

Hofstede's Model: Cultural Differences in Hospitality Sector and Experiences of a Migrant

Arshdeep Singh Bedi*

Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

Abstract

The paper focuses on various dimensions of the Hofstede's model on cultural differences. It analyses that how the dimensions in the Hofstede's model help in analysing the behaviour of an employee in a Hospitality sector. The viewpoints provided in this regard have been supported by valid arguments which have been further supported by giving the references of well known academicians and researchers from around the globe. As the paper moves further it provides the reasons which make study of cultural differences vital. Paper provides some experiences of a migrant (i.e. of the author) at a new work place in a new continent. The text given has been divided in sections which makes it easily understandable.

Keywords: Power distance; Uncertainty avoidance; Individualism-Collectivism; Masculinity-Femininity; Human resource planning; Job hopper, Migrant

Introduction

The proper study of human behaviour is vital in hospitality workplace, as hospitality products are intangible [1] especially aspects of services offered by Sommelier or that of Spa which cannot be measured only can be rated as good or bad. Hospitality employee's behaviour does have positive or negative effect on service receiver as services are inseparable from its provider [2] and to have positive effect study of cultural differences is vital.

Hofstede has presented a well balanced model on cultural differences as most of the dimensions in the model on broader scale help in analysing and interpreting the behaviour of workers in Hospitality workplace. The following text supports that how Hofsted's model of cultural differences helps analysing the behaviour of people related to hospitality industry.

Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance:- The First Two Dimensions in Hofstede's Model

It means the psychological gap that exists between workers that have power and those who don't have [3]. The inequalities that come with unequal distribution of power among workers also comes under dimension of Power Distance. In countries like New Zealand power distance among boss and subordinate is least, however in India it's opposite. Therefore, it can be said that if a New Zealand's employee works in India he may face difficulties in working as well as difficulties in behaviour with boss due to the reason that in India power distance is more in comparison of New Zealand. Hence, Hofsted's model is beneficial in analysing that due to more power distance in India, New Zealand's employee or employees from other countries with low power distance may face behavioural difficulties with boss while working in hospitality sector. The second dimension of Hofstede's model i.e. Uncertainty avoidance refers to stress level on an employee or individual regarding his uncertain future [3]. The cultural background and behaviour of an individual plays important role on how he/she deals with risk of uncertain future. In such countries where people cope with risk more easily they are comfortable with unknown situations [4]. This dimension of Hofstede is useful in hospitality industry as work shifts of an employee for a month are not generally known quite in advance and he may have to work in break shifts. This uncertainty of work shifts

is basically due to more demanding guests and companies trying to please guests to have cutting edge over competitors. It is observed that if an employee is given his duty rota well in advance then he can plan his operations well. Hence, not only benefitting him but organisation as well in terms of output. But with uncertainty of shifts an employee can become stressful which may negatively affect his behaviour. If such employee is from country where people cope with unknown situations easily, then he or she would be happy to serve and work in varied shifts. Hence, Hofstede dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance is beneficial in analysing that the employees who belong to countries where people cope with uncertain situations comfortably. Such people may not have any behavioural or other mental complexities while working in different time-tables.

Third and the Fourth Dimension in Hofstede's Model: Individualism v/s Collectivism and Masculinity-Femininity

Individualism v/s Collectivism says that how much an employee thinks of him or her and how much for his team/society. This dimension of Hofstede is beneficial in analysing employee's behaviour as in countries where there is more individualism a person can have selfish behaviour and selfishness is not accepted in hospitality industry as it requires team spirit. For example:- if a hospitality employee is having individualistic behaviour then he may not be a good team player, but hospitality workplace being a part of collectivistic society requires team play. Research reflects that a worker who has good bonding with fellow mates comes out of intricate situations easily. Fourth dimension given by Hofstede i.e. Masculinity-Femininity refers to the partition of roles among Males and Females. The nature of men on broader scale

*Corresponding author: Arshdeep Singh Bedi, BTS, BHM&CT, PG in Intl. Hospitality Mgt, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand, Tel: +64 9-921 9999, 0091-73070-41042, Tel: 215-863-1527; E-mail: arsh.bedi86@yahoo.co.nz

Received April 18, 2016; Accepted October 17, 2016; Published October 25, 2016

Citation: Bedi AS (2016) Hofstede's Model: Cultural Differences in Hospitality Sector and Experiences of a Migrant. J Tourism Hospit 5: 249. doi: [10.4172/2167-0269.1000249](https://doi.org/10.4172/2167-0269.1000249)

Copyright: © 2016 Bedi AS. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

have masculine orientation, but in some of the feminine countries like Netherlands men may have more feminine orientation [3]. Society expects that person with feminine nature would be more polite and those who are masculine will be lesser polite in comparison of feminine natured person. The usefulness of this dimension is explained in form of an example. For say, a female boss having feminine nature may understand the nature and problems of female stewards working under her easily. However, a male boss may not be able to do this as good as female boss. Hence, it can be said that lady boss can allocate work to the stewards (female workers) as per their nature expecting better output from them.

Fifth and the Last Dimension in Hofstede Model on Cultural Differences Helping Hospitality Industry

Long term versus short term societies is the last dimension given by Hofstede in his model for cultural differences. Some cultures are past oriented whereas some are future oriented. In certain cultures people plan for longer time when they are planning for future. Similarly, when past incidences are considered which shaped current time people tend to move further back in time so that they can shape their future very well [4]. This dimension is also vital for interpretation of behaviour in hospitality workplace as an employee who belongs to long term society may seek for long term benefits in job and person who belongs to short term society may behave differently in hospitality establishment and seek for instant rewards.

Significance of Studying Cultural Diversity

The excellent work done by Hofstede in his model for Cultural Differences ignited spark in my mind to give shoulder to this topic and further analyse that why studying cultural differences is crucial. Studying diverse culture brought by employees from various backgrounds is vital in the work place for various reasons like establishing and maintaining proper work culture in order to promote elevated levels of output in an organisation. Justification which supports this argument is that studying cultural diversity helps in keeping migrant workers in high spirits and due to this increased level of morale they are able to fill the gap of required skills which a local may not [5]. Hence, by studying and resolving the cultural issues an organisation can keep its employees in a joyful mood and can increase revenue. Moreover, in the present scenario when the world is shrinking into a global village study of cultural diversity requires a deep thought for harmony among various co-workers. With the existence of harmony among employees team work can be achieved easily as team work is need of hour and for proper team work selection of team as per inter relationship of job is crucial [6]. Therefore, without studying previous work cultures of employee's formation of an effective and efficient team is a hard nut to crack.

Other than for selecting the proper team, studying cultural diversity at work place is also very important for proper Human Resource Planning (HRP), as HRP can be a problem where workers from other than the host country are working [6]. The problem of proper HRP further intensifies as policy which is adequate for local labour may not be accepted by migrant employee or vice-versa due cultural and behavioural difference. I along with my other fellow workers experienced the same when my manager introduced a new leave taking policy for workers which I thought to be worth full for me but was worthless for local population of New Zealand as in policy double salary was paid to the employee who worked on public holidays. Most of locals were not willing to work on public holidays but for me public holidays of New Zealand were not of much importance. Rather

they were chance for me to earn double salary. Scholars doing research on cultural diversity in a work place also study it to explore similarities that exist in employees working in a same organisation. As there may be various similarities in people from different demographics like desire for self-esteem etc. which may not be visible to a casual observer [7]. Last but not the least, studying of cultural diversity is vital for analysing the reason that why most of migrants are regarded as Job Hoppers? The research shows that migrant population from different cultural backgrounds is in general excessively ambitious and job change in them is often for the sake of promotion [5].

Experiences of the Migrant

Being a migrant worker in New Zealand I was also regarded as Job Hopper. But there were valid reasons which led to often job change. Certain particular incidences faced by a migrant worker (myself) in a new environment where culture was quite different then home country has been elaborated as under.

Moody says that "Most of the countries into which mass migration flows need these desperate workers to fill jobs that natural population growth can no longer fill. Yet, immigrant workers are ill-treated and poorly paid" [8]. My experience was also similar when I was working in a Chinese restaurant situated near Queen Street in Auckland, New Zealand. There were several reasons such as my race, my language, even my age group and gender which made me feel out of place and in some instances I experienced discrimination. Though I was shortlisted for that job after a tough trade test but yet due to apparent biased behaviour from the higher level management and other employees my experience of that job wasn't enjoyable [9].

During my first day at the Chinese restaurant I was told to do the work which was below my job profile i.e. below the job profile of restaurant boy. In that restaurant there were separate employees for cleaning floors and utensils but due to my different facial structure then Chinese I was told to do the above mentioned job. Often while doing this particular task a question came to my mind that "is this the work for which I came miles away from my mother land? I answered to myself not at all". A possible reason why it was more stressful for me was that at my home land the culture was quite different as there was a separate class of people to do these jobs in the work place and I was never a part of them [10].

The time progressed but my job profile more or less remained the same. However, during this period I always tried to be happy and maintained high spirits. After, finishing my shift one day I asked my supervisor "when will I be given the chance to work with other locals who were recruited along with me?" and he bluntly replied "that there is wide gap between you and other Chinese workers". Then he looked at my face for few seconds and walked away. From his this silent look I analysed that he himself was not happy to say me that being a migrant I am not a good worker. However, migrants bring different skills required for the job which locals sometimes do not possess [5]. During my days in Chinese restaurant a thought clicked in my mind that I was ill treated not due to the reason of being a migrant but may be due to the reason that I didn't shared same values and culture as that of the owners of the restaurant.

But, it's said that 'all is well that ends well' and soon I got a better rather the best what I could have achieved in terms of job. I was recruited by a company providing outsourced services in major hotels of New Zealand and then by the links from this particular job I joined as a lecturer at a college and that to in Auckland itself.

Acknowledgements

Foremost of all I express my sincere indebtedness to the "Almighty" for bestowing me with all the favourable circumstances that kept me in high spirits while I was writing this paper.

A feeling of elation insists me on expressing my heartiest thanks to Ms. SonaliSinha Sr. Director of Rayat Bahra Institute of Hotel Management, Mr. Kunal-Principal and Ms. Cassandra Roberts Vice Principal for their precious guidance without which the completion of this paper would have not been possible. I would like mention about Wini a person more than just a friend to me who always relaxed my thoughts when nerves of my brain stretched during long working hours on this paper. Above all I would like to express deep sense of gratitude to my Mom and to Dr. SS Bedi (My Dad) for his blessing and technical support. Everybody met might not have got a mention, but none is forgotten. Above All I Thank WAHEGURU and JESUS for This.

References

1. Lashley C (1999) Empowerment through involvement: a case study of TGI restaurants. *Personnel Review* 29: 791-815.
2. Cowell D (1984) *The Marketing of Services*. Heinemann, London.
3. Hofstede G (2006) *Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context*. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture.
4. Laroche L (2003) *Managing cultural diversity in technical professions*. New York USA: Butterworth Heinemann.
5. Baum T, Dutton E, Karimi S, Kokkranikal J, Devine F, et al. (2007) Cultural diversity in hospitality work, *Cross Cultural Management. An International Journal* 14: 229-239.
6. Berger F, Brownell J (2009) *Organizational behavior for hospitality industry*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.
7. Harvey C, Allard J (2002) *Understanding and managing diversity (3rd edn)* New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.
8. Moody K (2002) Immigrant workers and labour/community organizations in the United States. In McBride, J & Greenwood I.
9. Baum T (2007) *Human resource in tourism: still waiting for a change*. Elsevier.
10. Iona Byford (2009) *Community Unionism: A comparative analysis of concepts and contexts*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.