

COMPARATIVE EMIC-ETIC REVIEW OF ZHANG DE AND TROMPENAARS'S CORPORATE CULTURE

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Abstract: *The paper focused on a literature review of organizational culture by analyzing the different dimensions between Western and Chinese organizational culture to ascertain whether there are similarities or differences using an emic-etic approach. The purpose of selecting a comparative review of Western and Chinese organization culture is due to the rise of China as an economic power house whereby more and more companies are beginning to query whether a Western or Chinese organization culture would better serve the organization given today's global landscape. This study focuses on Trompenaars cultural dimensions as a representation of the Western organization culture as the cultural model is considered to be the most comprehensive as compared to other Western organization culture and China's Zhangde's dimensions of organizational culture since the latter's organization cultural dimensions are distinctly Chinese in nature. Applied emic-etic research method combined with the specific cultural items of organizational culture between Western and China adopted as the research methodology. Such a methodology is qualitative in nature to determine whether a revised form of organizational culture model suitable for both the Western world and China's company is possible for global companies investing in Asia and the Western world.*

Keywords: *Organization culture; Zhang De; Trompenaars; Emic-etic*

Introduction

Organization culture is not a new idea, concept or theory. However, with the rise of globalization and the increasing merging of the world economy, organization cultures are also taking on a new perspective, whereby, the traditional influence of local culture on the organization culture is beginning to blur and the absorption of a more global culture is increasingly evident in many organization cultures (Diogenes and De Luca, 2020). Such conjectures though observed are not effectively researched on or measured via any scientific research methodologies. Hence, there is a need to study whether the merging of cultures are

influencing organization cultures, especially in multinational corporations (MNCs) that operate across different nations.

The existence of cultural imperialism and cultural relativism has led to complications in the merging of local and “adopted” culture in an MNC (Beck, 2015). In MNCs that practice cultural imperialism, the organization culture at the surface may seem to be the adoption of the home country’s culture, though there are underlying nuances and symbolisms that are inherently that of the host country’s culture (Palovaara, 2017). The same is true when MNCs adopt the cultural relativism stance whereby the local culture seem to dominate the organization culture, but, in reality, the home country’s culture are also evident in the way things are carried out in that MNC specifically when it relates to ethics or moral based decisions (Beck, 2015). However, studies related to the theories of cultural imperialism and cultural relativism did not focus on the principle of universalism, whereby when two (2) different cultures meet, a third culture that combines the essence of both cultures will create a culture that can be universally applied in other organizations in similar circumstance. Therefore, there is a need to conduct a study to relate the emic (local culture) and etic (adopted culture) integration to ascertain whether cultural universalism could lead to organization citizenship behaviours for MNCs within a specific context. Subsequent meta-analysis could then be undertaken to strengthen such studies, hence the commencement of the current research.

Literature Review

Organization culture as explained by Alonazi (2021) as the characteristics of an organization that manifest shared value and beliefs among employees to encourage embracement by members of the organization. Schein (1994) on the other hand, stipulated that it is not possible for the creation of organization culture within a day, and that organization culture are commonly develop via the process of time as the employees go through various changes, adapt to the external environment and solve problems. According to Robbins and Coulter (2019) organization culture consists of values and beliefs of an organization that include the principles, ideologies as well as policies followed by an organization which decides the way individuals interact with each other and behave with people within the organization as well as outside the organization.

Since the introduction of the theory of organization culture in the 1980s, it has received much attention and respect from both Chinese and Western scholars, and the intensity of focus on such research continued to rise (Liu, 2018). The earliest study of organization culture began in the 1980s with the study of successful business management experience of Japan by the American corporate management community and the reflection of the rapid growth of the Japanese economy after the war (Denison, 1996). However, over the years, more and more comprehensive studies on organization culture continued to surface that covered more angles and perspectives (Liu, 2018). At the same time, with the expansion of the depth and breadth of organization culture, the division of organization culture types has gradually become an important part of the research in this field, and reflected frequently in the organization culture (Li, 2017). With the maturation of organization culture researches, both Chinese and Western scholars begin to integrate the influence of local culture on organization as well as to study the influence of such integration on organization citizenship behaviours in various organizations (Alonazi, 2021; Byoung, 2014; Kerdpitack and Jermisitti, 2019).

Hofstede (1996) as the key researcher on organization culture and the dimensions of organization culture as introduced is well recognized and applied by many global organizations. With the progress of time and the deepening of the study of organization culture, scholars' controversy over the organization culture dimensions has also increased whereby it was believed that because of the different regions, the understanding of culture is different and the debate on cultural universalism begin to take shape. Hampton-Turner & Trompenaars (2011) based on Hofstede's (1980) study of organization culture, concluded that the political environment of the country largely influences cultural differences. Trompenaars (1998) argues that cultural differences between nations and nations are mainly reflected in seven dimensions whereupon, the first five dimensions refer to the relationship with other people, and the latter two dimensions refer to the arrangement of time and attitude towards the environment that bore similarities with Hofstede's (1996) model. For the purpose of this study, Trompenaars (1998) organization culture dimensions serve as a representation of an "adopted" culture that serves as the second "emic" organization culture of the research framework.

The researches on Chinese organization culture dimensions are not as extensive when compared with the Western scholars. In terms of theoretical research in organization culture, the focus of previous researches were on the definition of organization culture concepts, the creation of organization culture, the role of organization culture, and how to construct a rational framework for Chinese culture from the Confucian culture that was on the principles of Confucianism (Li, 2017). Due to the combined influence of traditional culture, contemporary thinking, political system, ownership structure, organization attributes and developmental stages, Eastern culture and Western culture are significantly different and thus, may lead to differences in corporate culture (Diogenes and De Luca, 2020).

The most prominent of the Chinese scholars on organization culture was Zhang De (2009) who scaffold on the principles of Confucianism to arrive at a universally acceptable organization culture that is distinctly Asian in nature as it incorporates all the core values of various Asian cultures. Hence, for the purpose of the current study, Zhang De's organization culture dimensions served as a representation of Asia's culture.

The framework for the study is to ascertain the similarities inherent within Zhang De (2009) and Trompenaars (1998) organization culture's dimensions and to determine whether such amalgamation of dimensions is evident in specific multinational companies in China. Below is an illustration of the research framework.

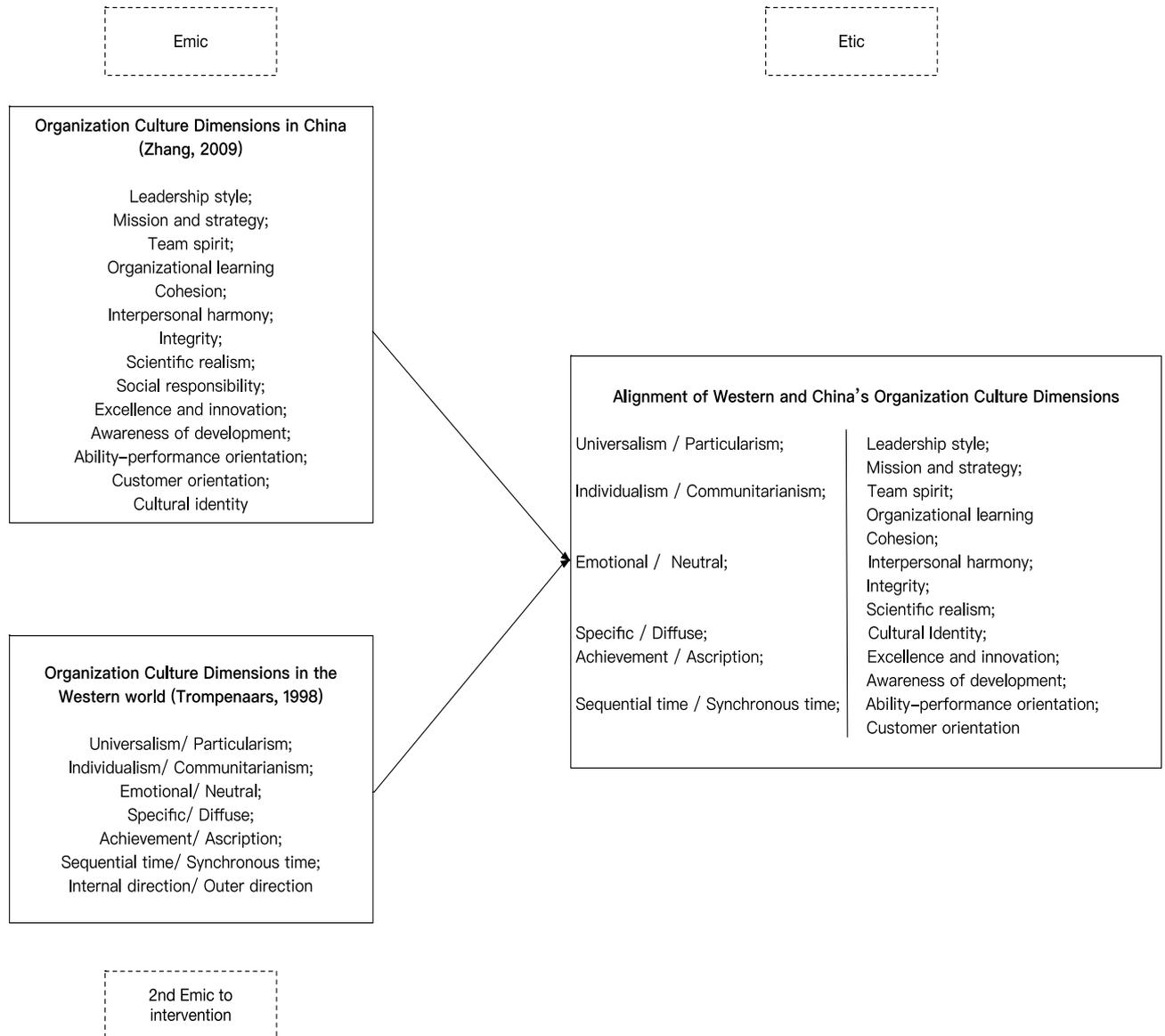


Figure 1: Framework of The Study

Methodology

A qualitative methodology using an emic-etic approach to critical ethnography to ascertain whether the local culture has achieved integration with the “adopted” culture and if there is an amalgamation is the research design for the current study. The purpose is to gauge the extent of the integration evident within the organizations studied. The unit of analysis in this study is the organization and is an exploratory study as such an approach (emic-etic) as a methodology in organization culture studies in China is not evident since the ethnography research methodology is a cross disciplinary methodology from the field of sociology and anthropology. This study is a pilot test for a larger study that will include more multinational organizations in China to ascertain firstly the extent of integration of organization culture from the perspective of Zhang De (2009) and Trompenaars (1998) in the multinational corporations (MNCs). In the current study, three (3) multinational corporations (MNCs) investing in China was reviewed. The findings is in the next section. According to Creswell (2018), for the pilot test of qualitative studies, approximately 10% of the proposed population under study is adequate. In support of

critical ethnography as per the current study, it had found that a total of 30-50 organizations as the sample size is adequate, especially for exploratory studies to develop a probable revised or new conceptual model for the theories researched on. In this pilot study, 10% of the proposed sample size of the organizations from a larger study selected as a sampling for the current study. Hence, three (3) multinational corporations selected and researched in this current study.

Findings

Using the emic-etic qualitative approach to review the organization cultures of the two (2) organizations selected, the following similarities and differences in terms of organization culture between the Chinese cultural dimensions of Zhang De (2009) and Trompenaars (1998) were extracted as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparative Similarities and Differences from Trompenaars and Zhang De Organization Cultures

Trompenaars (1998)	Zhang De (2009)
Universalism / Particularism	Leadership Style adopted (particularism); Mission and strategy (universalism)
Individualism / Communitarianism	Team Spirit (communitarianism); Organizational Learning (individualism); Cohesion (communitarianism);
Emotional / Neutral	Interpersonal Harmony (neutral); Integrity (emotional); Scientific Realism (emotional)
Achievement / Ascription	Excellence and Innovation (achievement); Awareness of Development (ascription)
Internal Direction / Outer Direction	Ability-Performance Orientation (internal direction); Customer Orientation (outer direction)
Specific / Diffuse	
Sequential Time/ Synchronous Time	
	Cultural Identity
	Social Responsibility

From the table, it can be found that out of the seven (7) dimensions of Trompenaars (1998), there are at least five (5) dimensions that bears similarities with Zhang's (2009) fourteen (14) organization culture dimensions. However, it was found too that two (2) of the organization culture dimensions were totally unrelated between the local Chinese organization culture and the Trompenaars's (1998) dimensions. Further to the emic-etic review and analysis of the local Chinese and home country's organization cultures, the next step in this qualitative study was to conduct interviews with four (4) key employees of the three (3) organizations to ascertain the extent of amalgamation of organization culture practiced or adopted within the organization. Applying the thematic categorization of the interview outputs from the four (4) interviewees using the MaxQDA qualitative analyses tool, the findings of the adoption of amalgamation of

organization culture adopted or practiced in the three (3) selected organizations are as per Table 2.

Table 2: Thematic Categorization Output from the Interviews

Organizations	Trompenaars (1998)	Zhang De (2009)
Organization A and B	Universalism dominates	Mission, Vision and Strategy Universally applied from the headquarters
	Communitarianism	Team spirit and cohesion is encouraged in daily work and interactions Organization learning is not evident
	Neutral seemed to be the prevalent organization culture although 2 interviewees stated that some of the management personnel do openly shout at the subordinates when things go wrong	On surfaced, internal harmony seemed to prevail, but, in reality, angry words are used on subordinates at times. Organization B however mentioned that scientific realism is seen as all new research outcomes must have practical value and is able to be commercialized on a large scale
	Achievement focused	Excellence and innovation seemed to permeate both the organizations, but awareness of development was not detected
	Internal Direction / Outer Direction Both the dimensions were evident	Ability-Performance Orientation (internal direction); Customer Orientation (outer direction) Similar in that performance was emphasized and customer focused was also actively promoted within the organization culture
	Diffuse The organization culture tended to be more formal and subordinates are expected to respect superior	
	Sequential time is preferred whereby time is considered as valuable and thus, time wasting is frowned upon	
		Cultural Identity: seemed to be maintaining a stronger local cultural practice
		Social Responsibility: not that prevalent

Organization C	Universalism / Particularism Interestingly, both dimensions are evident in organization C	The leadership style is following that of the home country instead of a more autocratic manner that is prevalent in Chinese organization culture The vision, mission, strategy is aligned with the home country as well
	Communitarianism	Team spirit and cohesion is encouraged in daily work and interactions Organization learning is not evident
	Neutral seemed to be the prevalent organization culture although 2 interviewees stated that some of the management personnel do openly shout at the subordinates when things go wrong	On surfaced, internal harmony seemed to prevail, but, in reality, angry words are used on subordinates at times. As this is a trading company, there is no mention of scientific realism
	Ascription is favoured	Both the dimensions of Zhang De such as excellence and innovation as well as awareness of development was not understood by the interviewees, hence, providing the conjecture that the dimensions were not prevalent in the organization culture of organization C.
	Outer direction was the focused as this is a trading company that dealt with the import of goods from the home country to China	Customer Orientation (outer direction) was very strong, but the ability-performance spectrum was not clear as the interviewees averred that a more “family” based organization culture that focused on relationship and not performance was adopted
	Diffuse	
	The organization culture tended to be more formal and subordinates are expected to respect superior	
	Sequential time is preferred whereby time is considered as valuable and thus, time wasting is frowned upon	
		Cultural Identity: not very clear
		Social responsibility: the organization is not sufficiently matured to focus on being socially responsible at the moment

As two (2) of the organizations selected for the purpose of the study were American MNCs involved in pharmaceutical products, the similarities of integration was apparent with these two (2) organizations, although for the third organization, the extent of amalgamation of organization cultural in terms of Zhang De (2009) and Trompenaars (1998) dimensions were less apparent. This could also be because the organization selected was from Asia instead of America, where culturally, there are still differences.

According to Scull (2017), China's cultural dimensions based on Trompenaars (1998) will include particularism; communitarianism; diffuse; emotional; ascription; outer direction and sequential time focused. From the findings, it was found that instead of particularism for organization A and B, universalism seemed to be the norm for the organization culture. From the perspective of emotional and ascription, for organization A and B, the opposite seemed to apply within the organization culture which is in direct contrast with the local Chinese culture. However, when it relates to Zhang's (2009) organization culture dimensions, the adoption is more consistent.

On the other hand, for organization C, the organization culture dimensions of Trompenaars (1998) seemed aligned with the culture of China as provided by Scull (2017). For Zhang (2009), the organization culture dimensions completely aligned with the fourteen (14) dimensions of the theory.

From the above findings, the conclusion drawn is that for organizations A and B, cultural imperialism is more prevalent, whereas for organization C, cultural relativism is more evident. When cultural imperialism prevails (Gudova, 2018), it means that a dominant emic culture of the home country of the MNC (multinational corporation) and the resultant etic culture is leaning toward the emic home country culture vis-à-vis the host country's culture (Nandwa, 2014). On the other hand, when cultural relativism is adopted as found in organization C, the host country's culture (China) will be the emic culture that prevails. Hence, the etic organization culture that is the result from the amalgamation of the two(2) emic culture will then lean toward to the host country's culture instead of the home country (Diogenes and De Luca, 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the pilot study, it can be found that although there are similarities between Zhang De (2009) and Trompenaars (1998) organization culture dimensions, in practice, as Trompenaars's (2011) cultural dimensions were sufficiently generic to provide for differences in organization culture globally. The findings indicated that there are mixed results from the pilot test whereby both cultural imperialism and cultural relativism are evident within the three (3) organizations selected. However, cultural imperialism seemed to prevail although the findings is not sufficiently conclusive since the organizations adopting cultural imperialism were both American organizations whereas the organization that was practicing cultural relativism is from an Asian country.

The ethnographic mapping of the organization culture dimension of Trompenaars (1998) and Zhang (2009) needs to be focused on China's culture to be aligned within the dimensions, especially with regards to Trompenaars (1998) organization culture dimensions. When related to China's culture as per Scull (2017), the comparison will be more meaningful as the findings showed that the integration of the Western perspectives in Trompenaars (1998) dimensions were evident in the American MNCs (organization A and B) vis-à-vis the Asian MNC

(organization C). This thus showed that the integration of two (2) emic cultures (American and China) would lead to a leaning toward cultural imperialism (American culture) whereby the Chinese organization culture is submerged.

On the other hand, when the ethnographic mapping of organization culture is applied to an Asian MNC, the amalgamation of the two(2) emic cultures indicated that cultural relativism is practiced instead of cultural imperialism. This could be because Asian culture bears similarity with China's culture, hence, the resultant etic organization culture seemed to prefer a Chinese culture that provided the impetus that cultural relativism is more likely to occur within the Asian MNC. According to Law Teacher (2018), there may be possibility of an amalgamation of cultural values, specifically in the laws and regulations of countries whereby instead of imperialism or relativism, a universal set of cultures could emerge to unite the laws and regulations of respective countries, thereby leading to a culture of universalism. Diogenes and De Luca (2020) found that globalization do have impact on organization or corporate culture and this was align too with Polavaara (2017). Thus, the emic-etic approach to the mapping of the cultural integration would be of importance to ascertain whether the resultant etic organization culture would lean toward imperialism or relativism or whether a universal organization culture could emerge as a new model.

There is definitely a need for a larger study or a meta-analysis using the emic-etic approach to ascertain whether MNCs investing in China from different regions or countries are more likely to adopt cultural imperialism or cultural relativism.

Future Research Direction

The findings indicated that when proceeding with the larger study of the various multinational corporations (MNCs) investing in China, there is a need to segregate the regions or countries where the MNCs come from (home country). This is of critical relevance to ascertain whether cultural imperialism is the etic approach or is cultural relativism the etic approach from the integration of two (2) emic cultures (home and host country). With the segregation, it is envisioned that the emic-etic approach will be better able to verify and confirm that specific regions or countries' MNCs are more prevalent in adopting a cultural imperialism approach vis-à-vis other regions or countries that are more likely to adopt cultural relativism.

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