

**UNDERSTAND THE CONFLICT IN A CROSS CULTURAL
INTERNATIONAL BRAND DISTRIBUTION COMPANY
BETWEEN THAILAND AND SINGAPORE**



**A THEMATIC PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MANAGEMENT
COLLEGE OF MANAGEMENT
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY
2014**

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Thematic paper
entitled
**UNDERSTAND THE CONFLICT IN A CROSS CULTURAL
INTERNATIONAL BRAND DISTRIBUTION COMPANY
BETWEEN THAILAND AND SINGAPORE**

was submitted to the College of Management, Mahidol University
for the degree of Master of Management

on
May 3, 2014



.....
Mr. Natawut Manachareon
Candidate

.....
Dr. Astrid Kainzbauer,
Ph.D.
Advisor

.....
Assoc. Prof. Gerard Tocquer,
Ph.D.
Chairperson

.....
Assoc. Prof. Anop Tanlamai,
Ph.D.
Dean
College of Management
Mahidol University

.....
Asst. Prof. Parisa Rungruang,
Ph.D.
Committee member

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thematic paper could not be finished without the kindness and helpful from all people I am going to mention.

Firstly, I would like to thank you to CEO of SingaporeCompany who is Mr. Kapoor M and CEO of Thailand Company who is Mr. PrasertManachareon. They all were so helpful to give me knowledge and allow me to interview their employees about culture different. To be more grateful, they answered with enthusiastic which could help me a lot to finish this effective thematic paper.

Secondly, I would like to thank you to Thailand company and Singapore company which I work with and inspire me to research this thematic paper. At least, I would hope that this paper will benefit to Thailand Company by improving company to understand about Singapore culture.

Lastly, I would also thank you for the kindness and recommendation from my advisor teacher Dr.Astrid Kainzbauer. She motivated me to do this topic which could give an advantage not only to me but also to own company I work with.

NatawutManachareon

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THAILAND AND SINGAPORE**

NATAWUT MANACHAREON 5549224

M.M.(MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT)

THEMATIC PAPER ADVISORY COMMITTEE; DR. ASTRID BKAINZBAUER,
Ph.D., ASSOC.PROF.GERARD TOCQUER, Ph.D., ASST.PROF. PARISA
RUNGRUANG, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

My objective is to understand conflict on why two companies from different countries have different kind of thinking and work process and need to work together as distributor. In the research, I bring out Thailand and Singapore distributor who have been working with each other for many years. In this study, I use different kinds of cultures like individual cultural representation, organization cultural and National cultural to see the different why about company act in work process differently. Hofstede theory is a tool of this research to clarify different of both countries and corruption are minor issue that change Thailand behavior. Using in-depth interview with 4 respondents that ever work in both countries.

In the conclusion, I find a lot of useful information that help me to understand why both countries work differently. Like different communication, operation system, working system and corruption that can be learn to help both organizations work together better.

KEY WORDS: Culture/ Conflict/ Understand/ Model of culture/ Hofstede

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With the world's rapid growth of economic development and globalisation, an increasing number of firms are extending their business overseas. Using capital and the power of money to expand their business is easy for many firms, but developing the best organisation and structure is one of the biggest challenges that all firms face.

One of the challenges to developing a business overseas is to understand cross-cultural management. Companies that can bridge the gap between different cultures can manage the operations and understand behaviour of the members. Many distribution companies have been developed to help large firms trying to expand into other countries to solve cross-cultural problems. Nevertheless, most firms do not realise that using a distributor company is only the first step to starting up the brand in that area. In the long term, problems concerning how the firm and distributor company work require communication.

Most firms only look at the results of their business. If the results are poor, some firms will find a solution by finding an alternative distributor, which will take time and cost to re-run the process.

Referring to the distribution channel and the problems that generally happen to a firm, I would like to use the real case of my family business as the case study and examine the current processes being employed to solve the cross-cultural issues. LIGHTING Thailand was established in 2009 by my parents as the authorised sole distributor for LIGHTING brand in Thailand, and in 2015 in Laos and Vietnam. LIGHTING is the name of a Chinese firm and a well-known brand worldwide that produces sports equipment, and it aims to be the number one sports brand in Asia. It started its first headquarters in Singapore in 2008 to help Southeast Asia grow its business.

LIGHTING Thailand continued to grow over time and developed a well-organised internal strategy. After looking at the sales in the Thai market, Singapore's headquarters decided to send several consultants to help grow the Thai market and develop a new strategy. However, instead of improving matters, many conflicts occurred because of the different management styles, staff behaviour and communication systems applied in different cultural contexts. However, these problems had been evident since the firm started in 2009.

1.1 Research question

What are the causes of cross-cultural conflicts in an international brand distribution company in Thailand and Singapore?

1.2 Research objective

My main objective is to understand the cross-cultural conflicts between Thailand and Singapore. Using the research outcomes, I aim to find ways to change the Thailand side to understand the Singapore side better, which will help to create a stronger bond and develop the growth of the market. Furthermore, this research can aid the company to study and understand other countries in Asia. As ASEAN Economic Community will open next year, we must be ready for the upcoming challenges.

1.3 Research scope

1. The effect of cultural differences that lead to conflicts occurring within the organisation
2. Cultural differences between Thailand and Singapore and the factors that cause the differences
3. The social culture that affects the different types of management styles in these two countries

4. Operational management styles and systems in each country, which make the organisations different

5. Common cultural aspects that both countries share in order to find the most suitable direction of management and the most efficient way to solve conflicts

6. An understanding of the human resource problem in each country



* The name of the company has been changed to LIGHTING in order to ensure confidentiality

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In regards to the conflict that happens in these two organisations, there are many theories that explain the cultural differences and background between Singapore and Thailand. This research paper will focus on two major topics: the dimensions of national culture and culture in an organisation with theory.

Every organisation has different work processes; people usually follow previous systems with which they are familiar before. However, such behaviour is dependent on the culture within the organisation and the nature of the national culture. To understand each organisational system and its culture will take a long time. Therefore, my focus is find out why the organisation of LIGHTING in Thailand and Singapore work differently in terms of both attitudes and beliefs, and why both organisations take time to understand the different cultures.

2.1 The multi-level model of culture

The multi-level model of culture is a structural and dynamic model to explain the levels of culture that affect people in different areas.

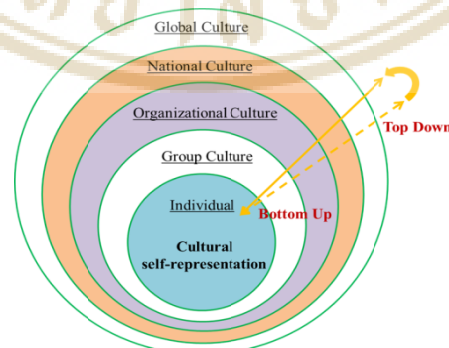


Figure 2.1 Show the five dimensions, which explain how culture influences people on each level. **The multi-level model of culture.** (Note. Reprinted from Erez M., Gati G, 2004. PP588)

The structure is shown as a top-down list.

1. Global culture explains how the world economy and situation changes people's thinking and behaviour.

2. National culture is partly determined by agreement on the values in society.

3. Organisational culture is the link between the members of the organisation that have the same social values, which influences their behaviours such as innovation, attention to detail, risk taking and team focus.

4. Group culture affects team members' shared learning orientation and team psychology.

5. Individual self-representation explains how each person thinks, as well as his or her mind-set.

As the above model shows, organisational culture is positioned in the middle of the list and is directly affected by individual perspectives and global cultural perspectives. I will next focus on the national cultural differences and similarities between Thailand and Singapore. One of the most famous cross-cultural studies that I will use in my research is Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions.

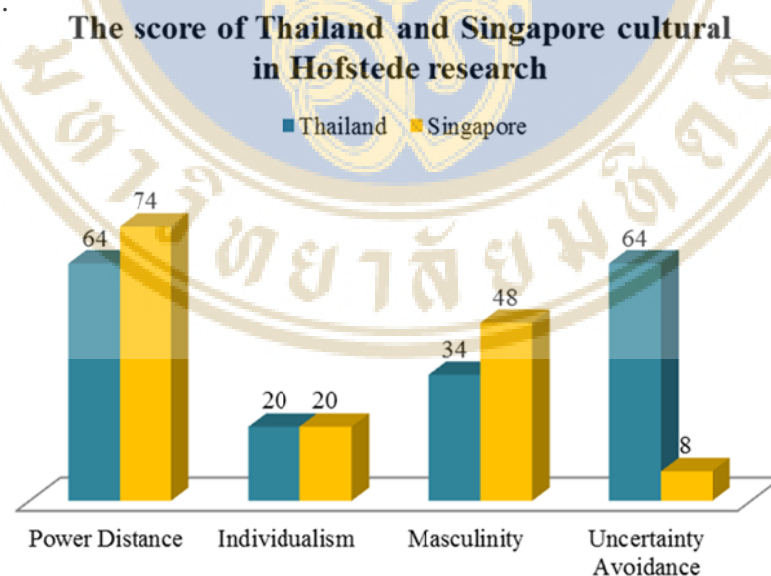


Figure 2.2 The differences of Hofstede's scores between Thailand and Singapore.

(Note. Reprinted from The Hofstede Center, n.d.)

2.2 Hofstede Theory

Identified four cultural dimensions in which national cultures differ from each other.

2.2.1 Individualism/collectivism

“Individualism and collectivism focus on the degree to which the society reinforces individual or collective achievement and interpersonal relationships. A high individualism ranking indicates that individuality and individual rights are paramount within the society, whereas a low individualism ranking typifies societies of a more collectivist nature with close ties between individuals” The Hofstede Center (n.d.).

Figure 2 shows that both countries are collectivistic societies, as both are Asian countries. According to The Hofstede Center (n.d.), “We” is the most important focus of this region; people belong to families, clans or organizations that look after each other in exchange of trust. Here we can also see the second key principle of the Confucian teaching: The family is the prototype of all social organizations. A person is not primarily an individual; rather, he or she is a member of a family. Children should learn how to be collectivist and overcome individualism so there can as to maintain the harmony in the family. Harmony is found when everybody saves face in the sense of dignity, self-respect, and prestige. Social relations should be conducted in such a way that everybody's face is saved. Paying respect to someone is called giving facing

“Communication is indirect and the harmony of the group has to be maintained, open conflicts are avoided. A ‘yes’ does not necessarily mean ‘yes’; politeness takes precedence over honest feedback. The relationship has a moral basis and this always has priority over task fulfillment. The face of others has to be respected and especially as a manager calmness and respectability is very important” The Hofstede Center (n.d.).

2.2.2 Uncertainty avoidance

The dimension of uncertainty avoidance refers to the way a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: Should we try to control the future or just let it happen? This ambiguity brings with it anxiety, and different cultures have learnt to deal with this anxiety in different ways. The extent to which the members of a

culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these is reflected in the score The HofstedeCenter,(n.d.).

As shown in Figure2,the two cultures are almost similar in all aspects except uncertainty avoidance. One of the reasons for this is that both of the countries are Asian, with similar nationalities, patterns of living and geography. However, the outstandingly different scores between Thailand and Singapore for uncertainty avoidance may offeran insight into how these two countriestackleconflicts in their organisations. This will be examinedin more depth in the following paragraphs.

Singapore

Singapore got a very low score on the uncertainty avoidance dimension, which may be because it is a relatively new country which places a high priority on ethics. Due to Singapore's limited resources, the country has been forced to develop and focus on human and business resources. While business has become of utmost importance in Singapore, the living structure is focused on work and career, which createscompetition among the population to survive. Singaporeans will accept all challenges as part of their work culture.

Thailandgot a medium-high score on the uncertainty avoidance dimension, whichindicates a slight preference for avoiding uncertainty. Thailand hasa medium range of competitiveness in business and focuses more on creating alliances to avoid anyproblems. Thai culture believes in 'Toikon la kao'(each move back one step) to avoid confrontational situations. The ultimate goal of this population is to control everything in order to eliminate or avoid unexpected problems. With themedium-high result on uncertainty avoidance, Thai people seem to stay in a 'safe zone', instead of challenging themselves to try new things.

2.2.3Masculinity/Femininity

Masculinity and femininity focus on the degree to which the society reinforces, or does not reinforce, the traditional way of working; That is,the masculine role model of ambition, achievement, control and power and the feminine role model of interpersonal harmony, caring for others andworking to ensurea good quality of life was stated in Thomas D.C., Peterson M.F., Smith P.B.,

(2008). Hofstede's graph shows that masculinity has the second biggest difference between the two countries. Thus, both countries have different ways of working in organisations; Singaporeans are more focused on achievement and control, whereas Thai people care for others and work only to have a good quality of life.

2.2.4 Power Distance

Power distance focuses on the degree of equality or inequality between people in the country's society. According to the Hofstede Center (n.d.), a high power distance ranking indicates that inequalities of power and wealth have been allowed to grow within the society. A low power distance ranking indicates that society de-emphasises the differences between citizen's power and wealth.

Figure 2 shows third difference between both countries in terms of dimensions on power distance. Singapore scored an average score of 74 on power distance, which relates to the laws and rules that their population work to in a very strict manner in order to follow the work procedures and rules of society. Punishment and fines are given to people who do not follow the rules. Singaporeans call their society a 'fine country', because 'you'll get a fine for everything'. In work, "power is centralised and managers rely on their bosses and on rules. Employees expect to be told what to do. Control is expected and attitude towards managers is formal. Communication is indirect and the information flow is selective" The Hofstede Center, (n.d.) Thailand scores 64, slightly lower than the average Asian countries (71). The Hofstede Center (n.d.) said that it is a society in which inequalities are accepted, and a strict chain of command and protocol are observed. Each rank has its privileges and employees show loyalty, respect and deference for their superiors in return for protection and guidance. This may lead to paternalistic management. Thus, the attitudes towards managers are more formal, the information flow is hierarchical and controlled. The Thai organisational culture follows a hierarchical structure, but there are different norms and rituals within the organisation. Thai companies are family oriented and more concerned with morals than strict rules and regulations.

2.3 Societal culture

For the purpose of this research, I will explore the differences in environment and history of the two countries that may have an influence on their cultural differences. Thailand Religion has a strong influence on Thailand, as Buddhism is central to Thai life; Most of the people in Thailand are Buddhist. Therefore, most of the education and ethical teachings are based on Buddhism. Thailand's long history of rank and respect for higher positions has led to a hierarchical system in the workplace. According to Vinita A. and J. Lawler (2003), Thailand is strong in terms of collectivism and power distance.

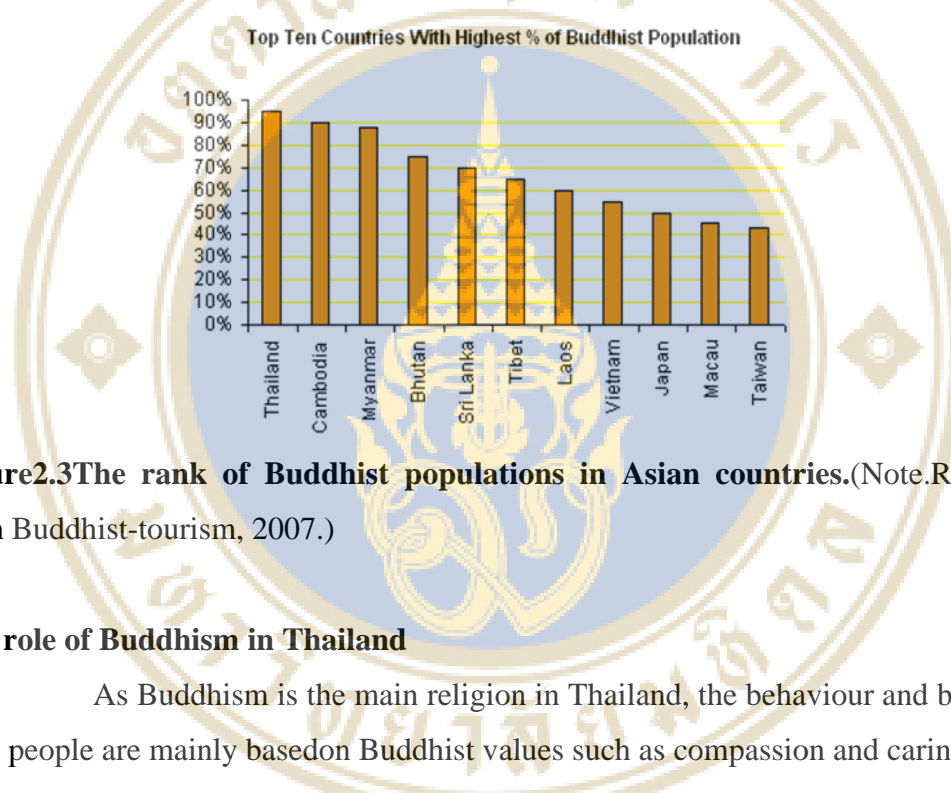


Figure 2.3 The rank of Buddhist populations in Asian countries. (Note: Reprinted from Buddhist-tourism, 2007.)

The role of Buddhism in Thailand

As Buddhism is the main religion in Thailand, the behaviour and beliefs of Thai people are mainly based on Buddhist values such as compassion and caring. Almost all major life events in Thailand are somehow connected to Buddhism. Most Thai males spend at least a short period in the monkhood. Vinita A. and J. Lawler (2003) stated that Buddhism is the religion not only of ethnic Thais, but also of most of the assimilated Chinese, who play a dominant role in business.

Singapore

The culture in Singapore is strongly influenced by Chinese culture, as most of the population's ancestors in Singapore migrated from China in the early 19th century. Scholarship is a very important aspect in Chinese culture. To most Singaporeans education and business acumen are the meanings of survival. According

to Charles M. (2003), competitiveness is part of their lives, as the geography of the country has low natural resources and needs to depend most on its human resources, which help to drive the country.

2.4 Corruption

Another factor that may affect the culture and behavioural activity in society is corruption. Corruption does not refer solely to significant problems such as political issues, but it might also be the cause of daily occurrences that previously went unnoticed.

“Corruption distorts markets and creates unfair competition. Companies often pay bribes or rig bids to win public procurement contracts. Many companies hide corrupt acts behind secret subsidiaries and partnerships. They seek to influence political decision-making illicitly. Others exploit tax laws or construct cartels. Private companies have influence in many public spheres” (Transparency International, 2014, Private Sector).

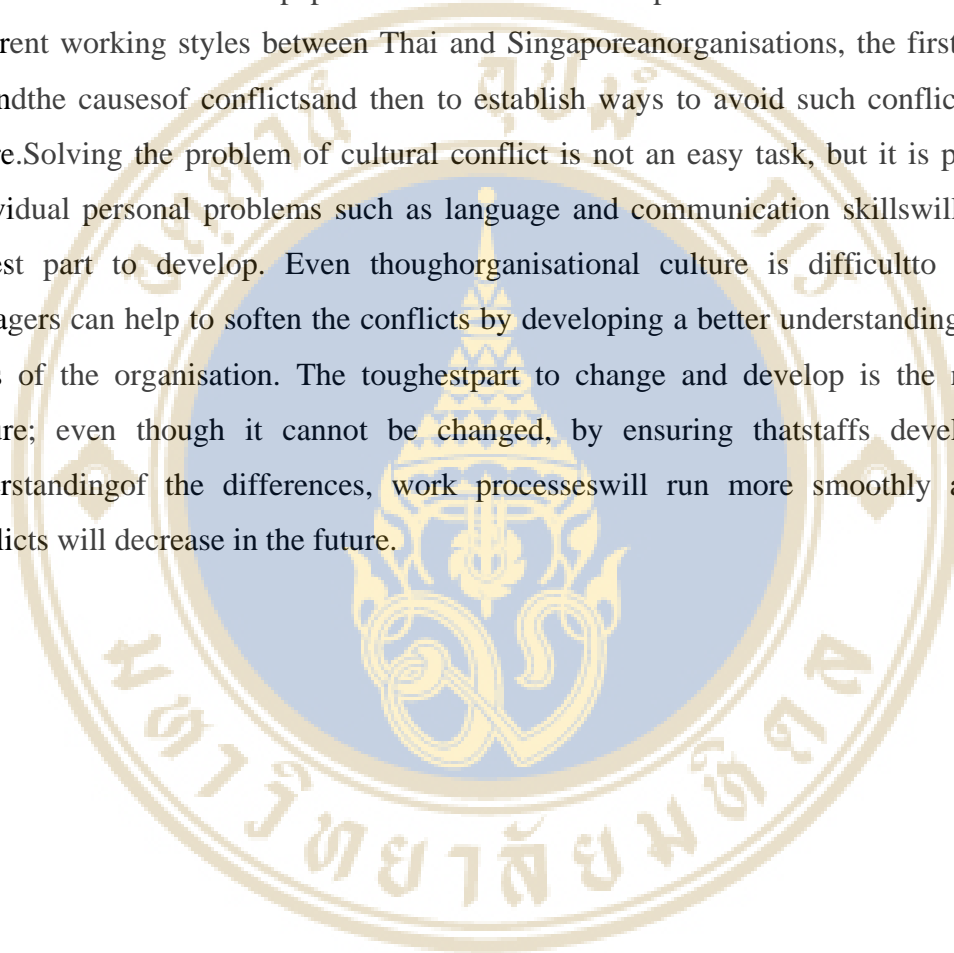
Figure 3 shows the corruption ranking in the two countries in 2013. Thailand was ranked number 102 in the red zone compared to Singapore, which was ranked fifth in yellow zone. This information highlights Thailand’s higher level of corruption compared to Singapore. (Transparency International, 2014, Corruption Perceptions Index 2013)

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	SURVEYS USED	CI: LOWER	CI: UPPER	2012 SCORE
1	Denmark	91	7	87	95	90
1	New Zealand	91	7	87	95	90
3	Finland	89	7	86	92	90
3	Sweden	89	7	85	93	88
5	Norway	86	7	82	90	85
5	Singapore	86	9	82	90	87
7	Switzerland	85	6	81	89	86
102	Ecuador	35	6	29	41	32
102	Moldova	35	8	30	40	36
102	Panama	35	6	31	39	38
102	Thailand	35	8	33	37	37
106	Argentina	34	8	30	38	35
106	Bolivia	34	7	28	40	34
106	Gabon	34	5	32	36	35

Figure 2.4 corruption perception index ranking between Thailand and Singapore 2013 (Note. Reprinted from Transparency International, 2014)

In summary, the conflicts between Thai and Singaporean organisations are mostly caused by the different levels of uncertainty avoidance, masculinity and different influences on societal culture.

As the literature review shows, Thailand and Singapore have significantly different levels of uncertainty avoidance, which may result from the problem of corruption in Thailand and influence the daily problems of Thai organisations. As the purpose of this research paper is to understand the problems that result from the different working styles between Thai and Singaporean organisations, the first step is to find the causes of conflicts and then to establish ways to avoid such conflicts in the future. Solving the problem of cultural conflict is not an easy task, but it is possible. Individual personal problems such as language and communication skills will be the easiest part to develop. Even though organisational culture is difficult to change, managers can help to soften the conflicts by developing a better understanding of both sides of the organisation. The toughest part to change and develop is the national culture; even though it cannot be changed, by ensuring that staffs develop an understanding of the differences, work processes will run more smoothly and the conflicts will decrease in the future.



CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodology

The focus of this cultural research paper is to understand the conflicts that arise in a cross-cultural international brand distribution company. The aim is to gain information on the differences observed and problems faced from staff that has worked in the two different cultural working environments of LIGHTING Singapore and LIGHTING Thailand. The questions are separated into two parts. The first part includes questions about the participants' backgrounds, while the second set of questions focuses on their insights into the company concerning the different work processes and the things they would like to change.

3.2 Data collection method

For this research paper, I employed a qualitative methodology by conducting face-to-face in-depth interviews. Each respondent was asked about the cultural differences in each organisation and the main issues that the participants faced.

3.3 Sample size

Two employees from the Singapore firm and two employees from the Thailand firm were invited to participate in the interviews.

3.4 Sampling frame and qualification

1. Working in management level positions in both LIGHTING Thailand and Singapore
2. Responsible for cooperating on work with the alliance country
3. The interviewee must have visited and stayed at the alliance country before.

Table 3.1 Respondents' details

The table 1 below shows the details of each respondent.

S1	Mr Goh is 34 years old, and he has been working for Singapore LIGHTING since the start of the company in 2008. Mr Goh graduated with a diploma from Tamasek Polytechnic in Singapore. As International Manager, Mr Goh was sent to Thailand in 2009-2010.
S2	Mr C.K. is 27 years old, and he has been working for Singapore LIGHTING since 2009. Mr Tan graduated with a Bachelor's degree from the National University of Singapore. Mr C.K was sent to Thailand in 2009-2011.
T1	Mr Wichit is 33 years old, and he has been working for Thailand LIGHTING since 2011. Mr Wichit graduated with a Bachelor's degree from Assumption University. As Purchasing Manager, Mr Wichit was sent to Singapore in 2011-2012.
T2	Mr Surawut is 28 years old, and he has been working for Thailand LIGHTING since 2009. Mr Surawat graduated with a Bachelor's degree from Assumption University. As Purchasing Manager, Mr Surawat was sent to Singapore in 2009-2011.

3.5 Interview Questions

All participants were asked the following questions:

Part 1 General questions

1. What is your background experience at LIGHTING
2. Please explain your position and responsibilities.
3. Have you ever been faced with conflicts in the organisation before?

What were the conflicts?

4. Can you explain the organisational structure in your company?

Part 2 Cultural insight questions

1. What are the cultural differences in the style of working between the two countries?
2. What are the management tactics for dealing with problems that occur in the country where you were sent to work?
3. What effect do you think the individual, organisational and national cultures have on the company?
4. Which parts of the operation do you think is the problem or causes the problems in this organisation?

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

4.1 Backgrounds of LIGHTING Thailand and Singapore

4.1.1 LIGHTING Thailand

LIGHTING Thailand was established in 2009. The founder of this company is a businessperson who has been working in the Thai badminton market for more than 20 years. The company was appointed sole distributor for LIGHTING, Kson and MDavid brands in Thailand in that year. For the past 5 years, the company has successfully expanded into the Thai market. Today, the company owns 37 retailers and 4 official stores nationwide. The company works with LIGHTING Singapore to create marketing strategies and distribute the products. The company has around 30 employees, making it a medium-sized distribution company in Thailand's badminton sector.

4.1.2 LIGHTING Singapore

LIGHTING Singapore was established in 2008. The founders of this company are four successful businesspersons who have been working in the badminton market for 30 years. The company was appointed to be sole-distributor for LIGHTING, Kson and MDavid brands in Southeast Asia. For the past 6 years, the company has been working with many countries in Southeast Asia to help expand the brands in each country. Today, the company has connections with Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Laos. The company has around 60 employees, making it one of the largest distribution companies in the Southeast Asian badminton sector.

4.2 Findings

4.2.1 Individual cultural self-representation

Individual cultural self-representation is the first factor that I examined with the four interviewees, as this is the basic information that adds to my research by gaining an insight into each interviewee's way of thinking. The staff working in Singapore reported the language barrier as the most difficult obstacle, as 80% of the Thai staff working at the operational level cannot speak English. Respondent S1 reported, 'The major problem that I face in Thailand is about the language'. Respondent S2 said, 'I can hardly work in Thailand as most of the Thai staff do not understand what I want, so I can only communicate with the managerial level for help'. Staff working in Thailand agreed that miscommunication is a part of the problem they face. T2 stated: 'Singaporeans speak too fast; I am always trying to catch up with what they are trying to say'.

4.2.2 Organizational culture

In this factor is the major factor that effect to the problem of both organization conflicts. Organization culture will include staff behaviour in two organisations, operation system (family system vs. partnership system) and working system

1. Staff behaviour in two organisations

All four respondents agreed that both organisations have different ways of thinking and working. They see Singapore as highly competitive where it is more difficult to find opportunities to develop the business compared to Thailand. Singapore is seen to have an aggressive approach towards tasks compared to THAILAND Thailand, which usually follows the flow of work. Respondent T2 said, 'one of the things that I see as different in Singapore is how Singaporeans approach and respond to their work and try to finish the job on time'.

According to the theory of uncertainty avoidance from The Hofstede Center (n.d.) it helps to support that Singaporeans show a more proactive approach to their work than Thai people. This finding supports the literature review in

terms of Thai people staying in a 'safe zone', rather than challenging themselves to new things, and Singaporeans accepting all challenges as part of their work culture.

2. Operation system (family system vs. partnership system)

All respondents mentioned that both companies have different styles of work processes for business operations. In Thailand's family-style system, the owner makes the decisions and gives most of the work to staff, and most of the staff listens to the owner. However, in Singapore's partnership-style system, the work processes are transparent, all the work is given to the staff by the duty manager and everyone responds to the action.

Accordingly, Thailand may work more slowly than Singapore, as most of the decisions are approved by one person. S2 said, 'I feel that the difference between both organisations is how the system works and the levels of formality. Singapore usually works in a formal way but Thailand has a more relationship-style of work'. T1 reported, 'In Thailand, we often follow the work given to us by our boss, but in Singapore, they need to get new ideas to impress their boss, because in Thailand we work as a family and we follow our boss like father and son'.

3. Working system

Thailand's work system has many operational levels. Most of the operational staff have a low level of education and cannot implement the work or process the work by themselves. LIGHTING Thailand has a top-down management work structure, as all the orders and job implementations happen at the management level, and the operational staffs have a low level of responsibility.

However, Singapore's staffs have mostly a medium-high level of education, all the job descriptions are clear and the staffs need to work on their tasks. LIGHTING Singapore has a straight line management work structure, which motivates most of the staff to work and develop themselves to do better.

As a result of the different working styles, Thailand's staffs have a slower process than Singapore's staff, which causes delays in cooperative work. Thus, most mistakes in the ordering process are caused by the different work systems.

4. National cultural

In this, we will focus on how Nation affects the organization. In this reach will include Corruption two out of the four respondents had the same perception that Thai culture involves corrupt activities, since the staff order products from stores with the agreement of department stores channel. Thai people absorb corrupt behaviour as a normal part of life, which contrasts with Singapore's culture in which everything needs to be processed systematically. S1 stated, 'In Thailand, corruption is almost part of daily life, so when you work with a shopping mall, you need to take a gift for them every time to have a better location in the mall'. S2 agreed, 'The corruption rate in Thailand is very high, if I want to solve any problems, I can just pay for it'.

Summary of findings

The culture in Singapore is more focused, results oriented and disciplined than Thailand. In Thailand, people tend to have a more relaxed attitude and work more from their feelings and heart. Thai people aim to play on short-term wins rather than long-term sustainable growth. While management techniques influence the working system, work culture is sometimes more important, as it forms the basis of the whole organisational system. These management techniques have been developed over time in relation to people's behaviours and national culture, but individual elements of the manager's background and ways of management also have a great influence on the working system. The Singaporean interviewees mentioned that the existence of corruption in the system in Thailand makes the organisational behaviour vary to a certain extent, as people are scared of those in power, but having money can make things more casual.

From additional information provided by the respondents, I found that even if obstacles were met while working, at the final phase, everyone could adapt and work together by following the flow within the organisation. Many levels of conflict derive from the cultural differences; however, the easiest part that adapts to change is the individual culture or human factor. In summary, based on the interviews, the biggest problem in Thailand is the organisational culture in terms of the family operation system and the individual problem of the operational staff. However, the Singapore business has problems with human resources that are not adaptive to Thai

culture, and their aggressive workstyle creates bias and lowers staff satisfaction. To develop both sides will take time, but it is possible to do so.



CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to understand the cultural differences between two countries, Singapore and Thailand, which are working under the same brand, LIGHTING, as a distributor in Asia. It is expected that two companies from two countries would experience conflict when working together because of the communication difficulties and different work processes. However, for Thailand side once we understand the cultures, we may also understand the cause of conflict and learn how to resolve it.

This research found three types of culture that influence conflict in an organisation: individual cultural self-representation, organisational culture and national culture. Each level has an effect on the work processes and other parts of work owing to the one-to-one communication required for the decision-making needed to process an important project.

The research supports that individual cultural self-representation is the first level that organisations should be aware of, as this type of culture is the easiest part to change and develop. Organisational culture is the next step to address, especially in terms of the work systems and operational systems (family business) in place. Lastly, although national culture cannot be changed or developed, efforts can be made to understand each culture to allow them space to develop and enable them to move forward together with a better understanding.

Recommendations for LIGHTING Thailand

- Communication is one of the main barriers in this cultural conflict. We need to educate our staff to understand and speak English.
- Training should be provided to staff of both companies to help them understand the differences in culture and work processes.
- All staff from both companies should work with each other, so that they become acclimatised to the differences.

-Understanding that Thailand's staffs adopt a family business style and Singaporeans work with a partnership style will help staff know who to talk to. That is, in Thailand, we need only communicate with boss for a decision, whereas in Singapore, we need to communicate with the staff responsible for the work.

-Even though the rewards and punishment systems cannot be compared, in Thailand, we can use and learn from the Singapore system and adapt it to Thai culture to increase the motivation of the Thai staff.

- Corrupt methods of work are apart of Thai culture, which will be impossible for Thailand to change, as the problem is part of the country's work processes. While it is difficult to change and solve national problems, we can choose to raise awareness of the problem as an urgent topic. I believe that once the organisation understands the culture of their staff in their country, the management will be able to manage that cultural aspect.

In conclusion, the management level will be the key to solve the conflicts between the two distribution companies. In Thailand, all the decisions and ordering processes are made by the management level. Once the management level understands the cause of the conflicts and knows how to deal with the problems, the operational staff under the management level will follow suit, which may improve the situation in the future. Furthermore, as Singapore's organisational structure is a straight-line management style; all staff that coordinate with the Thai company should prepare work processes to fit with the organisational culture of Singapore, such as time management, approval process and ETC. Understanding the structure and obstacles of each culture will help to decrease the conflict of each organisation, and thus, aim to move in the same direction toward the same goal.

5.1 Managerial Implications and Suggestions

1. Distributors can utilise the study to understand the differences between the cultures and learn how they might affect their organisations.
2. Managers should aim to understand staff behaviour differences and perspectives in Thailand and Singapore.
3. The collected information can be utilised to improve and develop processes that help Thailand and Singapore work better with each other.

5.2 Limitations

1. The study was conducted with a sample size of four respondents between March and April 2014 in Thailand and Singapore; therefore, the respondents may not well represent the entire segment.
2. A more complex methodology could be utilised to enhance the depth of data.
3. Due to the limited time available, the respondents were only interviewed once.

5.3 Future Research

Future research should interview more companies in Thailand that work with Singaporean companies to gain more detailed results and to better understand the cultural differences between Singapore and Thailand.

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