

A Comparison of Taiwan and Malaysia in Negotiation Styles

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ABSTRACT

In Asia market, Taiwan is the sixth largest trade partner of Malaysia. In these years, the industries of Taiwan and Malaysia are reforming to become service industry oriented. While much of the trade (and therefore negotiation) between Taiwan and Malaysia is associated with manufacturing, the last 10 years have seen a boom in consulting and tourism services between partners in these two countries. The globalize market products and services cannot be improved upon unless the cultural domain of the business people is better understood. This study uses the dual concern model presented by Blake and Mouton (1985) to explore what drives negotiation strategy selection in this two cultures. The result of statistical analysis demonstrate that differences exist between Taiwanese and Malaysia subjects in terms of their preference for three out of the five negotiation strategies that the author identified.

Keywords: Conflict Management, Negotiation, Malaysia, Taiwan, Dual Concern Model

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, the Asian Pacific region has become the largest regional economic organization in the world: the ASEAN Free Trade Area, or AFTA, comprises Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar. Among these, the economic development of Malaysia has been the most outstanding (Table 1: Indicators of Competitiveness: Overall Performance), and Taiwan is the sixth largest trade partner of Malaysia (Statistics Bureau of Malaysia, 2004). Notably, the GDP of Taiwan's service industry was more than 70% in 2010 (Chang, 2010), and the GDP of Malaysia service industry was nearly 60% in 2010 (Malaysian Representative Office of Taiwan in Economical Section, 2010). Since ancient times, Malaysia has been influenced by the Chinese and Indian cultures on top of the Islamic culture, resulting in Malaysia's cultural diversity (China Steel, 1991). Therefore, the objective of this study was to use the "Dual-concern Model" to determine the international negotiations resulting from cross-cultural influences, to provide businesses in Taiwan and Malaysia with references for business negotiations, and to help them achieve win-win situations by better understanding themselves and each other and thereby avoiding unnecessary conflicts.

Table 1: The World Competitiveness Scoreboard

Year/Rank	Taiwan	Mainland China	Japan	South Korea	Hong Kong	Indonesia	Singapore	Philippine	Malaysia	Thailand	India
2008	13	17	22	31	3	51	2	40	19	27	29
2009	23	20	17	27	2	42	3	43	18	26	30

Source: IMD, World Competitiveness Year Book 2009

CULTURAL DIMENSION

As for the research on differences among various cultures, the national culture dimension presented by Hofstede (1980) is the most recognized; the details of the theory are given below (see Table 2):

1. Power distance: This indicates the acceptance of unequal power distribution in an organization within a society. According to Hofstede's study, the degree of power distance in Malaysia is higher than in Taiwan.

2. **Uncertainty Avoidance:** It is the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain or unknown situations. According to Hofstede's study, the degree of uncertainty avoidance in Malaysia is lower than that in Taiwan, indicating that Taiwanese believe that they need a stable job.
3. **Individualism/Collectivism:** The self-consciousness represented by individualism is strong, which is a relatively loose social structure; while in a society of high collectivism, the member is a part of the closely connected group since birth, implying a tightly organized social structure. According to Hofstede's study, the degree of individualism in Malaysia is higher than in Taiwan.
4. **Masculinity/Femininity:** Achievement and independence are particularly emphasized by masculinity, signifying the importance of the pursuit of money as well as occupation orientation. According to Hofstede's study, the degree of masculinity in Taiwan is higher than in Malaysia. It showed that Taiwanese like to take risks, but are also relationship oriented.
5. **Long-Term Orientation/Short-Term Orientation:** People with long-term orientation regard time as a limited resource, and are often impatient about time. On the contrary, short-term oriented people consider time to be an unlimited and inexhaustible resource; such people manifest more patience (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). According to Hofstede's study, the score of long-term orientation in Taiwan is 87. Hofstede proposed that the Chinese are more long-term oriented than the Malays.

Table 2: National Cultures Dimensions

Country	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualism	Masculinity	Long-Term Orientation
Malaysia	104	26	50	36	
Taiwan	58	69	17	45	87

Source: Hofstede, Geert (2001), *Culture's Consequences, Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations* Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications.

Cross-Cultural Negotiation

In international business negotiations in the service industry, cultural differences often lead to misunderstandings among negotiators. Therefore, Ghauri (1983) proposed the socio-psychological model of negotiation that involves five elements: "objectives," "communication and behaviors," "results," "tradition and culture," and the "negotiation setting." Of these, the objectives of negotiation, communication and behaviors, and the results of negotiation reflect the negotiation process and occur in sequence as different procedures. "Tradition and culture" and "the negotiation setting" have subjective and objective influences, respectively, on negotiators and negotiations (Chu, 2006).

Culture and Personality of the Malaysians

Malaysia is a multicultural and multiracial country, and has a population of about 24 million. There are three major ethnic groups: Malays (61.5%), Chinese (26.0%), and Indians (7.7%) (Malaysian Department of Statistics, 2000). Malaysia is also a multi-religious country. The Malaysian people (Malays) that dominate the politics are the majority. The state religion of Malaysia is Islam; thus Islamic laws are observed in the local diet.

The Malaysian culture has a strong community spirit and a sense of responsibility to help friends, relatives and neighbors (Lim, 1998). Malaysians are concerned about the effects of their actions on the feelings of others, and take great care not to upset others (Kennedy, 2002). Additionally, the Malaysians are more concerned with their behavior being judged and assessed by members in their circle or network (Abdullah and Lim, 2001). In workplaces, Malaysian managers, especially Muslims, are more socio-centric than Taiwanese managers because of their strong preference for affiliation needs, concerns with social issues and the dignity of men, as well as their hospitable culture (Ismail, 1988).

Dual Concern Model

The dual concern model is a conflict resolution theory developed by Blake & Mouton (1985). It is based on the managerial grid, and emphasizes two aspects of leadership: concern for successfully completing the task and concern for interpersonal relationships (or task orientation and employee orientation). The dual concern model matrix consists of

five leadership styles: laissez-faire management, the country club management style, the task management style, the team management style, and middle-of-road management (Blake & Mouton, 1985). In the conflict resolution project, two dimensions are identified: degree of concern for oneself (self interest), and degree of concern for the relations with others (interest of others), which roughly correlate to Hofstede's individualism and collectivism concepts. Blake & Mouton categorized conflict resolution strategies into five types: withdrawing, accommodating, collaborating, consulting, and competing.

1. Competition is assertive and uncooperative: An individual pursues his own concerns at the expense of others. The individual only focuses on his own interests, and does not care about others' expectation. This is a power-oriented mode in which one uses whatever power seems appropriate to gain one's own position: one's ability to argue, one's rank, or economic sanctions. Competing means standing up for one's rights, defending a position which one believes is correct, or simply trying to win.
2. Accommodation is unassertive and cooperative: It is the complete opposite of competing. When accommodating, the individual neglects his own concerns to satisfy the concerns of others; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person's order when one would prefer not to, or yielding to another's point of view.
3. Withdrawal is unassertive and uncooperative: The person neither pursues his own concerns nor those of the others; thus he does not deal with the conflict. He will feel comfortable only in a non-threatening situation. Withdrawing might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation. It signifies avoidance.
4. Collaboration is both assertive and cooperative: It is the complete opposite of avoiding. Collaborating involves an attempt to work with others to find some solution that fully satisfies their concerns. It means digging into an issue to pinpoint the underlying needs and wants of the two parties. Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights or trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem. They both hope to reach a mutual understanding.
5. Consultation focuses on low assertive confidence and high cooperation: The target of consultation is yielding. Styles of negotiation involving third parties in this study are called an indirect style of negotiation (Dos Santos, 1995). Indirect styles of negotiation such as consultation and third party advocacy will be considered in this study because collectivist cultures have a high level of concern for the group's needs and are closely attached to their in-groups (Trubisky et al., 1991). Therefore, consulting with others and inviting third parties to intervene in their conflict settlements is usual.

In this study, consultation is defined as the process of searching for advice, suggestions or solutions from others (impartial or partial, resolution-oriented or relationship-oriented, formal or informal). It does not imply the presence of the third party at the conflict discussion. The presence of an invited third party to help one defend his or her point of view at the negotiation table is defined in this study as third-party advocacy (Dos Santos, 1995). This framework has been used extensively in the past, particularly to evaluate cross cultural negotiation styles (Chang et al, 2010). We intend to use this framework to show differences between the two cultures examined in this study.

RESEARCH METHOD

To explore the international negotiations in the service industry between Taiwan and Malaysia, this study employs Blake & Mouton's (1985) conflicted management model and dual concern model as a foundation, as well as the concept of negotiation type presented by Glaser and Glaser (1991), and Dos Santos's (1995) negotiation style profile revised edition. The author divides negotiation strategies into 5 categories: accommodation, collaboration, withdrawal, competition, and consultation. Hofstede's (1980) culture index scores are used to develop the hypotheses.

Research Hypothesis

According to Hofstede (1980), individuals from long term orientation countries are more comfortable abdicating short term benefits for potential long term benefits. It stands to reason that when such people are faced with a

negotiation conflict, they will be more comfortable abdicating certain terms with the hope that doing so will allow them to establish a relationship from which they can profit in the future. As such, individuals from long term orientation countries will tend to use the accommodation strategy when faced with negotiation conflict to avoid burning their bridges. While both Malaysia and Taiwan are long term orientation countries, Malaysia's long term orientation is far stronger (Hofstede, 1980).

In addition, individuals from high uncertainty avoidance cultures are not comfortable making decisions in the absence of complete information. They also tend to plan more, and when they organize into groups, expectations of individuals are enforced by group structures, because failures by individuals to meet their objectives can lead to a broken plan, which creates a substantial amount of uncertainty. In a negotiation situation, the high uncertainty avoidance negotiator will typically walk to the table with range of acceptable conditions. If s/he is not able to stay in that range, it could create uncertainty costs throughout the organization, so the high uncertainty avoidance negotiator is less likely to give into the demands of the other party. That is, s/he is less likely to engage in the accommodation strategy. Taiwanese tend to be much higher in terms of uncertainty avoidance than are Malaysians. Since Malaysians have longer term orientation and are more comfortable with uncertainty, we predict that:

H1: Subjects from Malaysia are more likely to select the accommodation strategy than would subjects from Taiwan for service industry negotiations.

According to Dos Santos (1995), when an individual is concerned about the interests of both him/herself and others, the collaboration strategy is more likely to be applied for resolving problems of conflict. Triandis (1995) argued that individuals from individualistic societies are more likely to put their own interests ahead of the interests of others. Since individualists tend to have weaker concerns about the interests of others, it stands to reason that they are less likely to choose the collaboration strategy. According to Triandis (1995), individuals from individualistic societies are more likely to put their own interests ahead of the interests of others.

Both Malaysians and Taiwanese are low in terms of individualism, indicating that both are concerned about the interests of others; however Malaysians tend to be stronger in terms of individualism, indicating that Malaysians are concerned both about the interests of others and their individual interests. As noted above, Dos Santos (1995) indicated that such people are more likely to choose a collaboration strategy. Since Malaysians tend to be more individualistic than Taiwanese, we predict that:

H2: Subjects from Taiwan are more likely to select the collaboration strategy than would subjects from Malaysia for service industry negotiations.

Individuals from cultures that are lower in terms of uncertainty avoidance are more comfortable with risk. When a negotiator is faced with a conflict, he/she has the option of walking away from the negotiation table and going back to the market to find another business partner. Doing so represents a substantial risk, and for those who are uncomfortable with risk, walking away is unlikely to be the option chosen. Malaysians are much more comfortable with risk than are Taiwanese, and are thus more likely to walk away from the table and go back to the market for a new partner.

In addition, individuals from long term orientation cultures faced with the decision to walk away from the negotiation table and go to the market to find a new partner are more likely to be thinking about the long term health of the company rather than the immediate benefits from the current deal. So, these people will be more comfortable walking away from the table and seeking a new partner, because doing so could lead to better deals in the future. Both Malaysia and Taiwan are long term orientation countries; however Malaysia is much more so. Since Malaysians are more comfortable with risk, and have a stronger long term orientation, we predict that:

H3: Subjects from Malaysia are more likely to select the withdrawal strategy than would subjects from Taiwan for service industry negotiations.

Negotiation conflicts tend to be rife with uncertainty. The competition strategy magnifies that uncertainty, which is likely to make negotiators from high uncertainty avoidance countries uncomfortable. These negotiators are more likely to select a less uncertain strategy, such as collaboration or consultation in order to avoid competition. Since Malaysians are much more tolerant of uncertainty, they are more likely to select the competition strategy.

In addition, individuals from masculine cultures tend to seek opportunities to showcase their accomplishments; they enjoy competition, and seek to maximize their performance. When faced with a negotiation conflict, we predict

that masculine individuals are very likely to employ the competition strategy. While both Malaysians and Taiwanese tend to be moderate in terms of Masculinity, Malaysians tend to score higher in terms of masculinity, and thus are likely to use the competition strategy more often than Taiwanese.

Finally, Dos Santos (1995) pointed out that individuals who are more concerned with their own interests than the interests of others are more likely to engage in the competition strategy. Individualists are more concerned with their own interests, and Malaysians tend to be higher in terms of individualism, and thus are more likely to choose the competition strategy. Since Malaysians tend to be more tolerant of uncertainty, more masculine and more individualistic, we predict that:

H4: Subjects from Malaysia are more likely to select the competition strategy than would subjects from Taiwan for service industry negotiations.

When two parties are involved in negotiations, each party is responsible for looking out for its own interests. Since neither party has access to perfect information, information asymmetry can lead to substantial risk for either party. While a facilitator represents a third party that opens up two more communication channels, they actually serve to mitigate any information asymmetries, and in a way look out for the interests of both parties. For the risk adverse negotiator, a facilitator reduces uncertainty. Since Taiwanese are more risk adverse than Malaysians, we predict that:

H5: Subjects from Taiwan are more likely to select the consultation strategy than would subjects from Malaysia for service industry negotiations.

METHODOLOGY

This research sample consisted of 275 business people who work in the service industry in Taiwan and Malaysia. Four hundred questionnaires were distributed, 338 of them returned, for a response rate of 84.5%. Effective questionnaires amounted to 275 with an effective response rate of 81.4% among which Taiwan business people amounted to 145 and Malaysian business people amounted of 130.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

Analysis of Samples

Of the respondents, 128 were female (46.5%) and 147 were male (53.5%). In terms of marital status, the samples were mostly single (174 singles, taking up 63.2%), 86 samples (31.3%) were married, and 15 samples (5.5%) were divorced, widowed or separated. In terms of age, most of them were in the group of 31 ~ 40 (141; 51.3%), followed by under 30 and 41 ~ 45 (total 73; 26.5%), 46 ~ 55 (43; 15.6%), and over 56 (18; 6.5%).

As for types of service industry, 110 (40%) worked for insurance companies, 60 (21.8%) worked in restaurants, 40 (14.5%) were real estate brokers, 25 (9.1%) worked in manufacturing service industry, 20 (7.3%) worked in the travel industry, 15 (5.5%) samples were in banking, and 5 (1.8%) worked in the beauty industry.

Analysis of Validity

Cronbach's α represents the level of validity, (see Table 3) and a value of 0.7 or better is required in most social science studies. Thus the same level was adopted in this study. Cronbach's α of all aspects of the finalized questionnaire was 0.7 or better, indicating a high level of validity. Although the value of "negotiation withdrawal" was between 0.6 and 0.7, it was still deemed by scholars as an acceptable value.

Table 3: Cronbach's α Value of Each Negotiation Type

Negotiation type	Cronbach's α
Accommodation negotiation	0.770
Collaboration negotiation	0.845
Withdrawal negotiation	0.600
Competition negotiation	0.787
Consultation	0.897

Hypothesis Testing

In order to understand whether there are significant differences between Taiwanese and Malaysian business people in terms of negotiation types, a t-test was conducted using cross-culture as the independent variable. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Analysis of Cross-cultural Difference in terms of Negotiation Types

	Taiwanese (n=145)		Malaysian (n=130)		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Accommodation	4.978	.952	5.843	.625	-8.798**
Collaboration	6.392	1.125	6.570	1.213	-1.262
Withdrawal	5.282	1.498	6.193	.829	-6.141**
Competition	5.827	.846	5.032	1.030	7.021**
Consultation	5.015	1.356	4.890	1.127	0.826

* p<0.05, **p<0.01

RESULTS

In H1, this research predicted that Malaysian business people would be more likely than Taiwanese business people to employ an accommodation strategy. Looking at the model with accommodation as the dependant variable, nationality was significant ($T=-8.798$, $P<0.01$), indicating that Malaysian business people were more likely to employ an accommodation strategy than Taiwanese business people; that is, Malaysian business people were more likely to comply with their opponents' demands in service industry negotiations.

In H2, this study predicted that Taiwanese business people would be more likely to employ a collaboration strategy. This hypothesis was not supported ($T=-1.262$, $P>0.05$). The result was unable to detect a significant difference between the countries in terms of preference for the collaboration strategy.

In H3, this study predicted that Malaysian business people would be more likely to select the withdraw strategy than would Taiwanese business people. This hypothesis was supported ($T=-6.141$, $P<0.01$).

In H4, this research predicted that Malaysian business people would be more likely to select the competition strategy than would Taiwanese business people. This hypothesis was not supported. While the nationality of the subject did have a significant influence on the selection of the competition strategy ($T=7.021$, $P<0.01$), the Taiwanese business people were more likely to select competition.

In H5, this study predicted that Malaysian business people would be more likely to select the consultation strategy than would Taiwanese business people. This hypothesis was not supported ($T=0.826$, $P>0.05$). The result was unable to detect significant differences between the two countries in terms of preference for the consultation strategy.

In H1, this research predicted that Malaysian business people would be more likely than those from Taiwan to employ an accommodation strategy. This hypothesis was supported. In addition to the influence of long term orientation and uncertainty avoidance, the fact that Malaysia was ruled by the British probably reduced the Malaysia people's perceived power in leading negotiations with the dominant British. This may have formed a tendency towards accommodation which remains unchanged.

DISCUSSION

In H2, this study predicted that Taiwanese business people would be more likely to select the collaboration strategy than would Malaysian business people; however the result was unable to detect a significant difference between the two countries. This research argued that since Malaysian business people tend to be more collectivist, they are more likely to prefer to work with their counterparts to arrive at a mutually beneficial solution. However, it is possible that Taiwanese business people's collectivism causes them to favor collaboration with members of their in-group, and they may perceive their Malaysia business counterparts as part of a competing group, with which they may prefer not to collaborate. It is also possible that Taiwanese business people do not want to give up too much ground

during negotiations, because they are high in uncertainty avoidance and value outcomes that are known; they are thus less likely to diverge from their plans (that is, because they do not want to diverge from their plans, they will not be as willing to reach a compromise). Finally, Wang (1998) points out that Malaysian business people tend to be very terse and to the point. Perhaps they are uncomfortable spending too much time to negotiate and come to a compromise.

In H3, this study predicted that Malaysian business people would be more likely to select the withdrawal strategy than would Taiwanese business people. Apparently, since Malaysian business people tend to be more accepting of risk, they are not afraid to go back to the market to find new business partners, and because they had stronger long term orientation, they saw more value in giving up on a current deal and finding a new partner with whom they could work in the future. Also, since Malaysian business people tend to be higher in terms of masculinity, it is possible that they perceive negotiation deadlock as a failure which they want to quickly remedy by moving on to the next partner, and hopefully getting a successful deal accomplished.

In H4, this research predicted that Malaysian business people would be more likely to select the competition strategy than would Taiwanese business people; however it was the Taiwanese business people who were more likely to select a competition strategy. This finding is truly surprising. This study argued that Malaysian business people were more comfortable with risk and thus more comfortable with competition, more masculine and thus sought out competition, and more individualistic and focused on their own self interests. The differences between Malaysian business people and Taiwanese business people in terms of individualism and masculinity are fairly small, but the difference in terms of uncertainty avoidance is large. Perhaps we erred in our prediction that risk seekers would seek competition; perhaps it is the risk adverse (the Taiwanese) who desire arriving at their anticipated outcome enough that they will engage in competition to do so, because not arriving at their desired outcome might lead to unacceptable consequences for their organization, which would create even more uncertainty. Furthermore, Taiwanese business people have a shorter term orientation than do Malaysian business people, indicating that perhaps Taiwan business people are so focused on the immediate results of the current deal, that they are motivated to engage in competition in order to achieve those immediate results. It is possible that long term orientation impacts the strategy choice more than does uncertainty avoidance.

In H5, this study predicted that Taiwanese business people would be more likely to select the consultation strategy than would Malaysian business people; however this research was unable to detect a significant difference between the two countries. In fact, individuals from both countries preferred this strategy. This study argued that Taiwanese business people would select this strategy more often because they tend to be high in uncertainty avoidance, and believe that a third party will protect their interests. It is possible that Malaysia business people also selected this strategy because they tend to be higher in terms of power distance, so they are more likely to prefer the structure provided by a neutral authority rather than a competing peer.

CONCLUSION

The issue of international services marketing and trade in services covers a broad range of issues. To summarize, cross-cultural negotiation literature has largely focused on the US and Japan, comparing western negotiation strategies to eastern strategies. Very little research has examined cross national negotiation between two eastern countries where cultural differences are more subtle yet still very important, and specifically in the context of the service industry. This is surprising, considering the substantial volume of international trade between eastern countries. This research demonstrated that differences exist between Taiwanese and Malaysia subjects in terms of their preferences for three out of the five negotiation strategies that we identified (accommodation, withdrawal and competition). The findings from the exploratory studies provide evidence of international negotiation styles in business services, as it seems to help explain how cultural differences relate to negotiation styles of business services.

Research Limitations

This research has the following limitations. The author used Hofstede's (1980) culture scores to argue the research hypotheses, thus, it might have garnered a better understanding of the role of culture on negotiation strategy

selection if it had collected individual national cultural scores from the research subjects. Since the current study represents a preliminary exploration of the influence of culture on international negotiation, there is room for further research in this area.

Suggestion for Future Research

Future studies can collect individual scores on each cultural dimension, in order to better assess the specific effects of each cultural dimension on the choice of negotiation strategy.

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