

BUSINESS DECISION MAKING AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THAILAND AND GERMANY

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ABSTRACT

The research utilized the concept of cultural differences between Thailand and Germany by using Hofstede's cultural dimension theory and illuminates different ways of decision-making. The research examines how business decision-making takes place and whether and how cultural aspects influence business decision-making of prospective managers among the two countries. Multiple regression analysis was used in order to provide a better understanding of how business decisions are made along with cultural influences among prospective managers from Germany and Thailand. As a result, the German as well as the Thai prospected manager seem to decide mostly rational, but combines their rationality with non-rational decision-making approaches. In addition to that, the cultural impact on decision-making was not as strong as it could have been expected due to Hofstede's differing outcome of both cultures.

Keywords: Business Decision Making, Cultural Differences, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาวิจัยใช้แนวคิดด้านความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรมระหว่างประเทศไทยและประเทศเยอรมนีโดยใช้ทฤษฎีมิติทางวัฒนธรรมของ Hofstede และเชื่อมโยงกับการตัดสินใจในหลากหลายมิติ การวิจัยต้องการที่จะศึกษาวิธีการตัดสินใจทางธุรกิจ และผลกระทบของอิทธิพลทางวัฒนธรรมที่มีต่อการตัดสินใจทางธุรกิจของผู้ที่จะมาเป็นผู้บริหารในอนาคตโดยการเปรียบเทียบระหว่างทั้งสองประเทศ การศึกษาวิจัยได้นำการวิเคราะห์ถดถอยพหุคูณนำมาใช้เพื่อให้เข้าใจถึงขั้นตอนการตัดสินใจทางธุรกิจประกอบและอิทธิพลของวัฒนธรรมในหมู่ของผู้ที่จะมาเป็นผู้บริหารในอนาคตจากทั้งประเทศเยอรมนีและประเทศไทย ผลของการศึกษาวิจัยพบว่าผู้ที่จะมาเป็นผู้บริหารในอนาคตจากประเทศเยอรมนีและประเทศไทยส่วนใหญ่ให้เหตุและผลในการตัดสินใจ แต่ก็ยังพบการผสมผสานระหว่างการใช้เหตุผลประกอบกับการไม่ใช้เหตุผลในการตัดสินใจ นอกจากนี้ ยังพบว่าผลกระทบของวัฒนธรรมต่อการตัดสินใจยังไม่มากตามสมมติฐานที่ตั้งไว้ก่อนหน้า ทั้งนี้เนื่องจากผลกระทบมิติทางวัฒนธรรมโดย Hofstede ที่แตกต่างกันของทั้งสองประเทศ

คำสำคัญ: การตัดสินใจทางธุรกิจ ความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรม มิติทางวัฒนธรรมของ Hofstede

1. Introduction

Internationalization of world business has brought together managers and companies from different countries and cultures. People from different cultures typically have different expectations, norms, and values that might

influence their behaviour and how they make decisions (Briley, 2007). The importance of intercultural competency of the single employee has grown significantly. If a company wants to interact successfully in a global business

environment, it has to develop cross-cultural awareness in order to understand different perspectives and to use that knowledge for sustainable business relations. Multinational companies that try to reach cultural unity by imposing the same norms on all its foreign facilities will probably fail (Mead & Andrews, 2009). Managers must be able to rethink how to deal with international business partners. Based on this fact, the present paper picks up cross-cultural differences in business decision-making as a crucial consideration in a global business environment where cooperation and mutual understanding of the cultural differences are success factors for a flourishing international business.

Culture is one of the many factors that determine success of an organization. Culture is likely to have an influence on how an organization responds to the environment and how their members make decisions. In addition, there are also other internal and external factors that influence an organization. An understanding of culture may not guarantee successful decision-making, but it may reduce the possibilities of failure (Mead & Andrews, 2009).

This research compares the results of one of the most common culture models from Hofstede for the two research relevant countries, Thailand and Germany. Germany, with its important role in the European Union in terms of trading and strong contribution of technology and innovation, and Thailand as an emerging market and a representative of the ASEAN community, play relevant roles in the global economy and need more inquiries in research topics. Furthermore, rational decision-making and non-rational decision-making approaches are discussed

2. Literature Review

2.1 Culture Dimension

Hofstede developed dimensions based on the respective basic problems with which all countries and cultures are confronted (Hofstede, 2001). Those different cultural dimensions include power distance (PDI), individualism (IDV), masculinity (MAS), uncertainty avoidance (UCA), and long-term orientation (LTO).

Power distance (PDI) measures the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 2001).

The lower the power distance index, the more individuals will expect to participate in the organizational decision-making process (Hill, 2007, quoted in Andrews & Siengthai, 2009). Germany is positioned among the low power distance countries. In business life, German employees get used to direct, participative communication. They benefit from extensive codetermination rights and dislike control (Hofstede, 2001). In contrast, in Thailand inequalities are mostly accepted. For the Thais, seniority and status are related to wealth, power, professional rank, age, and social connections (Holmes et al., 1995, quoted in Andrews & Siengthai, 2009).

The dimension of individualism (IDV) reflects how much a person depends on his own resources in order to achieve a good life and, accordingly, how much his success depends on a group (Mead & Andrews, 2009). The Germans are truly individualistic (Hofstede, 2001). From a very early age, Germans learn to think critically, make their own decisions, become independent, and do things alone (Schroll-Machl, 2008). In contrast, Thais are a highly collectivistic people where long-term commitment to member groups such as families is very important. As in the business environment, loyalty is paramount to most other social rules and regulations (Hofstede, 2001).

Masculinity (MAS) forms Hofstede's third dimension. A high masculine characteristic in a society stands for a preference for material reward for success, heroism, assertiveness, and achievements. Feminine societies give more importance to cooperation, caring for the weak, quality of life, and modesty (Hofstede, 2001). Germany is classified as a masculine society where performance is highly valued and required early. Germans draw a lot of self-esteem from their tasks, and recognition of their results is highly appreciated. Management and leadership style are expected to be precise and assertive (Hofstede, 2001). In Thailand, masculinity is not distinct. Thailand scores the lowest among the Asian countries; competitiveness and assertiveness are not strongly marked, and traditional values are considered to be more important and significant (Hofstede, 2001).

The dimension of uncertainty avoidance (UCA) expresses the degree to which members of a society feel uncomfortable in unstructured situations that are novel, unknown, surprising, or unusual. The Germans indicate a slight preference for uncertainty avoidance. German people are rule-oriented and have a strong preference for deductive thinking,

presenting, or planning. According to the low power distance, employees have to justify their decision on their own and cannot hide behind their bosses' larger responsibility (Hofstede, 2001). Thai people have a higher need to avoid uncertainty than do other nations (Andrews & Siengthai, 2009). They try to avoid uncertainty by adopting of strict rules, laws, policies, and regulations. Thai people like to control in order to eliminate unexpected circumstances. Thai society is not ready to accept changes easily and tries to avoid risks (Hofstede, 2001).

The dimension of long-term orientation (LTO) contains the temporal orientation toward life. Germany is a rather short-term-oriented country. Germans pay great respect to traditions. They have relatively small propensity to save because high social pressure to “keep up with the Joneses” is embossed in the German culture. Also, there is distinct impatience for achieving quick results and a strong concern for establishing the absolute truth (Hofstede, 2001). Even though respect and tradition play an important role for Thais, Thailand is classified as an LTO country. For Thai people, values such as hard working, investing in personal relationships, protecting someone's face, and having a sense of moderation are dominant. Concerning business, this implies that deadlines are as fluid as limitations and time scales. Negotiations are mostly flexible and pragmatic (Hofstede, 2001). The table below summarized the different cultural dimensions between the German and the Thais.

Table 1: The summary of the different cultural dimensions between the German and the Thais

Cultural Dimension	Germans	Thais
Power distance (PDI)	Low power distance countries. In business life, German employees get used to direct, participative communication	Inequalities are mostly accepted, seniority and status are related to wealth, power, professional rank, age, and social connections
Individualism (IDV)	High individualism, the Germans learn to think critically, make their own decisions, become independent,	Highly collectivistic, where long-term commitment to member groups such as families is very important

Table 1 : (continued)

Cultural Dimension	Germans	Thais
Individualism (IDV)	and do things alone	
Masculinity (MAS)	Masculine society where performance is highly valued and required.	Feminine society where competitiveness and assertiveness are not strongly marked, and traditional values are considered to be more important and significant
Uncertainty avoidance (UCA)	Rule-oriented and have a strong preference for deductive thinking, presenting, or planning	Higher need to avoid uncertainty, by adopting of strict rules, laws, policies, and regulations
Long-term orientation (LTO)	Distinct impatience for achieving quick results and a strong concern for establishing the absolute truth.	Values such as hard working, investing in personal relationships, protecting someone's face, and having a sense of moderation are dominant.

2.2 Decision-Making

The research on decision-making has provided an enormous amount of “empirical investigations, descriptions, prescriptions, structuring techniques, and analytical tools” (Nutt, 2011, p. 6). But, despite these notable distributions and efforts, only a few coherent approaches could be developed (Nutt, 2011).

1) Rational Decision-Making

Mishra (2014) identified the most rational decision in order to maximize benefits; thus, normative theories describe what individuals ought to do in a given decision-making situation. The individuals should follow specific rules and keep to the six steps in which rational decision-making usually proceeds (Harrison, 1996; Phatak et al., 2005).

Table 2: Rational Decision-Making Process

Steps	Necessary Tasks
1. Problem definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify problem – Realize need for decision-making
2. Identification of decision criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Clarify what are the objectives – Identify all criteria that need to be considered
3. Weighting of criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Prioritize criteria
4. Generation of alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify all possible alternatives that meet the criteria
5. Evaluation of alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Evaluate each alternative against weighted criteria
6. Selecting optimal solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Chose optimal alternative according to your evaluation

Source: Thomas, 2008, p. 94.

Limited applicability is a major weak point of rational decision-making (Smith, 2003). In a world of dynamic changes, a lot of limitations to rational decision-making have been set. Managers frequently have to deal with incomplete information or time restrictions. Sometimes they are even confronted with the limited cognitive capabilities of themselves (Thomas, 2008; Elbanna, 2006).

2) Non-rational Decision-Making

Elbanna (2006) elaborates on political behavior and intuition in decision-making. Political behavior among decision-makers has long been recognized as an influencing factor in the decision-making process (Child & Tsai, 2005, quoted in Elbanna, 2006). The power in organizations is often demonstrated by the intervention in decision-making situations. Disregarding the best interest of the organization or the rationality of decisions, the self-interest of the involved managers prevails. Politically influenced decision-makers prefer informal processes of negotiation, bargaining, and other political activities rather than rational replicable approaches (Tsang, 2004).

A second approach of non-rational decision-making often occurs when there is a lack of required information or a quick solution is needed. In these cases, the role of intuition as an influencing factor in decision-making processes increases. Khatri and Ng (2000) provided three implications of intuition:

- Reliance on judgment suggests that, whenever necessary, information cannot be obtained and no precedent is present,

the decision-maker relies on his judgment (Butler, 2002, quoted in Elbanna, 2006).

- Reliance on experience: Managers draw their attention not on the actual effects but on their previous experience and knowledge (Nutt, 1998). The more experience the decision-makers have, the more they rely on their own skills (Elbanna, 2006).
- Use of gut feelings: Some “decision-makers simply know that they are right, or they have a strong feeling about the decision” (Elbanna, 2006, p. 11).

3. Research Methodology

In the research upon which this paper is based, the subjects were structured into two specific research questions.

1. How do prospective Thai and German managers describe their business decision-making?
2. Which influence do cultural aspects have on the procedure of business decision-making?

To explore these questions, the research gathered samples from German and Thai perspective managers who have already reached a professional qualification and working experience for at least one year. The samples composed of young professionals with some working experienced from Germany who resided (working or studying) within Germany and the Thai future executives who are currently working or studying in Thailand. They must have already reached a professional qualification such as a Bachelor’s degree and working experience for at least one year. The questionnaire was sent to 100 persons of each nationality by selecting the sample randomly. The final response rate was 76% for the Germans, the response rate of the Thais was 63%. The final number of respondents was 139 respondents in total. The research was conducted through a questionnaire. Culture-specific behavioral anchors on decision-making and business life, derived from Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, formed the first part of the query; thus, general questions about the typical behavior of business decision-making is the second part. The evaluation was first carried out with descriptive statistical methods by using the mean score to interpret the results for each of the cultural dimension category. Later, multiple

regressions were run to evaluate the results with inductive statistical methods.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of respondents

Age (in years)	Mean (German): 25.92 Mean (Thai): 28.51
Gender	Male (German): 46 (60.5%) Female (German): 30 (39.5%) Male (Thai): 26 (41.3%) Female (Thai): 37 (58.7%)
Work Experience (in years)	Mean (German): 3.32 Mean (Thai): 5.4
Education	Below bachelor's degree (German): 9% Bachelor's degree (German): 52% Master's degree (German): 38% Doctoral degree (German): 1% Below bachelor's degree (Thai): 0% Bachelor's degree (Thai): 63% Master's degree (Thai): 35% Doctoral degree (Thai): 2%
Company international activities	(German) International 78.9% International acting companies operated worldwide 66%

Table 3: (continued)

Company international activities	(German) International 78.9% International acting companies operated worldwide 66% Operation in various countries 34% Subsidiary of another company 64.5% (Thai) International operations 80% International acting companies operated worldwide 34% Operation in various countries 26%
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4. Conceptual Framework

The following diagram represents the relevant variables for this research, which are interrelated and illustrated in the conceptual model.

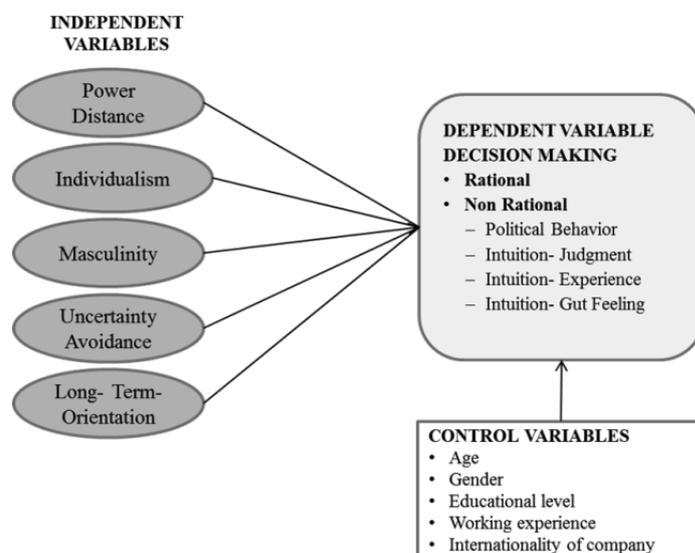


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

The cultural dimensions of power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation form the independent variables in this research. Decision-making with its divisions' rational and non-rational approaches were

the dependent variables. In addition, control variables such as age, gender, educational level, working experience, and internationality of company were introduced.

5. Research Results

5.1 Characteristics of the Respondents

Thai subjects averaged 28.51 years old. Contrary to Germans, for the Thais with a percentage of 63%, a master's degree is the most common qualification. Thai participants had 5.4 years of working experience on average and worked in mostly international operating companies (60%). German respondents averaged 25.92 years old. Most participants named a bachelor's degree (52%) as the highest educational qualification, followed by a master's degree (38%). German subjects worked for 3.32 years on average in international operating companies (78.9%).

5.2 Descriptive Comparative Results of Thailand and Germany

A cross-country analysis helps to illuminate the differences and similarities between the two countries in a decision-making context. Characteristics refer to the mean score of each variable. The scale of measurement indicates a score of five as strong agreement whereas one stands for strong disagreement.

Table 4: Comparison of Rational Decision-Making Behavior

	Rational Decision-Making Process	General Rational Decision-Making	Rational Decision-Making total mean score
Germany	3.75	3.63	3.70
Thailand	4.00	3.86	3.95

Most of the Germans tried to decide rationally. This was proven by the high accordance with the behavioral anchors of the rational decision-making process and further general rational statements. The great majority of participants acknowledged identifying facts that support their decision. Furthermore, most of the Germans concurred with the statement that they can justify their decisions with facts that everybody can retrace. Additionally, a number of Germans stated to consider alternatives as equal possible solutions when reliable facts approve of this. The German decision-makers considered risks and advantages carefully as an outcome of the decision. Moreover, most of the Germans professed that they evaluate their ideas. To conclude, two thirds of the participants tried to avoid the influence of emotions on business decisions and even more stated that they try to make their decisions rationally.

Also the Thai decision-making behavior can be described as rational. The evaluation of the rational decision-making process showed broad acceptance for the rational decision-making approach, proceeding in six steps. The great majority of Thai participants tried to identify facts that support their decisions. Most respondents answered that they can justify their decisions with facts that everybody can retrace. Also, most participants maintained that each alternative is considered as an equal possible solution when the facts proved this. Further, the great majority of the Thai subjects professed that they consider risks and advantages as an outcome of their decision and professed to evaluate their ideas. Also, around two-thirds of the participants agreed to refrain from emotions when it comes to business decisions.

Table 5: Comparison of Non-Rational Decision-Making Behavior

	Political Behavior	Intuition-Judgment	Intuition-Experience	Intuition-Gut Feeling	General Non-Rational Decision-Making	Non-Rational Decision-Making total mean score
Germany	3.22	no score	3.67	3.02	3.21	3.28
Thailand	3.87	3.98	3.79	3.21	3.43	3.58

In the case of limitations, the impulse for non-rational decision-making grew stronger, but the Germans still kept rational decision-making in mind to some degree. However, for the investigation, what the subjects do when they do not have enough time to decide, the reliance on emotions, expertise,

and one's own experiences were the most common answers. The study came to the same result, in the case of limited information, where the German prospective managers would first ask colleagues for their help and experience and, in the second step, involve their superior. This just covered the findings of Elbanna (2006), where she stated that limitations

set boundaries to the rational approach and, therefore, led to non-rational decision-making. But, as the participants often also mentioned rational and non-rational approaches at the same time, a combination of both seems likely.

The influence of non-rational factors on Thai decision-making behavior cannot be neglected. The normally rational decision-making behavior of Thai participants was in the case of limitations strongly affected by intuition and external influence, e.g., through colleagues and superiors, but also through the preference of avoiding the decision. The subjects were confident of their good intuition for decision-making and

especially, in the case of important decisions, they stated relying on their intuition. Thus, in the case of limitations, the Thai subjects tended toward non-rational decision-making approaches but without totally losing rationality.

5.3 Comparison of the Cultural Classification in the Literature and in Decision-Making

At first, estimation of Hofstede's dimensions from the literature was documented and then the mean score based on the research results of the decision-making behavior (DCM) determined.

Table 6: Comparison of Cultural Impact on Decision-Making

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Germany	low	2.28	Idv.	2.49	Mas.	2.26	Medium	2.53	short	3.92
Thailand	high	3.56	Col.	4.23	Fem.	2.07	Medium	3.63	long	2.30

Note: Power distance literature (1), Power distance Decision-Making (2), Individualism literature (3), Individualism Decision-Making (4) Masculinity literature (5), Masculinity Decision-Making (6), Uncertainty avoidance literature (7), Uncertainty avoidance Decision-Making (8), Long-term orientation literature (9), Long-term orientation Decision-Making (10)

To summarize, the results show that Hofstede's appraisal can only be proven to be relevant to some degree in terms of decision-making context. Hofstede findings pertained especially to the dimension of power distance where the findings indicated a rather low power distance in the case of decision-making of the German participants. For the other dimensions, Hofstede's results for German society cannot be conveyed to decision-making context. In this research, the Germans professed their attitude to collectivism by involving colleagues in their decision-making. This indicates more groupthink than expected but may also relate to the strong importance of participation in German business decision-making. Also, the common masculine German society in decision-making context paid attention to feminine values such as, e.g., a good feeling after making a decision. The result of the uncertainty avoidance index in decision-making context also varied from Hofstede's findings. The participants stated risk-taking propensity, which stands in contrast to the German decision-making behavior part, where the participants professed themselves as being rather risk averse. But, as the German society in general scored medium uncertainty avoidance, this discrepancy seems to be a good example for the diversity in uncertainty avoidance of the Germans.

Additionally, Hofstede predicted that the short-term orientation of the Germans cannot be transferred to a decision-making context. Here it seems that the Germans take their time to think thoroughly about their decisions. The subjects indicated their willingness to deal with problems and decisions more intensely by searching for more than one solution to a problem.

For the majority of dimensions, Hofstede's results also can be proven relevant in the context of decision-making. Hofstede's estimation for Thai power distance scored high. Also in a decision-making context, the high-power distance of the Thai participants can be deduced. The participants stated that important decisions were usually taken from high-level positions. Additionally, a lot of the subjects were sure that their bosses made good decisions. Contrary to Hofstede's estimation, in decision-making context the Thais professed an individualistic attitude. They did not hesitate to take responsibility for their decisions but also professed that the outcome for them, individually, and not necessarily for the group, is most important. However, the Thais still seemed to be collectivistic to some degree, as they named group benefits as well as the maintaining of relationships with colleagues as seriously important when it comes to conflicts due to opposing goals. Further, Thailand

scored mostly feminine values for decision-making, which was also proposed by Hofstede. Remaining true to one's self values rather than gaining appreciation and the importance of a good feeling after making a decision indicates the feminine attitude of Thai society. The dimension of uncertainty avoidance shows a preference for uncertainty avoidance. The Thais try to avoid uncertainty by adopting and implementing strict rules, laws, policies, and regulations. By relying on facts rather than on feelings and by using the established regulations, it might have been easier for the Thais to justify their decisions. However, the subjects did not approve Hofstede's predicted long-term orientation of the Thais in a decision-making context. A lot of Thais did not prefer thinking too long about decisions, as quick decisions suggest competency to them. Additionally, they stated that seeing the outcome of decisions directly is important for them.

5.4 Inductive German Analysis: Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 7: Regression Analysis Model- Thai Rational Decision-Making

Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	1.958			
UCA	.201	.401	3.187	.002

Note: $R^2=.404$, ($ps<.05$)

With increasing rationality in decision-making, the preference for uncertainty avoidance of the Thais was raised. The Thais saw their companies as being rule oriented with a lot of different regulations. They also preferred making their decisions conditional on facts rather than on emotions. These possibilities fit into the rational decision-making process and minimize uncertainty.

Table 8: Regression Analysis Model- Thai Non Rational Decision-Making

Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	3.714			
LTO	-.211	-.311	2.142	.037
Internationality of Company	.174	.276	2.234	.030

Note: $R^2=.319$, ($ps<.05$)

With increasing non-rationality, the decision-orientation turned to short-term orientation. A lot of Thai subjects professed that thinking not too long about decisions is a sign of competency for them. Also, they stated favoring to see immediate outcomes of their decisions. In addition to the shrinking long-term orientation, the more international the companies operate, the more Thais decided non-rational. As the Thais had a preference for uncertainty avoidance, also in local companies a lot of regulations and policies were passed. This addictedness to rules seemed to decline by working in an international operating company, as the Thais might have explored more freedom on how to make their decisions. Especially in companies from countries with a low-power distance, hierarchies were flat, and regulations often were more flexible than in companies from high-power distance countries. Thus, it is conceivable that the Thais took advantage of this gained independence and, therefore, used non-rational rather than rational approaches.

5.5 Inductive German Analysis: Multiple Regression Analysis

After the descriptive analysis of the results, multiple regression analysis models were run to find out whether the five cultural dimensions can predict the rational and non-rational decision-making processes of the Germans.

Table 9: Regression Analysis Model- German Rational Decision-Making

Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	3.574			
PDI	-.188	-.316	3.096	.003
IDV	-.183	-.297	3.073	.003
MAS	-.212	-.288	2.905	.005
UCA	.160	.219	2.095	.040

Note: $R^2=.449$, ($ps<.05$)

The more rational people decide, the lower draw their power distance. For the German participants, hierarchies were not obstacles; therefore, the Germans did not hesitate to indicate mistakes to their superiors and to signify their opinion when they did not agree with their bosses' decisions. Also, according to Hofstede (2001), German employees were used to direct, participative communication. With the increase of

rational decision-making, the German score of individualism shrunk, which reflects that the more rational people decide, the more their success depends on the group. Most of the Germans professed to prefer discussing possible solutions with their colleagues before reaching a decision. In the German case, raising rationality predicted also declining masculinity. The normally materialistic and success-oriented German society seemed to pay more attention to feminine values. Rational decision-making for only success-related reasons as the ultimate goal seems less important for the Germans than their wish to be at peace with the world and their selves. Moreover, with increasing rational decision-making, the preference for uncertainty avoidance raised. The more rational the people decided, the more they followed a defined procedure. This eased the reaction to unpredictable and incalculable situations; therefore, the uncertainty avoidance score increased by ensuring security and support in uncertain situations.

Table 10: Regression Analysis Model- German Non-Rational Decision-Making

Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	2.692			
IDV	.176	.270	2.711	.009
UCA	-.347	-.449	-4.164	.000
Age	.068	.306	2.081	.042

Note: $R^2=.416$, ($ps<.05$)

Contrary to the negative correlation with rational decision-making, in this case, individualism and non-rational decision-making were positively related. One's own experience and expertise seemed important and, therefore, formed a more individualistic than collectivistic characteristic. With increasing non-rationality in decision-making, the masculinity declined. As in the case of increasing rationality, the German participants, in general, seemed to tend toward a more feminine attitude in decision-making, no matter which approach they preferred. Also in contrast to the correlation with rational decision-making, the uncertainty avoidance score declined by 0.449 with increasing non-rational decision-making. As the decision-makers did not refer to a fixed procedure and trusted their own attitude, the need for coverage of uncertainty and risks was lower. Furthermore, non-rational decision-making was significantly predicted by the control variable age. The older the Germans were, the more they relied on non-rational decision-making. This can be explained through the increasing working

experience and judgment they gained during the years.

6. Summary and Concluding Remarks

Results of this study show that the decision-making behavior of both sample groups generally can be described as rational. Prospective managers from Germany and Thailand try to exclude feelings from their decisions in general and follow a clear structure in order to make their decisions justifiable and comprehensible to others.

However, as decisions in the future will be increasingly determined by limitations that set boundaries to rationality, the importance of non-rational decision-making will raise further. It can be inferred from the findings that, in these situations, the accessibility for external influence, e.g., through colleagues or superiors rises in both countries. Also the impact of emotions can be identified as important. "Rationality is bounded by emotions and, in any case, emotions cannot be separated from rationality in either personal or business decision-making" (Das, 2008, p. 1). Similarly to the research of Isenberg (1984) and Burke and Miller (1999), quoted in Sinclair and Ashkanasy (2005), proved, in case of limitations or uncertain situations, decision-makers tend to use non-rational approaches such as intuition or experience in conjunction with rational analysis. By the results of this study, this conjunction can also be inferred for prospective managers from Germany and from Thailand.

It was more difficult than expected to draw the correlation of each cultural dimension on decision-making. The findings of the research indicate that the cultural impact on decision-making behavior was not as strong as it could have been expected through the differences in the national culture. The influencing cultural dimensions varied a lot with the exception of uncertainty avoidance in what influenced both German and Thai rational decision-making behaviors. The findings of this research gives the impression that the different influence of the particular cultural dimensions on an almost similar decision-making behavior relate to other factors such as age or internationality of the company as well. The study findings are relevant for practitioners of collaborating companies of Germany and Thailand. Employees that must operate in an international environment could benefit from the findings on how decision-making takes place in the examined countries and the influence culture has on decision-making. They could use this knowledge to estimate the decision-

making behavior of business partners in order to be more successful in the future.

At first, international operating managers should be aware of the cultural differences of the countries they are working with and understand the cultural specifics. Even though prospective managers from both countries decide mostly rational, practitioners need to avoid generalization of the behavior of prospective managers of Germany and Thailand. Having a closer look at the decision-making behavior in the case of limitations, e.g., time or information restrictions, especially prospective managers from Thailand tend stronger than Germans to non-rational decision-making behavior. Nonetheless, German prospective managers are likely to rely on non-rational techniques. Managers should ensure that enough time and appropriate information are provided in order to keep the decision-making process as rational and, therefore, as replicable as possible. In this context, practitioners also need to realize that not all knowledge is universal; it varies across cultures. Therefore, differences in the kind of information or amount of time need to be considered as well. Furthermore, as rational decision-making aims to choose the alternative that allows maximization of benefits, companies usually prefer the rational decision-making approach of their employees. However, practitioners should keep in mind that their companies might also profit from good intuition based on experience, as this might ease rational decision-making, for example, through better selection and weighting of alternative solutions.

To conclude, even though decision-making behavior in both countries has similar tendencies, practitioners need to avoid unification of decision-making across cultures. Similarities in decision-

making do not automatically imply similar behavior in other contents. It always should be considered that the cultural background is distinctly different. The ideas, customs, and social behavior of the particular people still differ, which might lead to different reactions of prospective managers from Germany and Thailand in various business situations.

7. Limitations and Future Research

The limitation of this study is due to the nature of self-administrative questionnaire, the responses may not reflect the true behavior and the nature of cultural dimension of individual. Moreover, size of the respondent may not represent the nature of prospected managers among the two countries. In addition, the results of this study cannot be considered as conclusive, but they can provide an exploratory approach to examine decision-making behavior in Germany and Thailand and to investigate the influence of culture on decision-making behaviors.

Contrary to initial expectations, the former research of cultural effects on decision-making was not extensive. It was especially difficult to find similar former research results that cover all of Hofstede's dimensions. For the dimensions of power distance and individualism, applicable research results were found, but more attention in future research could be paid to the other cultural dimensions and their influence on decision-making. Further, the underlying circumstances should be considered in future research. As the Internet and globalization borders become more flexible and culture changes faster, the examination of these factors and their influence on decision-making could be potentially important as well.

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