

A Review of Cross–Cultural Adaptation in China–Indonesia Joint Ventures

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Received August 16, 2024; **Revised** October 17, 2024; **Accepted** November 15, 2024

Abstract

This article aimed to explore three key areas: 1) the main issues and challenges faced by China–Indonesia joint ventures in cross–cultural adaptation; 2) the impact of cultural differences and communication barriers on operational efficiency and employee satisfaction; and 3) strategies for enhancing employees' cultural understanding and adaptability. The study focused on China–Indonesia joint ventures engaged in economic and trade cooperation under the “Belt and Road” initiative. Data were gathered through comprehensive literature research, and analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and content analysis. The findings were as follows:

1. Cross–cultural adaptation significantly influenced operational efficiency and employee satisfaction. Effective adaptation reduced misunderstandings and conflicts, fostering better team collaboration and enhancing innovation capabilities.

2. Practical cross–cultural training and communication strategies were essential for improving overall performance and sustainability. Customized training tailored to employees' diverse backgrounds boosts their cultural understanding and adaptability.

3. Establishing cultural safety and building networks were crucial for cultivating an inclusive work environment. These factors led to improved mental health, higher job satisfaction, and enhanced employee performance, facilitating smoother integration into the local market and strengthening the sustainability of enterprises.

Keywords: Cross-Cultural Adaptation; China-Indonesia Joint Ventures; Cultural Differences; Sustainable Development; Cross-Cultural Networks

Introduction

With the implementation of China's "Belt and Road" initiative, the economic and trade cooperation between China and ASEAN countries has become increasingly close. Among these countries, Indonesia, as one of China's important trade partners, has seen continuous growth in bilateral trade volume over the past six years (Ministry of Commerce China, 2023). Against this backdrop, the number of China-Indonesia joint ventures is increasing. However, cross-cultural adaptation has emerged as one of these enterprises' main challenges. Existing research primarily focuses on cross-cultural adaptation issues between developed and Asian countries, with relatively few studies addressing adaptation between Asian countries or developing countries (Williams, 1983). Therefore, exploring the cross-cultural adaptation issues in China-Indonesia joint ventures is of significant practical importance.

Cross-cultural adaptation refers to how individuals or organizations adjust their behaviors and cognitions to fit into a new cultural environment (Ward, 2001). For China-Indonesia joint ventures, cross-cultural adaptation affects operational efficiency and employee satisfaction and directly impacts the enterprise's sustainable development (Black, 1991). By studying the cross-cultural adaptation issues in China-Indonesia joint ventures, effective management strategies can be provided to enhance their competitiveness in the international market. Additionally, this research aims to fill the existing gap in the literature regarding cross-cultural adaptation between Asian countries, enriching the theory of cross-cultural adaptation.

The main objective of this study is to explore the primary issues and challenges faced by China-Indonesia joint ventures in the process of cross-cultural adaptation and to propose corresponding solutions. Specifically, the study will analyze the cultural characteristics of China-Indonesia joint ventures and their impact on business operations, identify the obstacles encountered during cross-cultural adaptation, and explore effective methods to improve cross-cultural adaptability. This research aims to provide theoretical support and practical guidance to China-Indonesia joint ventures, helping them better address cross-cultural adaptation issues and enhancing overall performance and sustainable development capabilities.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the cultural characteristics of China–Indonesia joint ventures and their impact on business operations.
2. To identify the obstacles encountered during cross–cultural adaptation.
3. To explore effective methods to improve cross–cultural adaptability.

Literature Review

1. Theories and Concept of Culture

The term “culture” initially emerged in the eighteenth century, when its meaning was associated with cultivation. Later, its meaning expanded to encompass education, development, scholarship, and more. Cultural studies is an interdisciplinary field that spans anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, history, and more. From an anthropological perspective, Clifford Geertz (1973), in his seminal work “The Interpretation of Cultures,” analyzed various social customs and values, proposing the concept of culture as a symbolic system, which had a profound impact. Pierre Bourdieu (1984), in “Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,” introduced the theory of “cultural capital,” exploring the role of cultural habits in the reproduction of social class. He emphasized how cultural capital operates within education and social structures to reinforce inequality.

Hall (1997), a pioneering figure in cultural studies, examined the influence of media and popular culture on identity in “Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices,” highlighting the power dynamics and ideological manipulation involved in cultural representation. Geert Hofstede’s (2001) cross–cultural psychology research, such as “Culture’s Consequences,” used cultural dimensions theory to analyze organizational behavior and leadership styles across different cultural backgrounds, providing a critical theoretical framework for cross–cultural management and international business.

Matthew Arnold and Raymond Williams (1961) explored the essence of culture and its significance in society. In “Culture and Society,” Williams revealed the close relationship between culture and social structures by analyzing cultural changes from the 18th to the 20th century. Historian Fernand Braudel (1981), in “Civilization and Capitalism,” examined the role of culture in economic and social changes through a macro–historical lens, advocating for a long–term historical approach. In “Economics and Culture” (2001), cultural economist David Throsby discussed the

economic value of cultural industries and products, analyzing the role and impact of culture in the modern economy. In recent years, new literature has continued to deepen these studies. García Canclini (2005), in “Consumers and Citizens: Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts,” explored cultural consumption and civic identity in the context of globalization. John Storey (2015), in “Cultural Theory and Popular Culture,” updated the discussion on cultural theory, reflecting contemporary trends and challenges in cultural studies. Through these multidimensional studies, scholars collectively reveal the complexity and diversity of culture, providing rich theories and methodologies that offer a solid foundation for a more comprehensive understanding of culture.

2. Theories and Concepts about Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory

Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede proposed Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory in the 1970s. It aims to systematically describe and measure cultural differences across countries and regions through six core dimensions: Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation, and Indulgence vs. Restraint (Hofstede, 1980). Based on extensive survey data from IBM employees, this theory initially proposed four dimensions and later added two more in further studies to more comprehensively reflect global cultural diversity (Hofstede, 2001). Power Distance describes the acceptance of power inequality in society; Individualism vs. Collectivism reflects the balance between individual and group goals; Masculinity vs. Femininity focuses on the importance of competition and relationships; Uncertainty Avoidance examines the tolerance for unknown situations; Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation measures the emphasis on future and present; and Indulgence vs. Restraint describes the freedom to satisfy desires (Hofstede et al., 2012).

Hofstede’s theory has been widely applied in cross-cultural management, international marketing, and global leadership development. For example, Kirkman et al. (2006) meta-analysis demonstrated the significant impacts of cultural dimensions on team performance, leadership effectiveness, and innovative behavior. In international marketing, de Mooij and Hofstede (2010) explored how marketing strategies can be adjusted according to different cultural dimensions. Despite its recognition, the theory faces criticism. McSweeney (2002) questioned Hofstede’s research methods and sample representativeness, while Beugelsdijk et al. (2015) highlighted challenges to the theory’s stability due to cultural changes. Nevertheless, Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory remains one of the most influential frameworks in cross-cultural research, providing valuable insights for understanding cultural differences in the context of globalization.

3. Theories and Concepts of Acculturation Theory

John W. Berry's theory of intercultural adaptation is a multidimensional model used to understand the adaptation processes of individuals and groups when exposed to new cultures. Berry categorizes intercultural adaptation into four main strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. These strategies are based on an individual's attitudes and behaviors towards their original and new cultures. Assimilation refers to the abandonment of the original culture in favor of fully embracing the new culture; separation involves maintaining the original culture while rejecting the new culture; integration entails accepting and preserving both cultures; and marginalization suggests a lack of acceptance of either the original or the new culture (Berry, 1997; Berry, 2005). This theoretical framework explains the different adaptation strategies individuals employ in new cultural environments and emphasizes the significant influence of cultural background on the adaptation process (Berry, 2006; Berry et al., 2002). Berry's theory has been widely applied in research concerning immigrants, refugees, and international students, revealing the psychological and social factors involved in cultural adaptation. Studies indicate that emotional and psychological health during the adaptation process (psychological adaptation) and the effectiveness of functional behaviors (sociocultural adaptation) are independent yet related. Berry's theory underscores individuals' need to cope with challenges and pressures in new environments through emotional support and cultural learning, which is crucial for designing practical intercultural training and support programs (Berry, 1997; Ward et al., 2001; Sam & Berry, 2010).

Colleen Ward's theory of intercultural adaptation elaborates on the adaptation processes individuals experience in new cultural environments through two main aspects: psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation. Psychological adaptation pertains to emotional and mental health adjustments influenced by coping strategies, social support, and personality traits (Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Ward et al., 2001). Sociocultural adaptation refers to the effectiveness of functional behaviors influenced by cultural learning and social skills, including language proficiency and cultural knowledge (Searle & Ward, 1999). Ward's theory has been widely applied in research on the adaptation of immigrants and international students, showing that psychological and sociocultural adaptation are independent yet interconnected processes requiring different strategies and resources (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). In intercultural training, distinct psychological and sociocultural adaptation modules assist individuals in navigating intercultural transitions more

effectively while enhancing employees' intercultural communication abilities. Cultural sensitivity is critical in corporate cross-cultural management (Ward et al., 2011).

4. Theories and Concepts about U-Curve Adjustment Theory

The U-Curve Adjustment Theory, proposed by Lysgaard (1955), describes individuals' emotional and psychological changes when adapting to a new cultural environment. This theory posits that individuals experience four main stages in their adaptation process. The first stage is the honeymoon stage when individuals feel excited and curious about the new environment and hold a positive attitude toward the new culture. This stage varies in duration, lasting from a few weeks to several months. Culture Shock Stage: Over time, individuals face fundamental cultural differences and challenges, leading to confusion, discomfort, and stress. This stage is often characterized by disappointment, frustration, anxiety, loneliness, and homesickness. Adjustment Stage: After adaptation and learning, individuals gradually develop methods to cope with cultural differences, reduce stress, enhance adaptation abilities, and stabilize their emotional and psychological state. Mastery Stage: In this stage, individuals have fully adapted to the new cultural environment, comfortably living and working with a deeper understanding and acceptance of the new culture, and their emotional and psychological state returns to a higher level. For example:

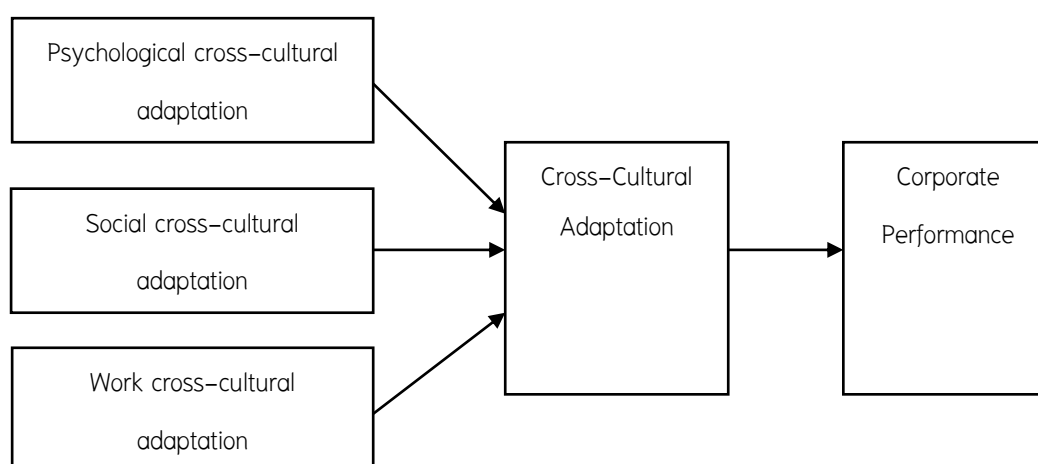
Berry's (1997) acculturation strategy theory further enriched this field. Black and Mendenhall (1991) reviewed and revised the U-Curve hypothesis, proposing a theoretical framework. Ward et al. (2001) comprehensively reviewed the U-Curve model in "The Psychology of Culture Shock," discussing its applicability across various cultural contexts. Church (1995) reviewed short-term residents' adaptation, emphasizing critical factors for successful adaptation. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) extended the U-curve model to propose the W-curve model, including the re-entry adjustment stage.

Cultural adaptation research in multinational enterprises has made significant progress over decades, from early theoretical construction to recent empirical studies, covering aspects such as cultural intelligence, cross-cultural training, and leadership. The U-Curve model proposed by Oberg (1960) laid the foundation, describing individuals' adaptation processes in different cultural environments. Adler (1975) extended this model to include re-entry shock and the W-Curve. The W-Curve Adjustment Theory, proposed by Gullahorn, extends the U-Curve model by adding the adaptation stage upon returning home, suggesting that individuals may undergo a similar adaptation process, including re-cultural shock and re-adjustment stages.

Summary: The authors have utilized these theories to construct a comprehensive framework for understanding cross-cultural adaptation in China–Indonesia joint ventures. By identifying the existing knowledge gap, the article aims to contribute to the literature by providing insights into the specific challenges and strategies for cross-cultural adaptation in this unique setting. Integrating various theoretical perspectives allows for a multidimensional analysis, addressing psychological and sociocultural adaptation aspects. The review is fully referenced, drawing from diverse academic sources to support its findings and arguments.

Conceptual Framework

This research is a study on the cross-cultural adaptation in China–Indonesia joint ventures. The researcher defines the research conceptual framework based on the concepts and theories of Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory, Berry’s Acculturation Theory, U–Curve Adjustment Theory, and practical implications for multinational enterprises. The details are as follows:



Research Methodology

The target population of this study is the employees of Sino–Indonesian joint venture companies, including managers, technicians, and other staff members from both China and Indonesia. The study selected employees who have worked in the Sino–Indonesian joint ventures for at least 6 months to ensure they have adequate cross-cultural adaptation experience.

The study adopted a questionnaire survey to collect data. The questionnaire covers employees’ backgrounds, cross-cultural adaptation status, perceptions, and challenges, using a 5–point Likert scale to collect employees’ subjective assessments. The questionnaires were

distributed through both online and offline channels to ensure coverage of joint venture employees from different regions.

The study employed a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling to invite Sino-Indonesian joint venture employees to participate in the questionnaire survey. A total of 300 valid questionnaires were collected, covering employees from both China and Indonesia. The sample has a certain degree of representativeness, reflecting the overall situation of cross-cultural adaptation in Sino-Indonesian joint ventures.

The study utilized SPSS and Excel software to conduct statistical analysis of the questionnaire data, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis, to verify the research hypotheses. Additionally, the study combined qualitative data, such as interviews, to provide in-depth interpretation and analysis of the questionnaire results.

Research Results

Descriptive analysis

In the sample distribution, 59.43% of the respondents were male, while the remaining 40.57% were female. Regarding age, 35.92% of the participants fell within the 31-40-year-old category, and 32.30% were between 26 and 30 years old. As for educational background, 41.09% had completed college or university, and 38.24% had attained a Bachelor's Degree. In terms of work experience, 27.91% of the sample reported having 2-5 years of experience. Additionally, the majority, 55.56%, were identified as general staff. Regarding English proficiency, a significant 41.34% indicated they were "able to communicate in general daily life."

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Living Environment	3.9599	0.77213	387
Interpersonal Communication	3.7397	0.92281	387
Service Model	3.9419	0.86725	387
Social Intercultural Adaptability	3.8805	0.65357	387
Physical and Mental Health	3.7526	0.97241	387
Satisfaction	3.6757	0.86965	387
Psychological Intercultural Adaptability	3.7141	0.76974	387
Communication	3.6270	0.86120	387
Work Competence	3.7080	0.91650	387
Managerial Skills	3.2084	1.09174	387

Work Intercultural Adaptability	3.5145	0.69200	387
Intercultural Adaptability	3.7030	0.59976	387
Executive Recruitment	3.5495	1.05056	387
Employee Training	3.7339	0.90229	387
Corporate Philosophy	3.7562	0.87406	387
Communication Strategies	3.6460	0.98470	387
Enhancement Strategies	3.6714	0.64812	387
Research and Development Competence	3.5782	1.12979	387
Financial Indicator Competence	3.4851	0.65202	387
Organizational Management Competence	3.6085	0.78740	387
Sustainable Development Competence	3.5573	0.71885	387

The passage explains the use of descriptive statistical analysis to evaluate variables through mean and standard deviation. A higher mean suggests a higher average level for a given indicator, while the standard deviation reflects the degree of data dispersion, indicating differences among samples for the same indicator. In the context of a questionnaire, a higher score signifies greater agreement. The accompanying table shows that most dimensions have higher scores, suggesting that respondents generally agree with the statements.

Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis is the process of describing and analyzing the nature of the interrelationship between two or more variables and their degree of correlation. The correlation coefficient is labeled with an * in the upper right corner, at which point it indicates a relationship; conversely, there is no relationship. A correlation coefficient greater than 0 indicates a positive relationship between the two variables, while a coefficient less than 0 indicates a negative relationship between the two variables.

Table 1 Correlation

	Research and Development Capability	Financial Indicator Capability	Organizational Management Capability	Sustainable Development Capability
Living Environment	0.477**	0.409**	0.576**	0.584**
Interpersonal Communication	0.414**	0.425**	0.519**	0.535**
Service Model	0.449**	0.409**	0.485**	0.536**
Social Cross-cultural Adaptability	0.581**	0.542**	0.686**	0.719**
Physical and Mental Health	0.460**	0.447**	0.593**	0.593**

Table 1 Correlation

	Research and Development Capability	Financial Indicator Capability	Organizational Management Capability	Sustainable Development Capability
Satisfaction	0.405**	0.418**	0.510**	0.525**
Psychological Cross-cultural Adaptability	0.519**	0.519**	0.663**	0.671**
Communication	0.451**	0.330**	0.439**	0.497**
Work Competence	0.397**	0.291**	0.350**	0.423**
Managerial Competence	0.444**	0.341**	0.402**	0.483**
Work Cross-cultural Adaptability	0.596**	0.445**	0.548**	0.647**
Cross-cultural Adaptability	0.662**	0.590**	0.743**	0.797**
Executive Hiring	0.395**	0.392**	0.464**	0.495**
Employee Training	0.506**	0.398**	0.482**	0.561**
Corporate Philosophy	0.415**	0.348**	0.509**	0.508**
Communication Strategy	0.278**	0.293**	0.279**	0.336**

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

The analysis of the data presented in the table reveals a significant positive correlation between various competencies and several factors. Specifically, developmental competence, financial indicator competence, organizational management competence, and sustainability competence are significantly correlated with factors such as living environment, interpersonal communication, service model, social cross-cultural adaptability, physical and mental health, satisfaction, psychological cross-cultural adaptability, communication, work competence, managerial competence, work cross-cultural adaptability, cross-cultural adaptability, executive hiring, employee training, corporate philosophy, and communication strategy. Furthermore, the correlation coefficients for communication strategies are all greater than zero, underscoring a significant positive relationship among these variables.

Regression Analysis

Table 2 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.810 ^a	0.656	0.654	0.42306

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work cross-cultural adaptability, psychological cross-cultural adaptability, social cross-cultural adaptability

Table 3 ANOVA^a

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	130.916	3	43.639	243.814	0.000b
	Residual	68.551	383	0.179		
	Total	199.466	386			

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable development capacity

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work cross-cultural adaptability, psychological cross-cultural adaptability, social cross-cultural adaptability

From the table above, the model equation is as follows: Sustainable Development Capability = 0.504 * Social Intercultural Adaptability + 0.345 * Psychological Intercultural Adaptability + 0.127 * Work Intercultural Adaptability. The R-squared value of the model is 0.656, indicating that these three factors account for 65.6% of the variation in sustainable development capability. The F-test for the model shows that it is statistically significant (F = 243.814, p = 0.000 < 0.05), meaning that at least one of these intercultural adaptability dimensions significantly impacts sustainable development capability. Additionally, with a VIF of less than 5, multicollinearity is weak, suggesting the model is reliable.

Table 4 Coefficients

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Collinearity Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance VIF
1	(Constant)	-0.126	0.139		-0.911	0.363	
	Social cross-cultural adaptation	0.504	0.044	0.458	11.545	0.000	0.570 1.755
	Psychological cross-cultural adaptation	0.345	0.036	0.370	9.575	0.000	0.601 1.663
	Work cross-cultural adaptation	0.127	0.046	0.122	2.771	0.006	0.463 2.160

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable development capacity

The value of the regression coefficient of social intercultural adaptability is 0.504 (t=11.545, p=0.000<0.01), which means that social intercultural adaptability will have a significant positive influence on sustainable development ability. The value of the regression coefficient of psychological cross-cultural adaptability is 0.345 (t=9.575, p=0.000<0.01), which means that

psychological cross-cultural adaptability will have a significant positive influence on sustainability. The value of the regression coefficient of work cross-cultural adaptability is 0.127 ($t=2.771$, $p=0.006<0.01$), which means that work cross-cultural adaptability will have a significant positive influence on sustainable development ability. It can be seen that social intercultural competence, psychological intercultural competence, and work intercultural competence all have a significant positive effect on sustainability.

The regression coefficient value for social cross-cultural adaptability is 0.504 ($t=11.545$, $p=0.000<0.01$), indicating that social cross-cultural adaptability has a significant positive impact on sustainable development capability. The regression coefficient value for psychological cross-cultural adaptability is 0.345 ($t=9.575$, $p=0.000<0.01$), indicating that psychological cross-cultural adaptability has a significant positive impact on sustainable development capability. The regression coefficient value for work cross-cultural adaptability is 0.127 ($t=2.771$, $p=0.006<0.01$), indicating that work cross-cultural adaptability has a significant positive impact on sustainable development capability. It is evident that social cross-cultural adaptability, psychological cross-cultural adaptability, and work cross-cultural adaptability all have a significant positive impact on sustainable development capabilities.

Discussions

This study examines the major problems and challenges faced by Chinese-Indonesian joint ventures in terms of cross-cultural adaptation. The study found that effective cross-cultural adaptation has a significant impact on operational efficiency and employee satisfaction. Good adaptation can reduce misunderstanding and conflict, promote teamwork, and enhance innovation. The study emphasizes the importance of practical cross-cultural training and communication strategies to improve overall performance and sustainability. Building a sense of cultural safety and social networks is essential for fostering an inclusive work environment, and these factors can improve employees' psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and performance, and contribute to better integration into the local market and sustainability of the organization. The study used questionnaires and statistical analyses, and the results showed that social, psychological, and work-related intercultural competencies have a significant positive impact on the sustainability of enterprises.

Knowledge from Research

This research's key body of knowledge is a comprehensive understanding of the cross-cultural adaptation issues, challenges, and effective strategies for Sino-Indonesian joint ventures. The study integrates various theoretical perspectives, including Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, Berry's Acculturation Theory, and the U-Curve Adjustment Theory, to analyze the complex dynamics of cross-cultural adaptation in this context. The findings offer insights into the critical factors influencing cross-cultural adaptation, such as cultural safety, social networking, and targeted training programs, and their impact on enterprise performance and sustainability.

Conclusion

The results from this research revealed that Cross-cultural adaptation significantly influences the overall performance of joint ventures. Adaptation enhances work efficiency, reduces misunderstandings and conflicts, and improves team collaboration. It also fosters the integration of diverse thinking, enhancing the enterprise's innovation capability. Good cross-cultural adaptation increases employee satisfaction and reduces turnover rates caused by cultural conflicts, thereby enhancing market competitiveness and adaptability to local market needs.

Suggestions

Future research should focus on developing effective cross-cultural adaptation strategies at both individual and organizational levels, including the design of customized training programs to enhance employees' cultural intelligence and adaptability. Additionally, research should explore the impact of government policies and support mechanisms on cross-cultural adaptation, analyzing the role of local subsidies and cultural initiatives in enhancing the adaptability and success of joint ventures. Investigating socio-cultural integration programs that promote mutual understanding and collaboration, such as language training and cultural exchange activities, will also be a crucial research direction. Conducting in-depth studies on the impact of cross-cultural adaptation on the long-term sustainability and performance of enterprises, and expanding the research scope to include diverse stakeholder perspectives, will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural dynamics. Finally, examining the role of digital technologies and virtual collaboration in enhancing cross-cultural adaptation, particularly in the post-pandemic era, will provide new pathways and strategies for enterprises to adapt.

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