my fault. I talk little because it is not my language, neither my culture or maybe rather because I do not like to be in the centre of attention. Otherwise meetings here are similar to those in Venezuela but in Venezuela communication is more clear and direct. Here meetings are too long sometimes.
27. What do you think about the information sharing between you and your managers/colleagues? Have you found anything surprising about it when communicating with managers/colleagues/subordinates from another culture?

I think information regarding our work and customer files is shared well. I see no difference regarding this question compared to my country. But when it comes to other information French do not share much. You have to dig for information.

#### **INTERVIEW 4**

A) Information about yourself for statistical purposes.

1. What is your nationality? Chinese
2. What was your citizenship at birth (if different)? Chinese
3. Are you a male or a female? Female
4. What is your current working position? Marketing & Communication Coordinator

B) Questions regarding the cultural differences and their influence on business interactions.

5. Is your current working position in your home country? If no, how long have you been working in your current country? If yes, have you ever worked outside your home country? Please comment specifically on your international working experiences.

No. I have been working in France for three years now. I studied French and International Business in China for four years. After I arrived to France to complete a three year master programme during which I studied one year in US.

Before coming to Rexam I worked for two years in a Japanese company. Japanese are very hierarchical, there was very little information sharing. Usually the direction takes a decision which is passed to operational levels. In France is not like that, everyone says what they think. In Asia people never contradict their boss. There is more respect for the boss and the hierarchy.

6. Did you experience anything surprising or odd during these experiences which you attribute to the differences between the cultures?

What shocks me is French criticism and complaining. French always criticise, they always express their opinion and say what they think is good and what is bad. In China this is not the case. We always listen carefully till the end when one is speaking. We never interrupt the speaker and if we want to make some comments, we never make them in front of everyone. We wait for the right moment to talk to the person in private if we want to give them our opinion about something.

7. Please think of an ideal job, disregarding your present job. In choosing an ideal job, what would be the most important to you?

Recognition from others and from myself and doing what I like, stable job, security of employment.

8. From which countries different than yours do the colleagues you interact with come from?

US, Asia, Brazil, Europe.



9. What would you say about the task vs. relationship orientation of the people you work with compared to yourself?

I would say that I am more task-oriented. French are more relationship oriented, while Americans are very task oriented. For Brazilians I am not sure, maybe more task as well.

10. What do you think about the organisational structure of the company (is it too centralised/ too structured)?

It is very complicated. It is a matrix organisational structure. It is structured by Business Units and by different functions and then there is for example Personal Care Unit Director on one side and a Marketing Director, Financial Director, etc. on the other side. It is hard to reach quick decisions with this type of organisation. Although I do not know how could we make it differently because we are a big international group.

11. Do you feel that you are being consulted enough by your managers when it comes to taking decisions concerning the projects you work on? Do you feel the difference regarding this subject on your current position compared to the position in your home country?

I think that my manager consults me enough. I have never worked in my home country.

12. What would you say regarding the attitude towards time of your colleagues to yours? Are they usually on time?

French are always late. What shocks me in France is that they don't meet deadlines and it's considered normal. They always have plenty of reasons for not meeting the deadline and here it is justified. In Asia once the objective is fixed, you are obliged to respect the deadlines. No one cares about your reasons for not meeting the deadline, this is unacceptable.

13. What would you say concerning their regards on male vs. female roles in business communications?

I think in France it's equal. Asia is more masculine, US more feminine. But between the three of them I think that Asia is the most masculine.

### C) Questions regarding the cross – cultural management in Rexam

14. If you are/were working in a foreign country have you received any particular training on cross- cultural management before moving to that position? Please comment.

No.

15. Are you aware of any existing protocols, modes or trainings within the company related to the cultural differences?

I'm not aware of any such training. I only know that there are language courses.

16. According to you do the cultural differences within the company require a greater effort during the daily business interactions?

Yes, a lot because we don't understand each other if we don't really explain well what we mean and even in that case there is communication and understanding problems.

17. Have you ever studied the culture of the foreign country where you are/were working?

Why (for business purposes, personal culture, everyday life, etc.)?

First I studied language and history with it. When you study a language you need to study history and cultural background with it because language is only a tool and there is always a cultural background behind it.

18. Would you say that your colleagues/managers/subordinates take/took into consideration that you are/were coming from a different culture?

Yes. Although they think that because I speak very well French I'm more close to French than to Chinese mentality which is not the case.

#### D) Communication management questions

19. Which methods of communication (verbal, e-mails, videoconferencing, etc.) are the most commonly used between you and your colleagues of same or from a different culture? Which method do you find the most effective?

Email, face-to-face, phone sometimes. It depends on the region. For example, I can not communicate with Chinese or American face-to-face. I think that e-mails are very effective with the countries I communicate with.

20. Have you ever find anything surprising (for example: length, topic, content) in an e-mail, a phone conversation or a videoconference with a colleague from a different culture?

Not really.

21. Is the nonverbal communication important to you? Have you ever found anything different or confusing in the nonverbal communication with a colleague from a different culture?

Very important. Yes because neither French nor English is my mother tongue. Sometimes I misinterpret things.

22. When having communication problems is it usually with your manager, subordinate or colleague?

Mostly with my colleagues.

23. How often do you have conflicts with your co-workers?

We have very few conflicts. Maybe once a month.

24. What are the most common reasons for conflicts? Would you say that the cultural differences are one of them?

Different interpretations of a same problem, different points of view on the same problem. I would say that cultural differences are a major reason for this because different cultures don't think the same way and they see same things differently.

25. Which language(s) do you use at work? Would you say that some of the misunderstandings are due to the use of a foreign language?

French and English. 70% of misunderstandings are due to the language because the way I say something can be misinterpreted sometimes.

26. How successful are the business meetings? Do you sense any difference between the business meetings with the colleagues from your cultural background and the international business meetings regarding the successfulness, length, atmosphere, and understanding?

With my manager the meetings are very successful. We make a meeting when we need to discuss something and solve some problem and finally we fulfil our objective.

The regularly sales meetings are too numerous and too lengthy. People talk at the same time; they say their opinions and remarks. I am not sure these meetings are very fruitful.

27. What do you think about the information sharing between you and your managers/ colleagues? Have you found anything surprising about it when communicating with managers/ colleagues/ subordinates from another culture?

Some of them share the information but not everyone. What I find very different when communicating with French is that they are very direct comparing to Asians. French never hesitate to make remarks and say what they think about someone's work for example. For Asians this is shocking because criticism in Asia is taken personally. For example if you criticise French person they will come up with arguments against your critic, while Chinese will say nothing but they will take what you say in a bad way. In Asia you have to be very careful when saying something because it is always taken personally.