WHEN IN ROME OR BEIJING

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Terms of Reference

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to give advice to the head marketing of TBG Tours LTD in United States on how different cultures such as China and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) behave and what to expect during the visit.

The report will also comment on what is and is not acceptable to say. According to Hofstede, culture is divided into six different parts: Masculinity/Feminity, Power distance, Individualism/Collectivist, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long term orientation and Indulgence. In this report, long-term orientation and indulgence is not discussed due to the fact there is a missing value in UAE.

The report also comments on the differences between China, Dubai and United States; especially the behavioural differences Dubai and China. For example, Dubai and China look more for the benefit of the team or enterprise rather than their own benefit. Also, the results shown that between the three different cultures there are different behaviour and some gestures can consider inappropriate. For example in Dubai, people shake hand with the right hand due to the fat the left hand is considered the dirty hand or in China, you should give the business card with two hands.

Furthermore, recommendations will also be suggested on what is acceptable to and what is inadmissible.

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1.0 Introduction

The aim of this report is to give advice to the American head marketing of TBG Tours LTD on how to behave and prepare for intercultural meetings during their trip to China and to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The report will include an overview of the cultural differences and provided recommendations on how to interact with the different cultures in a business environment.

2.0 Before the trip

2.1 Culture Custom

Moran et all (2014) highlight the importance of investigating the destinations culture beforehand so that you are prepared for encountering cultural factors and the complexities of communication. They also note how cultural sensitivity is needed in order to be aware of native customs so not to offend people and not to judge according to stereotypes.

2.2 Culture Confusion

According to Timm (2011), the term cultural confusion is the practice of learning about the customs and traditions of a new culture and the difficulties of adapting to the new environment. During the following business trips to China and Dubai it is likely that some will experience cultural confusion due to the notable differences in the way of living and doing business. This report will introduce the differences between America, China and Dubai to help the head of marketing to understand and respect each culture and minimise culture shock.

Greet Hofstede is a “social psychologist” and “anthropologist” who studied the different interplay between cultures (Telelangue Berlitz Company, 2011). His theory provides a systematic framework to evaluate the differences between nations and cultures. Hofstede divided the principal in 6 parts:

- Masculinity/Feminity
- Power distance, Individualism/Collectivist
- Uncertainty Avoidance
- Long term orientation
- Indulgence

In this report, the long-term orientation and indulgence has not be commented on because data is not available for the United Arab Emirates (see Appendix A).

In Appendix A, the countries China, United Arab Emirates and USA has been compared using the different parts in the Hofstede theory

3.0 United Arabs Emirates

3.1 Culture Differences

According to the Embassy of United Arab Emirates (2018), the official weekend in the UAE start on a Friday and ends on Saturday. Several small businesses only close on a Friday. Also, government offices open at 7:30 and closes at 15:00. Private offices use to keep longer hours and can have a straight shift or split hour. Meetings should be avoided during Ramadan (from the 6 May until 5 June). During this time, productivity decreases between 35-50% and decisions and meetings are postponed (Sunnuqrot, 2012). In addition, if the host offers you a beverage accept it as if you refuse it, it will look as if you are rude (Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, 2018).
Furthermore, Dubai has a liberal government economy and clothing polices are closely scrutinized that attract enterprises. (Dubai.ae,2018).

3.1.1 Masculine vs Feminity Culture

According to Hofstede Insights (2018), the United Arabs Emirates is described as neither masculine or feministic culture. In contrast with the United States, Hofstede Insights describes America as a high masculinity culture. A masculine culture is driven by the success and gender roles are obviously distinguished. Men are described to have jobs that are tough and focus on material success. Meanwhile, in theory, women are supposed to be more tender and focused on their way of life (Hofstede, as cited in Jawad, 2018 PPT3).

3.1.2 Individualistic vs Collectivist Culture

An individualistic culture is a society that places more emphasis on the individual rather than the group (Hofstede,2001). This type of culture value privacy, honesty

and freedom (Counter Collective, 2016). In an individualistic culture, people take care of themselves, express individual identity, and aspire to be the best (Rockson, 2016). According to Hofstede Insights, United States scores high in this category in comparison to China and the UAE.

On the other hand, a collectivist culture is committed on what is best for the group, family or business rather than what is best for an individual. Decisions are made with consideration on the communal wealth (Rockson, 2016). Also, they take care of each other and they control themselves to fit in the group. In this group, the UAE and China can be found. A recommendation would be to talk always in first person plural and do not think about your own interests. Think about what is better for the business. Therefore, it would be recommended to talk always in first person plural. For example: work in a group and families are more important. (Bernstein, 2018)

3.1.3 Power Distance

Power distance is explained as the individuals understanding that people are not equal inside a society. People, Schools, Communities, Families and business inside a country are expected and accept that power is distributed unfairly (Hofstede as cited in Jaward, 2018).

In countries with a high-power distance culture, employees have a definitive place and role. People accept the hierarchical order in which they are placed. Centralization inside a company can be popular and workers are expected to be told what they need to do and the perfect boss is described as a benevolent autocrat (Hofstede Insights,2018). For example, a country with a high-power distance is United Arab Emirates.

Although in countries with a low power distance, there is a strong expectation of equality in different aspects such as power, decision making, job benefits and other work conditions (Interface Training, 2010).
The United States is an example of a low power distance culture.

3.1.4 Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty Avoidance is described as the level of acceptance for ambiguity and hesitation within the society. Countries with a high score will have a low tolerance to uncertainty and ambiguity. This is expressed through a need of predictability; they will prefer written to unwritten rules (Rockson, 2016). The UAE can be described as a country with a high uncertainty avoidance. On the contrary, the

United States has a low score in uncertainty avoidance. This means the extension in which the society feels intimidated by ambiguity (Moran et al, 2014).

A recommendation for the head of marketing of TGB tours will be to make sure that they are very clear with the instructions before and during the meeting and let them know what the clear path of the meeting is going to be and what to expect (Rockson, 2016)

3.2 Business Code of Conduct

3.2.1 Introductions

The official language in UAE is Arabic although English is widely used in transactions. Nearly all the official documents, forms, laws and decrees are written in Arabic therefore it is recommended to have some knowledge of the language (United Arab Emirates Mistry of Economy, 2018). See appendix B for list of key phases.

Business etiquette must be fulfilled. Men should wear a suit meanwhile women should ensure that their business clothing covers their arms and legs. Women should not be covered with a veil during meetings, only if a sacred monument is visited where women should cover their head. (Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, 2018).

3.2.2 First Impressions

According to Goldman (Goldman, 2016), the first seven seconds in which you meet somebody, is when "first impressions are happening". Running late, poor physical grooming, poor physical care, slouching and a weak handshake can create a negative image in a business.

When meeting someone, do not kiss, unless the person kisses you first. If you have to greet someone, offer to shake the other person's hand. Give the right hand a shake instead of the left hand due to the fact that in the Arabic world, the left hand is used to clean yourself and it is considered as the dirty hand (Mr. Q - iLoveQatar.net, 2017).

Women should put their hand on their chest instead of shaking your hand and at the same time saying hello, unless a handshake is offered (Mr. Q - iLoveQatar.net, 2014). This happens due to the fact some people are very religious and they do not like any physical contact, especially for women. (Jawad, 2018)

3.2.3 Gifts and business cards

After starting the meeting, exchange business cards immediately after the introductions presenting with the right hands or both hands at the same time. Do not use the left hand for anything, as previously mentioned. Keep the card on the table and do not put them away immediately (United Arab Emirates Ministry of Economic, 2018).

3.2.4 Negotiation

Personal contact with potential/existing partners and regular visit to the market are the most important. Also, it is natural for the business relationship to build with time. The ministry of economic advisers you to consult a lawyer prior to signing an agreement in the UAE. (United Arab Emirates Ministry of Economic, 2018)

3.2.5 Communications

Communication abilities are essential between people from different countries, due to the fact misinterpretations of the different cultures can lead with a no deal and as a result it would affect the company economies. The UAE is described as a country with high context culture in comparison to the United States.

High context cultures use body language and non-verbal communication to give messages (Halls, as cited in Jawad, 2018, Halls Theory). Also, they speak one after another. If there are any personal disagreements, solve it instantly or avoid taking about it.

Meanwhile, in lower context cultures like America, non-verbal communications can be misinterpreted and they tend to give more emphasis on messages and giving details. Disagreements are not seen as personal and are not necessarily resolved immediately. Solutions tend to be rationally based (Halls, as cited in Jawad, 2018, Halls Theory). Therefore, if business is to be made, it is recommended to do as many meetings face to face as possible and expect things to be done well rather than efficiently or on how fast they can be resolved.

4.0 China

4.1.1 Masculine vs Feminity Culture

Similarly, with the USA, China scores high in this category, which means that this country is considered a masculine culture (Hofstede Insights, 2018). It must also be taken into consideration that China values high success and Chinese will interpose before work before family and leisure.

4.1.2 Individualistic vs Collectivist Culture

Similarly, to UAE, China is seen as a country with a collectivistic culture, contrasting with the individualist culture of the USA (Hofstede Insights,2018). As it was explained before, collectivistic cultures look at the benefit of the team rather than the personal benefit. In addition, they emphasise on trust and relationship. While, in the USA they have an individualistic culture. The advice will be the same as the one for Dubai.

4.1.3 Power Distance

China and the UAE score a high result in power distance. In contrast with the USA (low power distance), both countries accept the disparity (Hofstede, 2018). In China, the manager-worker relationship tends to be polarized and there is no argument against power abuse by the supervisor. Also, the positions inside a business have great significance and this can be seen in the way of seating during a meeting. A recommendation to the TGB Manager would be to always address the person in charge rather than subordinate employees.

4.1.4 Uncertainty Avoidance

Like the USA, China achieves a low score on uncertainty avoidance. Chinese people try to solve problems between friends and families. It is characterised by trust and personal relationships between enterprises (Moran et all, 2014). The

fulfilment of laws and rules may be flexible to suit the situation. Chinese people are very content with ambiguity as they are very adaptable and entrepreneurial.

4.2 Business Code of Conduct

4.2.1 Introductions

In China, there are many languages and dialects spoken although the official language is the "standard Chinese", but English is also widely spoken (Jaward,2018). Please, see appendix C for list of key phases in Chinese.

Dressing Etiquettes must be followed. Men should wear either the traditional costume or a suit of the same colour. Avoid using nylon silk socks and avoid the white colour. Women should wear a traditional costume or a suit with skirt or trousers. Avoid the use of black leather skirt and if you use a skirt always wear a half sock. (Chinese students cited in Jaward, 2018)

4.2.2 First Impressions

In a meeting in China, greetings are formal and the oldest person in the room should be greeted first as a sign of respect and men should great women first. Also, you should address the person by their honorific title and their surname unless they have mentioned which name they want to use. Moreover, when greeting a Chinese, they will look at the floor when meeting someone. If you are doing a business in China, prepare to laugh at yourself giving the circumstances. Chinese people can laugh at themselves in comfortable relationships. (Jaward, 2018).

4.2.3 Gifts and business cards

Business cards in China are given after the introduction. Always give the card with two hands and receive the card in the same way. The TGB tours should have a translated business card into Chinese using simplistic characters and they should be printed in gold ink. Extra details should not be handwritten on the card. (Jaward, 2018). When giving gifts, they should be wrapped in red paper as it represents the lucky colour. Chinese people are very modest; they will reject the gift several times. Continue to insist until they accept. Some examples of gifts are: wine, tea, cigarettes. Do not give expensive gifts. (Chinese students cited in Jaward, 2018).

4.2.4 Negotiation

When negotiating in China, only senior members of the team will speak. Therefore, the oldest person in the team should be the spokesman. Negotiations are slow and are generally slow. There is a high possibility that decisions will be made after the meeting, as businesses are hierarchical. Managers from the United States should also be prepared to jump off the point for other discussions. If the words “we will think about it” or “we will see” are said, there is a possibility that it is a “No” because Chinese do not look for conflict. (Jaward, 2018). Moreover, Chinese are astute when negotiating therefore do not use high-pressure tactics, otherwise you can find that you have been outmanoeuvred. (Jaward, 2018).

4.2.5 Communications

As explained before, the United States has got a low cultural context and in contrast with China, Chinese people have got a high context culture. Non-verbal communication is valuable. The way that you seat or the tone of voice will determine the intention and the meaning of things (Jaward, 2018). Avoid staring at the bosses’ eyes and frowning of the face as this is considered disrespectful. It is advisable to try and maintain an indifferent look. (Jaward, 2018).

5.0 Conclusion

After exploring the cultures of these countries, it can be said that the ability to adapt to different cultures can make a difference to being successful. Communication and respect to another culture can be beneficial and have a positive effect on future business projects.

6.0 Appendices

Appendix A

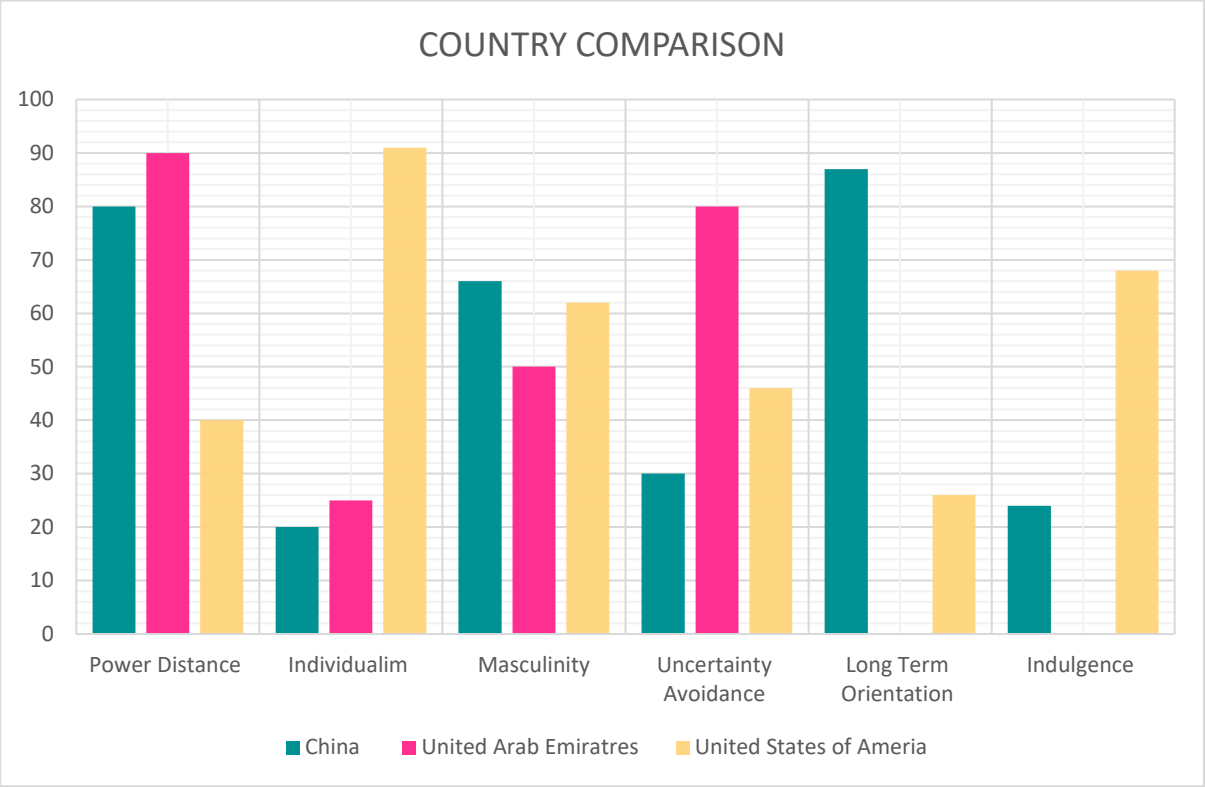

Figure 1

Appendix B

In UAE, when encountering a person for the first time, use this salutation " السلام عليكم "[assalamu a'alaikum], this phrase means peace be upon you. If you ask something, start or end with the following phrase which means please in a polite form "من فضلك "[min Fadlak]. Supposing that you have to introduce someone, say Mr or Ms before the name or the equivalent in Arabic "السيّد" [assayed]. (Jaward,2018)

Appendix C

Some useful words in Chinese at time of presenting are the following ones. When you want to say hello in Chinese is said Ni Hao. If you want to say thank you then you use the word Xie Xie. In the case, you want to express denial then say Meiyou. The word Bukeqi means you are welcome in Chinese. When ending a meeting or a talk say Zaijian to say goodbye. (Jaward,2018)

Image References

Chinese flag: http://www.stickpng.com/assets/images/580b585b2edbce24c47b27f5.png

UAE flag: http://www.freeflagicons.com/country/united_arab_emirates/glossy_round_icon/

USA flag: http://www.freeflagicons.com/country/united_states_of_america/glossy_round_icon/

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