

Impact of the dimensions of national culture on the relational integration of Supply Chains: an exploratory study on the specificities of Moroccan culture

Mr. Mohammed Hicham HAMRI¹, Mrs. Ouafae ZEROUALI OUARITI², Miss. Hafsa LECHHEB³

¹Professor Researcher / h.m.hamri@gmail.com

National School of Commerce and Management of Agadir, University IbnZohr, MOROCCO

²Professor Researcher / zerouali.ouafae@gmail.com

National School of Commerce and Management of Agadir, University IbnZohr, MOROCCO

³Student in the Doctoral Cycle / lechheb.hafsa@gmail.com

National School of Commerce and Management of Agadir, University IbnZohr, MOROCCO

Abstract: *The adoption of the concept of Supply Chains integration constitutes a key success factor, for the companies which are in search for value and of perennity, in a market marked by a fierce competition, not only between companies, but between corporate networks, which means a competition between several styles of management, and various national cultures. The purpose of this paper is to explore the specificities of the Moroccan culture, through a qualitative study based on an abductive approach, in order to answer the following question: **Does the Moroccan culture present determinants favourable to the relational integration of Supply Chains?***

Key Words: Supply Chain Management, National Culture, Relational Integration, Moroccan Culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most remarkable trends on which companies should focus is globalization. In the past, most organizations were competing with other companies in their country of origin or their area. Today, companies enumerate multiple partners everywhere in the world, supply raw material, require services, develop alliances and distribute their products in all the continents.

From now on, companies are requested to build powerful relations with their partners based mainly on trust, and to integrate their Supply Chains in order to perfectly achieve the goals set.

The integration of Supply Chains represents a crucial point, which was the object of several rich debates (Power, 2005). When firms seek to build links with their partners, the internal processes are inter-connected, and extend on the borders of the companies (Power, 2005).

Consequently, the integration of Supply Chains thus remains a vital point, for firms which seek to reach a

competitive advantage and to gain market shares, in a world marked by a fierce competition.

In addition, the integration of Supply Chains offers a multiplicity of opportunities for organizations; however, these opportunities do not come without possible obstacles. Trust, in particular, represents a prerequisite to the success of the integration of Supply Chains, but trust and its relevance can change from a national culture to another.

In this paper, we will present our problems of research, will study the theoretical bases of national culture and the integration of Supply Chains, and will analyze the results of our exploratory qualitative study on the specificities of the Moroccan culture, by focusing more particularly on Geert Hofstede's founder model of the national culture.

2. PROBLEM OF RESEARCH

Morocco represents a country which has an enormous potential for the improvement of the competitiveness of its economy following the example of a considerable logistics optimizing and of ordering all flows of goods. In fact, Morocco implemented the National strategy for the Development of Logistic Competitiveness, which will register the Kingdom in the most powerful Supply Chains.

The registration of the Moroccan companies in Supply Chains requires a change in the tools and methods of management and of information sharing, which can be the object of several positive or negative feedbacks on behalf of the persons in charge and the employees. Acceptance or refusal is inherent in a certain number of parameters relating to the national culture. As explained by Philippe d'Iribarne, culture is a system of directions through which the individual perceives and interprets a situation or a concrete action, this system of directions is

shared with the other members of his community, which it constituted during his history,.

The act of taking into account the national culture in the relational integration of Supply Chains remains a central point to evoke during the adoption of this new way of managing, in order to guarantee its success to the maximum.

The purpose of this research paper is to explore the determinants of the Moroccan culture and to analyze their influence and their impact on the integration of Supply Chains, while answering the following question: Does the Moroccan culture present determinants favorable to the relational integration of Supply Chains?

3.CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE NATIONAL CULTURE AND RELATIONAL INTEGRATION OF SUPPLY CHAINS

In the present part we will present the theoretical bases of the national culture, while basing ourselves more particularly on Geert Hofstede's founder model of the national culture, as well as the theoretical bases of the integration of Supply Chains.

3.1 National Culture

We can define a country as a territory made up of individuals, with a political authority, established on a definite geographical space and incarnated by a sovereign authority¹. The idea of nation supposes a historical construction and thus a past. It is also expressed in the present, by the will clearly expressed by the citizens to continue their joint life, according to the rules dictated by the company (common language, religious practices, habits of the country...)².

The national culture then indicates the whole of the values and the distinctive features of a group of individuals belonging to the same country.

In order to treat the determinants of the national culture, we chose the model of Geert Hofstede, although various cultural models were proposed in the literature, and in spite of much criticisms (Mc Sweeny, 2002), the applicability of the model of Hofstede in the work registered in sciences of management, and its validity, compared to other cultural models, remain remarkable (Merrit, 2000, Magnusson et al., 2008). The model of Hofstede is also adopted in work which aims at the

comparison between the national cultures (Magnusson et al., 2008, Merrit, 2000). Finally the model of Hofstede represents the model founder of the national culture, and shows a certain facility of comprehension and a clear explanation of the determinants of the national culture.

The model of Geert Hofstede is composed of five principal determinants of the national culture:

- **Hierarchical distance:**

The hierarchical distance is defined by Hofstede (1980) as the perception of the degree of inequality of power between a subordinate and his superior. This dimension refers to the degree of inequality expected and accepted by individuals. In the companies at strong hierarchical distance, the power is centralized and the leadership is exerted in an autocratic and coercive way (Hofstede, 1983). Contrarily, in countries where the hierarchical distance is weak, the emphasis is placed on equality and co-operation.

- **Individualistic or Community orientation:**

According to Hofstede, the distinction between national cultures can also be done through the relations whom the individuals maintain with the other members of the community.

This dimension is due to the importance given by an individual to his own person or to her entourage (Hofstede, 1983.1991). In the companies marked by individualism, the individuals are worried more about their own interests and of their immediate environment (Hofstede, 1994), whereas in the countries with Community culture, the importance is given to the emotional ties and the trust linking the members of the community.

- **Relation with uncertainty and ambiguity:**

This third dimension returns to the degree of tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity. The level of control of uncertainty means the extent to which the individuals of a culture accept ambiguous, risky, unforeseeable, not-structured, even anarchistic situations and the manner with which these members react to this unpredictability (Hofstede, 1983.1991).

The control of uncertainty can be highlighted through forecast plans and tools of stability and order. The small degree of control of uncertainty results in taking risks, and the confrontation of ambiguous future events.

- **Male or female orientation of values:**

Male cultures attach great significance to the values of success and possession, whereas female cultures focus especially on the values of the mutual aid and empathy, and are preoccupied with social cohesion.

¹ Definition resulting from the Dictionary the Petit Robert, supplemented by the writings of E. Renan, Qu'est-ce qu' une nation? INALF, 1961.

² Oliver Meier, Intercultural Management, Strategy, Organization, Performance, Dunod, Paris, 2008, p.22.

- **Short-term orientation and long-term orientation:**

Cultures with short-term orientation are cultures which respect tradition, the execution of social obligations, and consider that serving others is an important goal. These cultures have as principal values of work freedom, respect of rights, success and personal blooming.

Cultures with long-term orientation encourage perseverance, precaution and savings. These cultures have as fundamental values of work training, honesty, responsibility and self-discipline.

Considering that we study the determinants of the Moroccan culture, and to respect and reflect to the maximum reality our context of research, we will add another determinant even if it does not appear in the model of Hofstede, that of **religiosity**.

Indeed, although religiosity does not appear among the determinants of the national culture suggested by Hofstede, we consolidate our choice by former work (Hofstede, 1991, Schwartz and Huismans, 1995, Saroglou et al., 2004, El Akremi, 2007, Balambo, 2013.2014), which integrated religiosity, in order to apprehend more some companies characterized by religion, which can play the part of an explanatory factor of the attitudes, behaviors and relations with others.

Religiosity can be defined as the level of participation, or fidelity to the convictions or the practices of a religion (Shaffer, 1996). Religiosity is seen as the whole of the attitudes and the practices to discover the direction, the goal or connection with things external and more powerful than oneself (Kieshing et al., 2008).

3.2 Integration of Supply Chains

The concept of integration of Supply Chains is a central element of Supply Chain Management (Baharanchi, 2009; Danes et al., 2013). Indeed, integration is frequently noted like a key characteristic of Supply Chain Management (Dag Naslund Hana Hulthen, 2012). Several definitions of Supply Chain Management refer to integration (Pagell, 2004; Stock and Boyer, 2009), in particular that of Cooper et al. (1997) who consider Supply Chain Management as a philosophy which tends towards an integrated management of all the flows of a distribution network, from the supplier to the end-user.

Mentzer et al. (2001) study how integration represents an essential component of the establishment of Supply Chain Management, while Lambert et al. (1998) affirm that the goal of integration is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of all the links of Supply Chain.

In addition, the integration of Supply Chains can be identified in six types, strategic integration, integration of the relations, internal integration, external integration,

the integration of information and the integration of measurements (Baofeng et al., 2005).

Strategic integration refers to the degree to which a company can structure goals and strategic objectives, as well as rewards, resource sharing and risk between the organizations, through a contractual consensus and agreements in order to reach competitiveness (Burgelman and Doz, 2001; Fuchs et al., 2000; Johnson, 1999).

The integration of relations is defined as the degree to which a company can structure the formation, the commitment, the maintenance and the relations between the organizations, through a contractual consensus and agreements in order to reach competitiveness (Bowersox et al., 1999; Stank et al., 2001).

Internal integration refers to the degree to which a company can structure its organisational practices, its procedures and its behaviors and collaborative processes, synchronized and manageable in order to fulfill the requirements of the customers (Cespedes, 1996; Chen and Paulraj, 2004; Kahn and Mentzer, 1996; Kingman-Brundage et al., 1995).

External integration is regarded as the degree which a company can join its principal members of Supply Chain, to structure their practices, procedures and inter-organizational behaviors of collaborative processes, synchronized and manageable in order to meet the requirements with the customers (Stank et al., 2001).

The integration of information indicates the degree to which a company can coordinate the activities of information sharing, by the means of common forms (Jhingran et al., 2002; Roth et al., 2002).

Finally, the integration of measurements is defined as the degree to which a company can structure the systems of measurement, and manage the activities of measurement with its principal members of Supply Chain, in order to concretize the strategy of integration of Supply Chains (Bowersox et al., 1999).

New (2004) affirms that the integration of Supply Chains can be understood in three ways, namely operational integration (coordination of the inventories, scheduling, transport, development of new products), functional integration (management of the various managerial functions such as the purchase and the inventory control), and relational integration (improvement of the relations with the partners).

3.3 Choice of The Relational Integration of Supply Chains

In this paper, we will tackle the relational aspect of the integration of Supply Chains, in other words the integration of the relations, or behavioral integration (Bowersox et al., 1996, 1999, 2000; Mentzer et al., 2001),

because the latter constitutes the cornerstone of Supply Chain Management (Mentzer et al., 2001).

We notice through our review of literature, that the majority of the research concentrates primarily on the operational and technological aspects, being used for the installation of an effective integration of the links of Supply Chain, hence the choice of our positioning on the relational side of the integration of Supply Chains.

Relational integration is regarded as the capacity of a company to be based on trust, commitment, maintenance of the relation, and even consensus in the event of rupture of a relation (Bowersox et al., 1999).

Relational integration is based on a partnership process (Cooper et al., 1997), which is based on new principles of interpretation of the inter-organisational relations, these relations require a real agreement, even a cultural congruence (Lassar and Zinn, 1995; Mentzer et al., 2001; Baratt, 2004; Adam-Ledunois and Renault, 2004).

4. PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE SPECIFICITIES OF THE MOROCCAN CULTURE:

We noted through our review of literature, in which there is little work treating the Moroccan context and its characteristics according to the model of Geert Hofstede. Consequently, in order to enrich and to more supplement the conclusions drawn from the review by previous work, we will have, in the present part, the results of our exploratory study based on an abductive approach, on the specificities of the Moroccan culture, after having specified the methodological elements used.

4.1 Methodological Elements Used

Our exploratory qualitative study was carried out through semi-directing individual talks, while being based on guides of maintenance. These talks proceeded with 10 professors in sociology and anthropology of various Moroccan universities, namely the University Mohamed V of Rabat, the University Ibn Tofail de Kenitra, and the University Ibn Zohr of Agadir.

With the aim of fixing the size of our sample, we based ourselves on the principle of saturation of information provided by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

In addition, we chose the method summary/synthesis, which is based on two complementary approaches in the analysis of the talks, which are the vertical approach and the horizontal approach.

4.2 Results of The Exploratory Study

In the present part we will have the results of our exploratory study on the determinants of the Moroccan culture, while basing ourselves on the model of Geert Hofstede.

The analysis of the results of our qualitative study was carried out through the confrontation of the conclusions of our guarantors, and the review of literature on the specificities of the Moroccan culture.

4.2.1 Moroccan Culture and Hierarchical Distance

Our review of the literature on the specificities of the Moroccan culture, revealed that the Moroccan culture is marked by the principle of marked hierarchy and the principle of authority (Bourqia, 2010).

In the same way, other studies showed the strong hierarchical degree existing in Morocco (Mezouar and Semeriva, 1998; Al Maache, 2002; Eddakir, 2003; Nouiga, 2003; House et al., 2004; Balambo, 2014).

The hierarchical distance and inequalities are expected and accepted by the Morroccans, and are generally translated by the concept of "arzaq" and "aqdar", as one of our guarantors affirmed that "generally inequalities are interpreted from a religious point of view by proposing the concept of "arzaq" or "aqdar". Inequalities are not due to policies or historical and ideological conditions, but to the "mektoub" which means that living conditions and the situation in which each human being lives are decided well before his birth".

Consequently, these conclusions coincide with the results of our exploratory study, which affirmed that the Moroccan culture presents a strong hierarchical degree.

4.2.2 Moroccan Culture and Individualistic or Community Orientation

Through our review of the literature on the specificities of the Moroccan culture, we noted that it is characterized by an elevated level of collectivism (Hofstede, 1980.2001; Mezouar and Semeriva, 1998; Al Maache, 2002; Eddakir, 2003; Nouiga, 2003; House et al., 2004; Matsumoto, 2006; Hmaida, 2010, Allali, 2010; Balambo, 2014). In the same way, these conclusions are in agreement with the results of our exploratory study.

One of our guarantors affirmed that "the Moroccan culture is a culture with a collectivist predominance, which attaches undeniable significance to social relations. Relations which are regarded as being a layer where any Morrocan draws its reference marks of sociability, identity and membership".

4.2.3 Moroccan Culture and Male or Female Orientation of The Values

Our review of the literature showed that the Moroccan culture tends to adopt a female orientation of values (Nouiga, 2003; Bourqia, 2010; Balambo, 2014). Indeed, our exploratory study generated results similar to the previous reports.

Geert Hofstede (2010) also announced that the companies marked by a female orientation of the values, are characterized by the humanization of work, contact and co-operation, mutual aid and collaboration within the framework of social relations.

Consequently, as one of our guarantors indicated that “as a culture marked by diversity and pluralism, the Moroccan culture is rich in “tender” values of solidarity, tolerance, unity, importance of social relations, co-operation and openness.

4.2.4 Moroccan Culture and The Relation With Uncertainty and Ambiguity

From our review of the literature, we discovered that several studies interested in the Moroccan context, showed that the Moroccan culture is characterized by a small degree of control of uncertainty (Nouiga, 2003; Eddakir, 2003; Balambo, 2014). This low level of control of uncertainty is rooted in our religion and of the notion of Maktoub (Al Maache, 2003).

Indeed, our exploratory study revealed that risk and uncertainty are interpreted by Lmektab and the will of God. As we affirmed, one of our guarantors said that “it is Lmektab which interprets this kind of situation in our company”. Jointly, Geert Hofstede (2010), specified that in cultures with weak control of uncertainty, risk and ambiguity are part of everyday life, and are accepted for what they are. “According to our culture, it is necessary to go back to destiny”, as indicated by one of our guarantors.

4.2.5 Moroccan Culture and Short-Term or Long-Term Orientation

Through our review of the literature, we showed that the Moroccan culture is characterized by a short-term orientation, which results in a strong attachment to traditions and social norms. As Bourqia (2010) affirmed, habits, tradition, and common laws are the main sources of values, true reference frames of moral values, which govern the appreciation of the individual, social relations and the link to the community.

Indeed, the remarks of one of our guarantors showed that “in spite of the changes witnessed by Moroccan companies, it seems to me that social norms and traditions still have their place and play a significant role in social relations between individuals in the private life and the professional life”.

According to Geert Hofstede (2010), cultures with short-term orientation are always related to the past. The Moroccan culture has, precisely, a projection in the future, but it remains marked by the past, as explained one of our guarantors.

4.2.6 Moroccan Culture And Religiosity

Through our review of the literature, we concluded that the Moroccan culture is a culture with strong religiosity (Geertz, 1973; from Iribarne, 1997; Al Maache, 2002; Bourqia et al., 2007; Tozy et al., 2007; Bourqia, 2010; Balambo, 2014).

Indeed, one of our guarantors indicated to us that “with my direction, religion can be regarded as a cornerstone and a main component of the Moroccan culture, it is of a very significant importance in the life of the Morrocans, and their vision of things, and thus constitutes a source of major inspiration of social codes, a framework of reference par excellence, and a genuine reserve of ethical values and morals”.

5.CONCLUSION:

In this paper, we were interested in the exploration of the specificities of the Moroccan culture according to the model of Geert Hofstede, considering there exists little of research on this topic, through an exploratory qualitative study which was carried out through individual and semi talks, with university professors in sociology and anthropology.

This exploratory study revealed to us that the Moroccan culture shows the following characteristics:

- A strong hierarchical distance;
- A Community orientation.
- A small degree of control of uncertainty;
- A female orientation of values;
- A short-term orientation;
- A strong religiosity.

The results of this qualitative study will help us conduct another confirmatory quantitative study, through which we will try to answer our problem of research.

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