TAIWAN AND THAILAND- CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AT WORK

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to identify, from a Taiwanese perspective, the cultural differences experienced by Taiwanese business owners/managers who live/work in Thailand. It is important to understand the differences in cultural values before moving into a new country. The qualitative research methodology has been used in this paper. Interviews were conducted to define in depth the cultural differences perceived by Taiwanese business owners/managers who live/work in Thailand. The interviewees had at least three years of work experience in Thailand along with work experience in Taiwan, which served as their cultural background. They clearly provided examples of differences and similarities between Taiwan and Thailand's work culture.

The interview results showed four aspects of cultural differences:

主動 *Zhu-Dong* (Initiative) vs. Sabai-Sabai (easy-going attitude), 危機感 *Wei-Ji-Gan* (crisis awareness) vs. Jai Yen Yen (take–it-easy attitude), 面子 *Mian-Zi* (Face), Humane management. And two other aspects which were similar in both cultures were: Hierarchy and 關係 *Guan-Xi* (Relationship).

KEY WORDS: Culture/Taiwan/Thailand/Management

40 pages

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Globalization enabled various businesses to expand abroad easily and technological developments created chances for people to communicate and interact with each other across countries faster. Business owners and managers who worked and lived in a culturally different country need to be flexible, deployable, multi-skilled, multidisciplinary, and cross-cultural (Alkhafaji, 1995, p. 57). In order to work or come into contact with people from different cultures, it can be said that culture has become one of the important factors that can affect management. Problems may occur when a foreigner needs to deal with people in the host country. *"Cultural problems are different to diagnose because so many crucial elements are hidden from the participants of the system itself. Often cultural patterns exist as unrecognized assumptions. It is generally only by looking at other cultures that people become aware of having taken their own cultural patterns for granted"* (Nord, 1972, cited in Runyon, 1977, p.76).

Globalization also created certain chances for business owners to reduce production costs by investing in developing counties, which are lower in labor costs, raw materials, cost of living, etc. By reducing costs, it helped increase profits for the company. However, living in a foreign country is a challenge for everyone. The differences in weather, food, language, and culture, etc., are factors that can cause problems, and sometimes may lead to the failure of investments. There are multiple studies comparing Asian and Western cultures. Somehow, very few studies compare Asian countries closely. From an outsiders' view, Asian cultures are similar, but, in reality, East Asia and Southeast Asia's values and norms are different. As a native Taiwanese, I learned about the differences between Taiwanese and Thai culture while

growing up in Thailand, which is different for Taiwanese investors who only invested in Thailand later in their lives, and had most of their work experience in Taiwan. Conflicts and uncomfortable feelings might occur when a foreigner needs to have his/her life start over in a new environment/culture. This paper helps identify the different cultural values between Taiwan and Thailand from a Taiwanese perspective. It also provides some basic cultural knowledge for future investors who would like to invest in Thailand. The literature review is focused on the basic definition of culture from various researchers, and it defined both Taiwanese and Thai cultural background in general. Qualitative methodology is applied in this paper. The intention of this research is to identify the cultural similarities and dissimilarities between Taiwan and Thailand at the workplace, based on interviews. Taiwanese owner/managers provided useful feedbacks in pointing out the differences between Taiwan and Thailand's culture in terms of management. The paper includes some actual stories and problems that occurred in the workplace, and also, it shows how managers react and make changes to adapt themselves to a situation. Hopefully, this paper can reveal some interesting cultural aspects as a guideline for Taiwanese business owners/managers to successfully manage their businesses in Thailand.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

In the cross-cultural literature, a lot of research studies have focused on comparing the cultures of Western countries with Asian countries. For example, a study on the cultures of Germany and Thailand analyzed how organizational culture influences a firm's entrepreneurial orientation and how this relationship is influenced by the national culture (Engelen et al., 2014). Several studies compared the culture of Western countries with that of Taiwan, such as a recent study, which examines the impact of religious culture on the negotiations of Iran, Taiwan, and the United States (Farazmand, Tu, & Daneefard, 2011). Some studies focus on similar cultures in order to group them together so as to compare them with another culture that clearly showed differences. For example, a study was undertaken to help Western managers understand the business people, companies and human resources of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong based on Confucian ethics (Lin & Ho, 2009). Another study focused on finding cultural similarities between Japan and Thailand based on Hofstede's framework about application and adaptability of Japanese management practices in Thailand (Swierczek & Onishi, 2003).

However, studies that focus on defining cultural differences of seemingly similar cultures are rare. While there are several studies that compare Western cultures with either Taiwanese or Thai culture, no studies comparing the cultures of Taiwan and Thailand could be found. In order to identify in depth the cultural differences of Taiwan and Thailand, this paper will first introduce some historical information about Taiwan and Thailand as a guideline for understanding cultural differences.

2.1 Culture

The meaning of "culture" has been derived by different researchers from different fields of study, under different levels and forms. There are hundreds of definitions for the word "culture". Culture is shared among a group or society that has a common lifestyle. According to the social scientist Hofstede (2005), "*Culture is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another*" (p. 4).
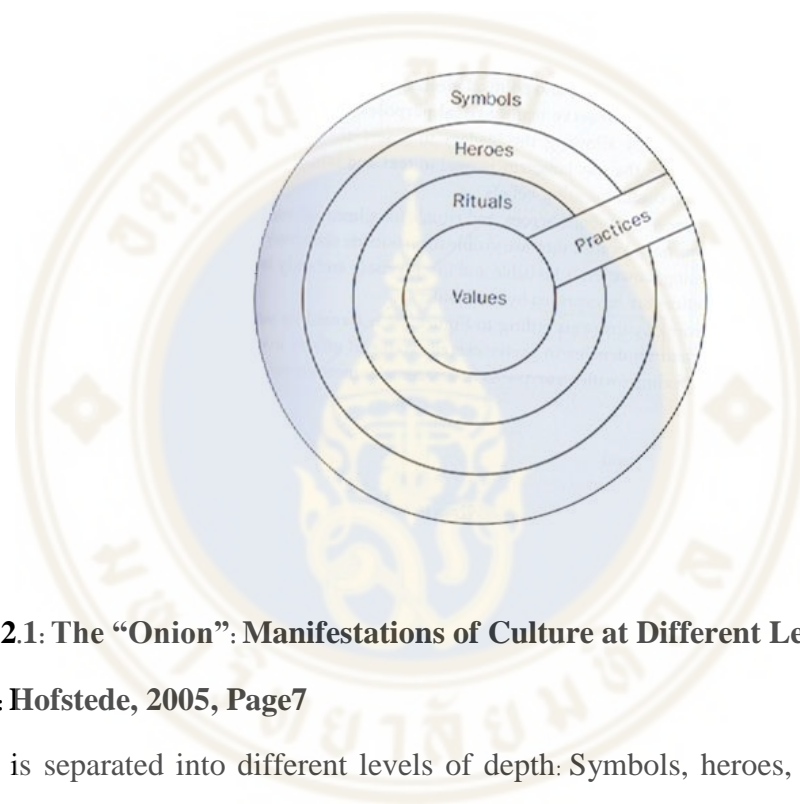

Figure 2.1: The "Onion": Manifestations of Culture at Different Levels of Depth

Source: Hofstede, 2005, Page 7

Culture is separated into different levels of depth: Symbols, heroes, rituals, and core values. The core values are learned in the first 10-12 years of our life, which include symbols, heroes, and rituals that help us to unconsciously fit into the environment we live in. We then consciously learn in a gradual manner from the new practices in schools or at workplaces. Cultural practices can be changed when we go through different levels in life such as the national level, social class level, generation level, and organizational/departmental/corporate level. However, although cultural practices change, values remain stable as they are learned at a young age (Hofstede, 2005). Hofstede (1980) describes value as "*a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs*

over others" (p. 19), and calls values "*mental programming*" which exists before behavior (p. 25).

Hofstede's (2005) five national cultural dimensions are power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and short-term orientation vs. long-term orientation. Power distance measures the degree of inequality in a society. The distance between parents and children, boss and subordinates, elders and youngsters, etc. Individualism vs. collectivism measures the degree of individualism in a society by defining the independency degree of a person. Individualism values include personal time, freedom, and challenge, and in contrast, collectivism values include training, physical conditions, and use of skills. Masculinity-Femininity measures a society's values related to achievement. Masculine societies mostly values earnings, recognition, advancement, and challenge. High paid, public recognition and accomplish difficult task is highly preferred in masculine cultures. On the other hand, the femininity pole values management, cooperation, surroundings, and employment security. They prefer to maintain good relationships and cooperate with people. Uncertainty avoidance measures the tolerance of ambiguity in a society; it defines the acceptance of new things, acceptance of change, and the ability to take risks. Countries with high uncertainty avoidance scores often have more stress, can only accept familiar risks, and are better at implementation. In contrast, countries with low uncertainty avoidance scores have less stress, can accept ambiguous situations, and are better at invention. The last dimension, which is long-term orientation, fosters perseverance and thrift, whereas short-term orientation fosters preservation of "face" and fulfilling social obligations. Countries with Long-term orientation show respect for circumstances, don't focus on leisure time, and make sustained efforts toward slow results. In contrast, countries with short-term orientation show respect for traditions, focus on leisure time and bottom lines, and think efforts should produce quick results. Triandis (2004) as a psychologist, felt that culture was a central topic in psychology after he reviewed Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Based on Hofstede's cultural

dimension, he identified the influences of the dimensions that affect the psychological processes and organizational behaviors in many cultures.

According to Triandis (1994), *"Culture is a shared meaning system, found among those who speak a particular language dialect, during a specific historic period, and in a definable geographic region"* (p. 146). Cultural distance occurs when the two cultures are different. Cultural distance is greater when the people speak different languages, have different social structures (family structures), different religions, different standards of living, and when values differ substantially between cultures. Triandis has developed four culture dimensions, which are individualism vs. collectivism, content vs. context, idiocentric vs. allocentric, and tight vs. loose culture. Each of these dimensions is closely related to each other. Individualism and collectivism is the most important dimension of all as it can be used to link to every other dimension later on. A collectivist culture gives more priority to the group they belong to, and they are more loyal and rank high in organizational commitment, whereas an individualist culture sees self as a stable entity. In an individualism culture, messages are conveyed directly since the culture focuses more on content messages; in this culture, they say what they want to say. In contrast, collectivism culture is based more on context messages. Here, there are hidden messages under the spoken words. In a culture, there are individuals who are idiocentric (think, feel, and behave like people in an individualist culture) and there are individuals who are allocentric (like people in a collectivist culture). Idiocentrics are more expressive, aggressive, initiate action, tend to finish a given task and have strong opinions. Allocentrics, on the other hand, are highly accommodating and avoid arguments, and shift their opinions easily than idiocentrics. A tight culture has many rules and norms; has standards for correct behavior; and is mostly found in high population density countries such as Japan. A loose culture on the other hand, has less rules and norms, also fewer standards, and is mostly found in low population density countries such as Thailand (Triandis, 2000).

As a cross-cultural psychologist, Matsumoto (2000) defined culture as *"a dynamic system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups in order to ensure their survival, involving attitudes, values, beliefs, norms and behaviors shared by a group but harbored difficultly by each specific unit within the group, communicated across generations, relatively stable by with the potential to change across time."* (p. 24). He spotted five factors that affect culture in order to meet survival needs: environment, technology, population density, climate and affluence. Environment can influence the nature of the culture. For example, natural resources of each country owned, such as oil, fruits, etc. The geographical environment can affect the way people live and so as their culture. Teamwork and interrelationships among members of an in-group and out-group will help in getting abundant resources in order to survive. This makes a society accept foreigners and interact with them in a better way. Societies with high population density require greater social orders than societies with lower population density in order to function effectively. Technology affects the way people work. It makes them more capable of working independently and relying less on others. Difference in climate affects the way people dress, eat, and live. Cold weather and hot weather society live differently to survive. Affluence is related to both individualism and emotionality. As a society becomes more affluent, they are able to rely less on others. All those factors are likely to influence people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

Brooks Peterson, founder of Across Cultures Inc., lived, worked, and traveled in many countries, and earned great experiences in various fields such as academic, business, manufacturing, non-profit, and military. From the experiences in these fields, he developed the definition of culture as *"Culture is the relatively stable set of inner values and beliefs generally held by groups of people in countries or regions and the noticeable impact those values and beliefs have on people's outward behaviors and environment"* (Peterson, 2004, p. 17). Culture can be explained in a simpler way. Imagine culture as a tree, a tree includes its roots, branches, and leaves. The same applies to people, because family, diet, environment, and education slowly form them and create a society of all like individuals. Trees undergo changes every year, dead

leaves fall and new ones grow, but still the tree remains the same. Similarly, values provide people within the group the same context meaning toward the same culture. But, it can't help to predict a person's reaction in a certain situation even if you know what their values are. "*Culture values are principles or qualities that a group of people will tend to see as good or right or worthwhile*" (Peterson, 2004, p. 22).

Culture is a system of particular group of people who lived under the same environment, beliefs, norms, behavior and values. They shared the same language, lifestyle, and standard of living. According to the previous definitions of culture given by the researchers above, Hofstede's definition classified culture by nations, where the countries are grouped to be similar based on his five cultural dimensions. However, Triandis derived the meaning of culture in a narrower view. He focuses on culture in one dimension of Hofstede's research and provides more insights on individuals in a certain culture. Individuals can be different regardless of their nationality. Matsumoto, on the other hand, describes culture as a shared psychological phenomena in which culture contains values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Culture can be affected by external factors and it changes through generations.

2.2 Thai Culture

Thailand's culture has been greatly influenced by the Buddhist religion since the Sukothai era to the present time. Its values and culture are unique and developed without direct foreign influence as it was never colonized by any foreign country like the neighboring Southeast Asian countries (Niffenegger et al., 2006).

Thai culture emphasizes on two main components to form its social structure: social hierarchy and the degree of ethnic heterogeneity. Thais have a strong social hierarchy system in their mind. They emphasize on respect for elders, superiors, and patrons. Status, seniority and personal connections are important and they manage the social relationships in Thailand. Thailand is moderately heterogeneous; 90 percent of

Thailand's population is Thai, 8 percent are Chinese descendants, and 1 percent is Malay. The Chinese descendants and Malays have absorbed Thai culture through intermarriage and education in Thai schools. Therefore, they face no problems when living in Thailand unlike in the other Asian countries where there is strong discrimination against foreigners (Chanthika, 2000).

Chanthika (2000) has been exploring Thai values in depth, and he has come up with 10 different values to describe Thai people and society.

1. Individualism vs. Collectivism: Thais highly value maintaining harmony in interpersonal relationships. They are collectivistic, interdependent, and emphasize face-saving. They are easily influenced by family, friends, and those with whom they have close relationships. They treat in-groups with quality norm, but use equity norm for out-groups. Decision-making is centralized, and the leaders play a paternalistic role.

2. Locus of Control: Thais are collective oriented (external locus of control). They have a tendency to submit to one's individual fate, chance, and the power of others. They believe life is ephemeral and fatalistic. They have favorable attitude toward an advertisement when the endorser/spokesperson is an expert, regardless of the message being send. They also believe that chance and luck influence income.

3. Uncertainty Avoidance: Thais score moderately high on the uncertainty avoidance index. They value high security in life and believe in experts' knowledge. They are likely to seek for strategies to reduce risks. They often rely on suggestions from personal information sources, friends, neighbors or relations.

4. Relationship Orientation: Personal connection is crucial for success at work in Thai society. They have low levels of task achievement and regard work as less important than maintaining good relationships with others.

5. Sensitivity: "Krieng-jai" (the attitude of being polite and restrain one self's interest of desire) value is dominant in Thai society. It consists of difference, deference, consideration, sensitivity toward others, reluctance to impose on or interrupt others, and reluctance to assert one's comments, wants, or disagreements. It is a norm mostly reserved for in-group members and for acquaintances who are in frequent contact, but it is not practiced toward out-group members.

6. Payment of Favor: Thais pay "Bun-khun" (moderate to extreme favor, patronage) and "Nam-jai" (kindness, mild favor, generosity, voluntary help) to the people they have received help from. The reciprocation of "Bun-khun" and "Nam-jai" need not be in the same form or of equal proportion, but it must be regarded that some form of repayment has taken place or will take place in the future.

7. Situation/Flexibility Orientation: Thai society is situation- and flexibility- oriented. They often change decisions according to the situation to avoid further conflict in the future. Therefore, principles and rules are usually flexible to suit people and situations.

8. Materialism: Thais are materialistic and believe that people judge them by the way they dress and what they own (Thorelli & Sentell, 1982). However, as Thai culture is rated as a moderately feminine culture, the dominant values are caring for others and quality of life (Chanthika, 2000).

9. Hedonism: Thais are satisfied with immediate gratification of their needs. They are concerned with making a living for the present time, and do just enough to survive. "Sa-bai" (comfortable, trouble-free, contented) and "Mai-ben-rai" (never mind, it doesn't matter) give an easygoing feeling about life and social interactions in Thai society, which implies high degree of flexibility in rules and regulations.

10. Activity-handling Mode: Thais are relatively polychronic (doing many things and being involved with many people at the same time) in interpersonal relations. It is quite common to see Thai people gather in crowds for a service.

The following are five Thai values that Thais established to maintain good relationships with friends or at work places (Holmes & Tangtongtavy, 1995)

1. *"Krieng Jai"* refers to an attitude whereby an individual tries to restrain his/her own interest or desire in a situation where there is a potential for discomfort or conflict.

2. *"Hai Kiad"* means to give respect or show honor. It can be expressed in different forms. "Wai" is the basic form of Thais giving respect. It is the posture of putting their hands together in a sort of prayer form and is accompanied with a slight bow. When employees ask you to join a wedding or a funeral ceremony, your attendance gives weight to the ceremony and shows that you give importance to the employee who invited you. In addition, *"Hai Kiad"* can also be a motivator for the employees when you praise or point out their good work in front of others.

3. *"Nam Jai"* represents the acts of kindness or a voluntary help given to someone without expecting anything in return.

4. *"Hen Jai"* literally means the ability to "see (into) the heart". It means to understand and have empathy toward others. Also, *Hen Jai* implies the willingness to listen and to be flexible on a policy, and the ability to deal with problems on a case-by-case basis.

5. *"Sam Ruam"* can be defined as "to travel the middle path" in the Buddhist concept of moderation. Thais are taught when they are young, to practice restraint and maintain composure during stressful situations, and to avoid displaying emotions toward others.

After comparing the values identified by the researchers above, it can be seen that Thais prefer to live in harmony, peace and in a flexible environment. They prefer being respected. There are high seniority problems in Thai society. Moreover, relationship between people is one of the important rules in a work place. Thai people rely on good relationships while doing business, and they will keep good relationships for other

purposes too. Kindness is one of the main values in Thai culture since it is a key attitude that all Thai people hold in the way they live.

2.3 Taiwanese Culture

Taiwan was originally formed by various groups of aborigines. The culture in Taiwan does not come from a single culture group. Different culture groups formed Taiwan's culture overtime due to the geographic environment and reform of history. Taiwan has gone through four large cultural changes in history: the Dutch and Spanish Period (1624-1662), the Ming Cheng Period (1662-1683), the Period of Qing Reign (1683-1895), and the Japanese Colonial Period (1895-1945). The Dutch and Spanish Period (1624-1662) brought in the Christian religion in Taiwan along with farming techniques and equipment to improve Taiwan's aborigines' farming skills. They also taught the aborigines Cantonese to improve their literacy skills. This was followed by the migration of a large number of Chinese soldiers to Taiwan during the Ming Cheng Period (1662-1683). The great influence of Chinese culture can be recognized from education and architecture during that period, and it was also the start of the Buddhism religion. During the Qing Reign Period (1683-1895), more Han Chinese migrated to Taiwan, mostly from the Fujian and Guangdong province. Due to the high flexibility of cultural adjustment in the ground aborigines, they slowly adapted to the Chinese culture and created the new Taiwanese culture. As a result, their regulations, education and lifestyle, etc. is only slightly different from the main land China. In 1894, the first Sino-Japanese war took place. The weak powered Qing Dynasty gave Taiwan to Japan as a present for peace. This was the start of the Japanese Colonial Period (1985-1945). Japanese started to migrate to Taiwan and tried to eliminate Taiwan's local culture by forcing the residents to use Japanese as the main language. Under the Japanese rule, the lifestyle in Taiwan became more hygienic and structured. Other than education, the Japanese also brought in arts and entertainment to Taiwan, which improved the

entertainment industry in Taiwan during their 50 years of control. Finally, Taiwan was handed back to China and is governed by the Republic of China party of China (Gu & Hong, 2013).

Majority of Taiwan's population is Han Chinese, due to which the official language in Taiwan is Mandarin Chinese. However, since many of the Taiwanese are of the Southern Fujianese descent, the Min-nan dialect is also commonly used in Taiwan. Taiwan's traditional values are based on Confucian ethics (Chen, 2011).

Taiwan has a great influence of Confucianism from China. Combining Confucian's two prime structures (structure of five hierarchical relations and structure of five virtues) generates five key aspects of Confucian values (Yeh & Xu, 2010): (1) hierarchy and harmony; (2) group orientation; (3) *Guanxi*; (4) Mianzi; and (5) time orientation. Taiwanese have these Confucian values embedded deep inside their culture. The determination of each person is in accordance with the predetermined social rank or status (hierarchy and harmony). They give group's interests a priority over the individuals' interests (group orientation) (Wang et al., 2005). Connections, relationships, or networking in personal relations (guanxi) is important for adapting individuals into the society (Wong, M. L., 2010). The concept of giving face (mianzi) is to show respect to the social status and reputation in society. Time orientation emphasizes more on the past rather than present or future (Yeh & Xu, 2010).

Fu or *Fu-qi* (happiness) is one of the hidden values in Taiwan that comes from the Chinese culture. For the Taiwanese, it is important to remain in the feeling of peace. *Fu* or *Fu-qi* usually means "anything positive and good in life." According to folklore, longevity, prosperity, health, peace, virtue, and a comfortable death are among the best values in life (Wu, 1991).

According to the world cultural data (Minvok, 2007), Taiwan has a middle/high level of power distance, low level of individualism, high level of masculinity, middle level of uncertainty avoidance, and is long-term oriented. East Asian societies, like the Taiwanese society, are most likely to control gratifications with respect to desires and

feelings, and they are more likely to mix positive and negative emotions. Self-effacement is commonly seen in Taiwan. Taiwanese are less likely to draw attention to themselves unless necessary, whereas humility is strongly encouraged in East Asian societies (Ricardo, 2010).

Taiwan is identified as a polychronic, high-context society (Halls, 1990), where messages are mostly transferred through non-verbal communication. Objectives are mostly in big picture, and it is possible to do several things at the same time (Dzambo, 2011).

2.4 Comparing Thai and Taiwanese Culture

Working under a culturally different environment can cause people stress. Cross-culture issues can occur in any of the activities inside a company even in countries that might have similar culture. On comparing the scores of Taiwan and Thailand from Hofstede's research results, it is found that Taiwan and Thailand are slightly similar in the overall results as one of the Asian countries.
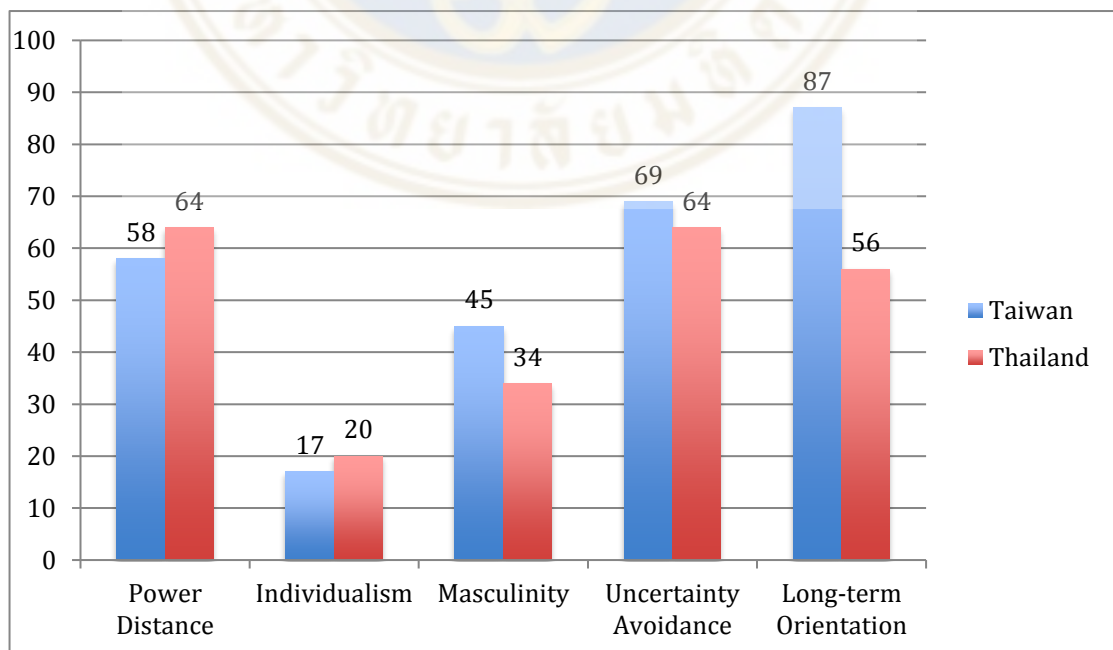

Figure 2.4: Chart comparing scores of Taiwan and Thailand

From the graph, both Taiwan and Thailand score high in power distance index (similar). It means the society can accept hierarchical orders and inequities better. Employees show loyalty, respect, and deference to their superiors. They obey orders without complaint. The final decision is made in an autocratic style, in a top-down direction. In individualism, Taiwan and Thailand are grouped to be collectivist societies (similar). Both countries are group-oriented and have strong focus on relationship building. People in this kind of society are not confrontational. They consider the in-group as an important factor and everyone in the group has their responsibility. The masculinity score for Taiwan and Thailand has a difference of 11 points. The lower score in this dimension indicates the less amount of assertiveness and competitiveness in the society. Thailand is classified as a feminine society, and Taiwan is a slightly feminine but also slightly masculine. Both countries give importance to relationships, cooperation and quality of life. Both Taiwan and Thailand score high in uncertainty avoidance dimension index. Taiwan scores higher than Thailand which means, Taiwanese prefers to avoid the unstructured and unknown situations by applying strict laws and rules for their safety and security measures. They perceive time is money, and are urged to keep themselves busy and work hard in order to live. Although, Thailand had also applied strict rules and regulations to reduce the level of uncertainty, but somehow, these rules and regulations did not work, but no changes have been made to them. In both the countries, the leaders in the company stay longer in service in order to provide a stable feeling to their employees. In the last dimension, long-term orientation index, Taiwan and Thailand showed a huge difference in the scores. Taiwan is a pragmatic, long-term oriented society. They have strong work ethic, sense of shame, thriftiness and perseverance in achieving results. In contrast, Thailand is a slightly short-term oriented society. They have a respect for traditions, preservation of "face", and fulfilling of social obligations.

After analyzing Hofstede's cultural dimensions of Taiwan and Thailand from a large picture, even though they are similar in most of the dimension, it can be seen that the

values and norms of a culture in depth are slightly different, due to their different historical and geographical backgrounds. In order to identify the differences between Taiwan and Thailand's culture in depth, this paper applies a qualitative approach to search for more details by interviewing and observing the Taiwanese who live in Thailand. They are from different cities in Taiwan, and have been living in Thailand for at least 4 years or more. The reason I chose Taiwanese owners/managers living in Thailand is because of their experiences in managing blue-collar employees in both Taiwan and Thailand. Research on the blue-collar employees can give more insight into the local culture. This research will provide an insight into the cultural similarities and differences between Taiwan and Thailand based on the perspective of the Taiwanese owners/managers.
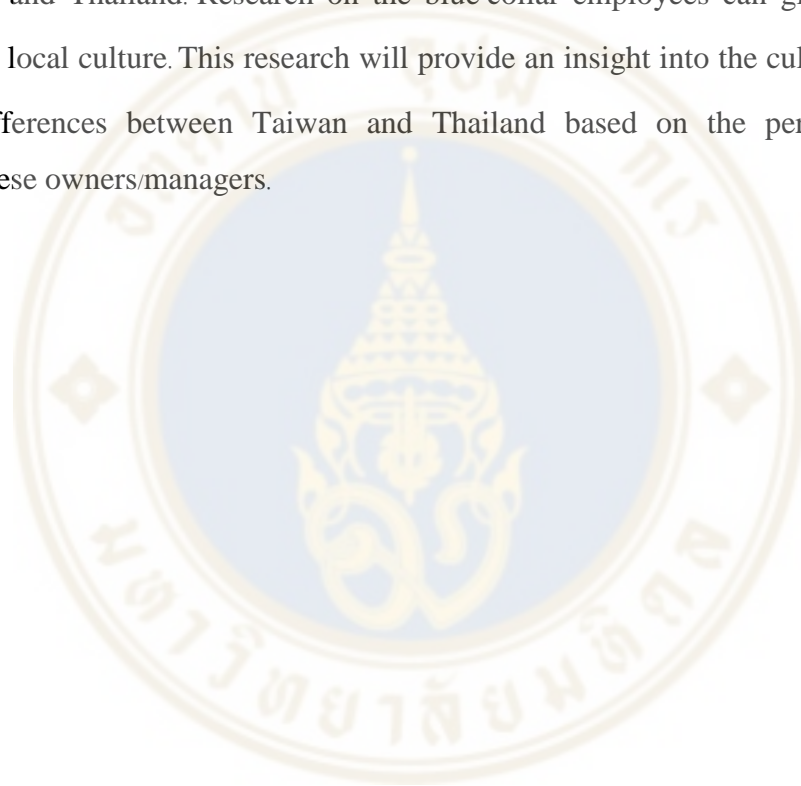
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper uses qualitative research methodology. Qualitative methodology is commonly used in cultural research in order to gain deeper insights. Qualitative research enables the interviewer to understand and interpret the interviewees' ideas and thoughts in a better manner; it emphasizes on the interpretation and flexibility of the information given by the interviewees (Johnson & Harris, 2002). Face-to-face interviews are conducted to receive information from the interviewees in detail. In this research paper, the interviews were conducted in the form of private discussions, and interviewees were encouraged to share their experiences and elaborate on them with the help of personal examples.

The interview started with questions pertaining to some basic biographical details about the interviewees, such as their age, work background, number of years they have lived in Thailand, and their work experiences. This was followed by some open-ended questions on cultural differences between Thailand and Taiwan. The interviewees provided some examples while comparing the Thai and Taiwanese culture (See Appendix: Interview Questions). A total of 14 Taiwanese business owners or managers who owned or worked for Taiwanese companies both in Taiwan and Thailand were interviewed; they were mainly from manufacturing and security service industries. The average age of the interviewees (12 men and 2 women) was 46 years, and the average number of years that they have lived in Thailand was 10 years.

Liamputtong (2010) said "qualitative research relies heavily on "words" or stories that people tell researchers." The reason for choosing qualitative methodology for this research is because it is a better way of comparing and analyzing the interviewees' answers. In addition, a more in-depth understanding of the situation along with the details can be achieved by applying a narrative research approach to the interview.

Czarniawska (2004) defined narratives as "a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions chronologically connected" (as cited in Soin & Tobias, 2006). Narrative approach is chosen in this research in order to acquire detailed information by having the interviewees share their work experiences in a story-telling style. By using this approach, it is easier to understand and analyze the information given by the interviewees.

Being a Taiwanese, I was able to contact some Taiwanese business owners and managers who lived in Thailand. Snowball sampling technique has been used in this paper. Snowball sampling involves seeking information from key informants about details of other 'information-rich cases' in the field (Suri, 2011). I selected the individuals who provided detailed stories about the cultural difference they experienced and the problems that occurred in their work place. They also described as to how they reacted during such situations and the changes they made to adapt themselves to it. In addition, some interviewees had also worked in other Southeast Asian countries before coming to Thailand. Therefore, they were able to give comprehensive answers and comparisons to the research questions.

This paper focuses on identifying differences between two Asian cultures, Taiwanese and Thai. The interviews were conducted mainly in Chinese (Mandarin). The raw data was transcribed in Chinese, then translated into English when the data was justified as useful for the research. Qualitative content analysis approach was used to analyze the interview transcripts (Paul & Lynne, 2001). To identify the similarities and differences in the data gathered from the interviewees, I cross-compared and analyzed all the transcripts from all the interviewees. Some similar aspects appeared after a detailed comparison and data analysis. The similar aspects were grouped together in order to identify the cultural differences perceived by Taiwanese managers living in Thailand.

CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH FINDINGS

This research focuses on two Asian countries whose scores were quite similar in Hofstede's research results. There were some similar and different aspects in the two cultures which were derived after comparing the interview results. A total of four aspects were identified from the interviews, where participants found Thai working culture to be different from Taiwanese culture. These aspects include areas where they needed to adjust themselves to adapt and accept the differences in the work environment. Those aspects in which the two cultures differ are:

- 主動 *Zhu-Dong* (Initiative) vs. Sabai-Sabai (easy-going)
- 危機感 *Wei-Ji-Gan* (crisis awareness) vs. Jai Yen Yen (take it easy)
- 面子 *Mian-Zi* (Face)
- Humane management

And the similar aspects are:

- Hierarchy
- 關係 *Guan-Xi* (Relationship)

In the interviews, the interviewees shared their thoughts and experiences about how they adapted to the new environment in a culturally different country. Each of the aspects relates to certain values in the Taiwanese and Thai culture. By understanding these aspects, Taiwanese owners/managers are likely to improve their overall work performance when managing their employees in Thailand.

4.1 主動 Zhu-Dong (Initiative) vs. Sabai-Sabai (easy-going)

The interviewees agreed that Taiwanese employees mostly show initiative. This initiative aspect is mostly seen in Taiwan's work culture. Employees in Taiwan are more active and willing to do extra work without being told/ordered to do so. On the other hand, Thai employees are more passive at work. From a Thai perspective, they prefer to do things as being told by their supervisors or boss to prevent mistakes.

Here are some thoughts shared by the interviewees when describing the work ethics of the Taiwanese employees in the work place. Interviewee A (CEO of a security company) shared one of his stories based on the initiative aspect. In this industry, employees' work is case based. "*When I was in Taiwan, I found that the employees are more active in acquiring new cases in order to improve their work performance to get promotion,*" stated interviewee A.

"*Taiwanese employees are more self-disciplined. They will keep up with their own work by themselves and sometimes, even do more for the company,*" said interviewee J (owner of a plastic manufacturing company). He compared the employees both in Taiwan and Thailand. Employees in Taiwan work till the last minute and try their best to raise their performance.

Interviewee C stated, "*Taiwanese employees are more active in completing their own cases, and they will request you to give them new cases.*"

Interviewee L mentioned that in Taiwan, speed and accuracy are the base requirement at a work place. He said, "*Employees in Taiwan often come up with their own ways to maintain or even speed up the production rate and at the same time with good quality control.*"

In contrast, the interviewees also shared their management experiences with Thai employees at the work place. "*Thai employees are very punctual about the work dismiss hour. They dislike sacrificing their private time for work,*" stated interviewee A. Interviewee L stated, "*Thai employees need to be monitored all the time in order to*

get the work done on time." According to interviewee J, Thai employees are less likely to do more than the assigned work.

Interviewee C pointed out that Thai employees often do only what they have been told to do, and they sometimes perform well when they are less stressed at work: "*My employees have a high turnover rate when I use strict rules and regulations to evaluate their performance.*"

"*Thai employees always say yes to the assigned work, but they do not care whether the work is completed or not,*" stated Interviewee D (an out-field security manager). "*The subordinate gave me a nonsense reason as the excuse for not completing the job. They don't think that delaying the job will cause future problems and loss to the company.*"

Interviewee F (a general manager) mentioned: "*Thai employees often use sick leaves as an excuse to take the day off when they do not want to work or when they do not want to stay back and work overtime.*" Doing this might affect the employee's work performance. "*But, I have a feeling that the employees do not take this issue seriously, and they are ready to change jobs anytime,*" he said.

On comparing Taiwanese employees with Thai employees, it was found that Taiwanese employees are more active and show initiative (主動-zhu-dong) in getting themselves scheduled and finishing the work on time. Most of the Taiwanese employees are willing to work on their private times to complete the assigned tasks. However, Thai employees mostly prefer to be *sabai-sabai* (easy going, comfortable, trouble-free, contented) at work. They don't like showing off over others, and they think, to be outstanding at work is a part of showing off. They prefer to go along with the others, and this reason leads them to care less about the work deadline. This is the reason Thai culture is perceived as more passive than Taiwanese culture.

4.2 危機感 *Wei-Ji-Gan* (crisis awareness) vs. *Jai Yen Yen* (take it easy)

From the interview results, it could be clearly seen that Taiwan is greatly influenced by Confucian's theory. The Taiwanese have a strong sense of crisis and urgency in work. They have strong work ethics, sense of shame, thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving goals. Taiwanese have strong work attitudes toward gaining promotion. In contrast, Thai people prefer to work without pressure and stress. They are more relaxed at work and emphasize on their private time.

Interviewees shared their management stories in Thailand. Interviewee C (a set-up outfield manager) elaborated his conversation with his Thai employee: "*I said to one of my employee 'hey, would you like to become the head of the team?' And the employee replied that he felt good in the current position and would like to continue working in the same position.*" Thai employees lack ambition and dislike taking responsibility for others.

Interviewee L (CEO of an electronics manufacturing company) pointed out that, Thailand is a Buddhist country and hence, they are softer and can accept other religions. The King is the main entity in Thai people's heart; *yu baab por piang* (live as it's sufficient) is highly promoted by the King. Therefore, this leads Thai people to have a relaxed attitude. "*My employees prefer to remain at same the position with sufficient pay rather than being promoted with higher pay with more responsibility,*" said interviewee L. Also, as interviewee K stated, "*In Thailand, the employees prefer to earn a reasonable amount of salary, but put in a standard level of effort in work. They are less likely to compete with other colleagues or try to reach their supervisor's position.*"

"*My Thai employees asked me once, 'why are all those Taiwanese managers working so hard?'*" said interviewee E. Thai employees think that Taiwanese are too hard working, and this makes them feel stressed about working with them. Thai employees seem to prefer to live simple without stress.

While comparing the Thai employees to the Taiwanese employees, interviewee C pointed out that: "*Taiwanese employees are ambitious and willing to carry responsibilities.*" Taiwanese employees will definitely accept the promotion and work harder to gain the next promotion.

"*In Taiwan, employees will set their own standard and deadline for an assigned case,*" said Interviewee D. As there are less job opportunities in Taiwan, employees are afraid to lose their jobs if they do not do well.

Interviewee F compared employees of Thailand and Taiwan. "*Taiwanese employees attend work even when they are sick because they are afraid of causing trouble to the company and colleagues, and think that they may be replaced by others if they take too many sick leaves.*" The attendance is also part of the performance evaluation at work. It might result in a loss to the company if the employees take too many days off.

"*In Taiwan, there is a high competition between colleagues. Employees are active at work to prevent being replaced,*" said interviewee K. "*In Taiwan, we can always reach out to employees easily during their days off, and they are willing to help out the company even when they are on their day off,*" he noted.

From the interviews, it can be derived that Taiwanese employees consider their jobs and personal responsibility as their priority in life. I found that Taiwanese have a strong sense of 危機感 (*Wei Ji Gan*, crisis awareness), because of the culture and differences in standard of living. Taiwanese seemed to have a stronger desire of gaining promotion and having their salary raised. In contrast to Thailand, Thai employees prefer to be *Jai yen yen* (take it easy). They are less competitive and do not prefer to spend their personal time at work. They prefer to live in an easy and peaceful environment, as their King said, "*live as its sufficient*".

4.3 面子 *Mian-Zi* (**Face**)

In collectivistic cultures, face-saving is one of the important aspects to be considered. However, the objective of face-saving is different in Taiwan and Thailand. In Taiwan, we call it 面子, *mian-zi* (face), it is considered as giving face, to give someone *mian-zi* is to show respect. It is similar to the Thai value of *Hai-kiad* (to give respect or to show honor). Thais think that giving respect to others is important and the others should show respect to them too. In Thailand, they consider saving their own face more than that of others. Both countries emphasize on face-saving issues, but somehow the objectives are slightly different.

"*In Taiwan,*" interviewee A stated, "*managers call all employees for a meeting, and point out the mistakes of each employee in the meeting room before everyone.*" By doing this, it helps to remind the other employees not to make the same mistake. According to interviewee B, reward and punishment rules are clearly set in Taiwan: "*An employee's punishment is announced in front of all his colleagues,*" said interviewee B.

Interviewee E said, "*Taiwanese employees can accept their mistake being pointed out in front of others.*" The reason behind pointing out the mistakes right away is to help the company prevent future mistakes. "*Taiwanese employees are not afraid to ask questions in front of others, they prefer to make sure they are going in the right direction rather than making mistakes later,*" said interviewee M.

As interviewee G stated: "*Taiwanese employees emphasize more on saving the company's face than their own. They consider group's pride as the priority.*"

Comparing this to the Thai workplace, "*I recognize that Thai employees dislike being scolded or embarrassed in front of other colleagues,*" said interviewee A. "*I have realized this because the employee disappears on the next day of work. However, if I called the employee to the office and scolded the employee privately, the employee will still come to work on the next day,*" he added.

Interviewee B elaborated that Thai employees prefer to be praised or rewarded in front of others when they perform well: "*Those Thai employees that I have praised in the morning meeting often have clear improvement in their work performance.*"

"*Thai employees will feel shame and sia-na (lose face) if I point out the mistake right in front of the other employees,*" said interviewee E. "*When the employees feel discredited, they often choose to quit or take day offs to hide away because they feel they have lost face in front of others.*"

Interviewee M shared his experience when he did not confirm with his employees their understanding of the assigned work. "*Thai employees will not speak out even though they do not understand the assignment, because they are afraid of losing face among themselves.*" This experience taught me to double check with the employees and make sure they understand correctly to prevent any waste of time.

According to the interview results, both Taiwanese and Thai care about face-saving. However, it showed clearly that Thai employees care about their own face more than that of the group. They dislike being embarrassed in front of others, especially in front of team members or colleagues. Thai employees are less likely to stay with the company after they have been embarrassed in front of other employees. On the other hand, Taiwanese employees emphasize on face-saving of others and their team. They are fine to lose face personally, but do not let the group lose face

4.4 Humane management (Jai dee)

Thailand and Taiwan are slightly different when it comes to human management. In Taiwan, work performance is evaluated based on the performance appraisal set by the company. Taiwanese employees are more aggressive in completing the work and raising their performance level. In contrast, Thai employees are more productive when they work under a kind (*jai dee*) manager. Being a feminine culture, they have less tolerance for conflicts.

From the interview results interviewee B: "*Conflicts between Thai employees can be easily solved when I understand their conflict issues privately.*" The issue can be solved by having the employees come together and negotiate. Mostly, the employees compromise and resolve the problem. "*The method of recording the merits is not suitable when managing Thai employees,*" said interviewee E. "*I can see a clear feedback by using this method in measuring Thai employees, and it has negative effects on the performance.*"

Interviewee F elaborated: "*Thai employees are more simple and honest. Treating them privately with food and drinks can help in building the employees' trust in the company.*" Listening to the voice of the employees is a way of showing kindness to the employees.

With Taiwan being a slightly masculine culture, Taiwanese are more competitive at the work place. Interviewee I stated that Taiwanese employees focus more on their performance. They are more serious about achieving set goals. "*Taiwanese employees are more aggressive in improving their performance,*" he said.

"*In Taiwan, when there's conflict between employees, the way to solve this conflict is mostly by letting the employee compete, and the conflict will be resolved by competition,*" stated interviewee B. In Taiwan, the performance score is the guideline for winning or losing. The side that can provide more benefit to the company, wins.

Interviewee F mentioned that employees in Taiwan can accept strict punishment from the company if they did violate the company rules. Moreover, the rewards for achieving goals are attractive. Taiwanese employees are more focused on the equity reward: "*Taiwanese employees will work hard in order to increase their pay and bonus,*" remarked interviewee F.

Apart from the differences mentioned in the above paragraphs, I have also defined two aspects that highlight the similarities in the Taiwanese and Thai culture. Asian countries have different historical backgrounds, but they tend to share some similar

values and behaviors. The findings from the interviews show that both Taiwan and Thailand share the cultural aspects of "hierarchy" and "relationships".

4.5 Hierarchy

Thailand emphasizes social hierarchy as one of its key cultural attributes. They consider respecting the elders and seniors in every situation. Thais use the "Wai" posture (putting hands together in front of chest area and bowing) for greeting and paying respects to someone who is higher in social rank or older in age. Hierarchy in Taiwan is influenced by Confucian philosophy. Each person has their own rank or status; they behave according to their predetermined position. Decisions are centralized, and orders are in the top-down direction. Both Taiwan and Thailand apply a paternalistic management style.

Speaking of the hierarchy aspect, interviewee F pointed out that the Thai work environment has a strong sense of seniority: "*I can clearly see that the young employees follow the order from the elder employees in the company.*" The young employees believe that doing what the elders tell can prevent the chances of mistakes.

Interviewee M said, "*Sometimes, I have seen the senior employees assign all the work to the younger employees who have just been recruited into the company.*" This seems to happen to every newly recruited employee, and the young employees follow the senior's order without doubt, according to interviewee M's observation.

In Thailand, they will address by adding *P*' "พี่" (older sister/brother) before the name if they meet someone older than them. It is the way to show respect to someone who is older than you, and it also shows the hierarchy aspects in Thai culture. Described by interviewee K: "*I often heard the employees addressing the older employees by adding "P" in front of the name of the older employees. This is just like it is done in Taiwan when addressing* 哥 *(older brother) or* 姐 *(older sister) by the names.*"

The hierarchy aspect is important in Taiwan too. Obeying the orders is the basic requirement in a work place. Every company has a clear hierarchy structure for management. And the subordinates follow orders from their supervisors/managers accordingly. As interviewee I mentioned, "*Employees in Taiwan followed the authority according to company structure.*" Employees obey the orders from their superiors. The final decision is centralized to the top management in the company.

"*Employees in Taiwan show high adaptability and perseverance in work. They are able to accept difficult tasks and commit to the orders from their superiors,*" confirmed interviewee H. Taiwanese culture has high deference to authority. Employees in the company trust and support their company, and they put in their full effort while working.

4.6 關係 *Guanxi* (relationship)

In Thailand, relationship is the key for doing business and for gaining benefit. Taiwanese consider relationship (*guanxi*) as a long-term benefit and a heritage for their descendants. This aspect is found similar to both Taiwan and Thailand's culture. Due to their cultural background, relationship is one of the key values in these cultures.

Interpersonal relationship is important in all collectivistic cultures, and Taiwan and Thailand are no exceptions. "*My aunt is the head of the production line, so I have the privilege to choose my workload as opposed to other employees,*" interviewee I recalled having heard this statement from one of her employees in the company. Relationship and connection is important in the work place in Thai society. Personal relationships help employees to acquire better job position and opportunities.

Interviewee H pointed out that Thai employees like to work at the place where they have an acquaintance: "*I found many families working in my company. Some of them are spouses, some are relatives.*" Thai employees rely on personal relationships to

stabilize their income, because they sometimes help each other to cover the failures at work to prevent being punished by the company.

Interviewee E mentioned, "*When I worked as the manufacturing manager in Taiwan, I recruited my niece to work as my secretary in the company.*" With relationships, good opportunities can arise for those who want to get a good job. Moreover, it is significant to pass on the power to the next generation for maintaining their relationship circle in the industry.

As interviewee K said, "*Relationship is important in Taiwan. Mostly the employees will suggest their own children or relatives to work in the same company, if the compensation in the company is good.*" Everyone is looking for a good job, but finding the good ones by oneself is difficult. The fastest way is to go through the connections of the nearby people.

In conclusion, it is found that the hierarchy and relationship (*guanxi*) aspects are important and similar in both Taiwan and Thailand. Both countries have high power distance according to Hofstede's (2000) research. The hierarchy aspect in Taiwanese work culture is highly influenced by Japanese culture. For Thai people, they are influenced by the Buddhist practice. They believe in paying respect to the elders and it is perceived as rude to give an order to someone who is older in age. Both Taiwan and Thailand rely on interpersonal relationships. Connections between a person and a group can lead to helpful sources and benefits. Both aspects are the key values in a collectivist culture.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The main purpose of this paper was to identify the differences between the cultures of Taiwan and Thailand from a Taiwanese perspective. Somehow, besides the differences, some similarities were also found during the research. By interviewing Taiwanese owners/managers who have a work experience in Thailand, it was possible to compare the differences in a clearer way. With qualitative methodology, the primary research results were gained by interviewing Taiwanese owners/managers. These interviewees provided detailed answers which allowed to investigate in depth the various aspects of cultural differences between the two countries. As the interviewees were mostly from a manufacturing background, the stories provided by them were mostly based on their experience of working with blue-collar employees in Taiwan and Thailand.

This research started with a comparison of Hofstede's (2005) cultural dimensions for Thailand and Taiwan, and it was found that they were quite similar in the universal dimension results in Hofstede's (2005) research. A literature review on the cultural background of Taiwan and Thailand helped to identify some differences more clearly.

The qualitative research findings of this study finally revealed some cultural values that actually showed the differences between Taiwan and Thailand, from a local point of view. In addition, some of the aspects found in the research can be linked to Hofstede's dimensions. The hierarchy aspect could be related to the power distance dimension, and the *guan-xi* (relationship) aspect can be linked to the fact that both Taiwan and Thailand are collectivistic cultures.

This paper will be a good guideline for Taiwanese business owners/managers who wish to invest or work in Thailand. As discussed in the paper, Taiwanese business

people explained in their examples of Thai employees that they prefer to feel relaxed at work, should be managed with kindness, and are concerned about face-saving.

The research findings in this paper can help Taiwanese business owners/managers to understand Thai employees better before they move to work in Thailand. Lessons learned from this study include the following: Taiwanese managers should follow-up of the work with Thai employees more often than Taiwanese employees. In Thailand, the working environment is less competitive than Taiwan. Taiwanese business owners/managers should try to be soft and less harsh with Thai employees in order to increase their work performance and motivation. As far as face-saving is concerned, Taiwanese managers can slowly educate Thai employees to understand the importance of face-saving of the group rather than that of the individual. Apart from being a guideline, this research can also be used as a reference by those interested to study further, in order to identify the differences between any similar cultures in the future.

This paper identifies some differences and similarities between Taiwan and Thailand's cultural values from the perspective of old Taiwanese people, who were raised in Taiwan. The findings of this paper are limited to those who have already been shaped by their home culture and are exposed to working in another similar culture.

As a native Taiwanese, I moved to Thailand with my family when I was 12 years old and grew up in Thailand. Somehow, I was unconsciously influenced by Thai culture due to my surrounding environment. Thus, further research can focus on those Taiwanese who have grown up in Thailand and investigate whether there are any differences between them and the older Taiwanese. The second generation of Taiwanese living in Thailand could be good research targets.

As the research samples are mainly from the manufacturing and security service industries, the interviewees were mostly working with blue-collar employees at their workplace. Future research can focus on other industries, such as hospitality, accounting services, and insurances services, etc. which have more white-collar employees to see whether their cultural values can also be considered to be the same as that of the blue-collared employees in Thailand.

The recommendations for further research can be: 1. Identifying the cultural differences experienced by those Taiwanese owners/managers who were raised in Thailand. 2. Focusing the research on Taiwan and Thailand's white-collar employees, and identifying the cultural differences between them.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Have you worked in other companies before in Taiwan or in Thailand? What is your position when you were in Taiwan, and here. Do you supervise other people too? How many do you supervised?

2. How long have you been working in this company?

3. What are the differences you experienced between Taiwanese and Thai work environment? Can you compare the differences you see? How do you think this difference will affect if it happens in Taiwan.

4. How do you cope with the differences that happened during work? How did you react for the first time you experienced the difference? Any embarrassing things happened? Can you give me some examples?

5. How do you solve the conflict between your Thai and Taiwanese employees? Do you use any tricks to solve the conflict? Can you give me some examples of the conflict stories you experienced?

6. How do you praise your employees? Any differences between Taiwan and Thailand?

7. Does the organization culture change your leadership style from your previous workplace?

訪問題目：

1. 你曾經在台灣或泰國其他公司工作過嗎？那時擔任什麼職位呢？有管理其他人員嗎？

2. 這公司經營多久時間了？有多少外國人在職？來泰國多久了？在這家公司工作多久了？

3. 在管理和經營方面，有哪些文化上的差異嗎？可以舉個例子嗎？
（如果這些文化上的差異發生在台灣，會有什麼不一樣的解決方法嗎？）

4. 你怎麼去接受這些文化差異？怎麼管理？當你第一次遇到問題時，你是怎麼反應的，能舉個例子嗎？

5. 你曾經遇到員工之間因為文化差異的矛盾嗎？當時你是怎麼處理的？有特別的處理方式嗎？能否告訴我一些相關的故事呢？

6. 你是怎麼嘉獎你的員工呢？嘉獎的方式跟台灣一樣嗎？

7. 這家公司文化有改變你之前的領導方式嗎？

Appendix B: Table of Interviewees

Interviewee No.	Gender	Years in Thailand	Profession	Industry	Remarks
1 (A)	M	5	Company CEO	Security	宋先生
2 (B)	M	9	Company Sales Manager	Security	潘大哥
3 (C)	M	7	Company Set-up Outfield Manager	Security	王大哥
4 (D)	M	5	Company Security Outfield Manager	Security	朱先生
5 (E)	M	15	Company Manufacture Manager	Printing Aluminum plate	黃先生
6 (F)	M	18	Company Owner-General Manager	Machinery Equipment	Mark 張
7 (G)	M	4	Company Owner-Manager	Machinery Equipment	Mr. Leo
8 (H)	F	11	Company Owner	Plastic Manufacture	李小姐
9 (I)	M	11	Company General Manager	Plastic Manufacture	賴先生
10 (J)	M	20	Company Owner	Plastic Manufacture	盧先生
11 (K)	F	20	Company Owner	Plastic Manufacture	黃小姐
12 (L)	M	25	Company CEO	Electronic circuit board	陳先生
13 (M)	M	12	Company Manager	Electronics	Mr. Lee