

MARK AND SPENCER

INTRODUCING THE MODERN WORKPLACE

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The essay is based on the relationship of structure, functions and diversity of culture within the organization and how the organization has coped with diversity of different cultures within the organization based on Hofstede cultural dimensions. The analysis will be based on the influence of cultural diversity on Mark and Spencer Plc. (M&S) and how organization cope with cultural difference in United Kingdom (UK) and France.

According to the researcher Minterzberg's definition the structure of organization is relationship between the system, operating process, groups and people making efforts to achieve goals of organizations. Organization structure refers to the models of internal and external relations such as decision making, power to employees and communication processes that affects the performance of organization in an effective manner (Ahmady, Mehrpour and Nikooravesh, 2016).

Organizational culture is defined as system of shared values, assumption and beliefs that guides individuals in understanding which actions are appropriate or not appropriate within the business. Such norms and behaviors are also transmitted to the new members of organization (Strategic Business Leadership, 2019). The employees adopt such norms in order to achieve the goals of the organization. In another definition it has been narrated that organization culture is referred to the working such as how the employees will perform duties? are the managers have decision making powers?). Culture can also be considered as a competitive advantage for organizations. (Groysberg, Lee, Price & Cheng, 2018.)

In large organizations there is a cultural diversity at the workplace. When individuals are recruited in any organization, they are bound to follow the organization culture apart from their own culture to remove the cultural differences at working environment. By adopting organization norms will help the employees to work in a team to achieve the organization goals and it will also eliminate the risk of misjudgment while understanding the tasks (Ashton 2010).

Marks and Spencer Group plc (M&S) is the leading international multi-channel retailer in the United Kingdom (UK). M&S offers range of products for all people from middle to elite class such as all kinds of Garments for all genders and all age groups such as menswear, womenswear and kids wear along with wide range of home and food products via online and in stores. The company has business established in Europe, middle east and Asia specifically (Anon, 2019).

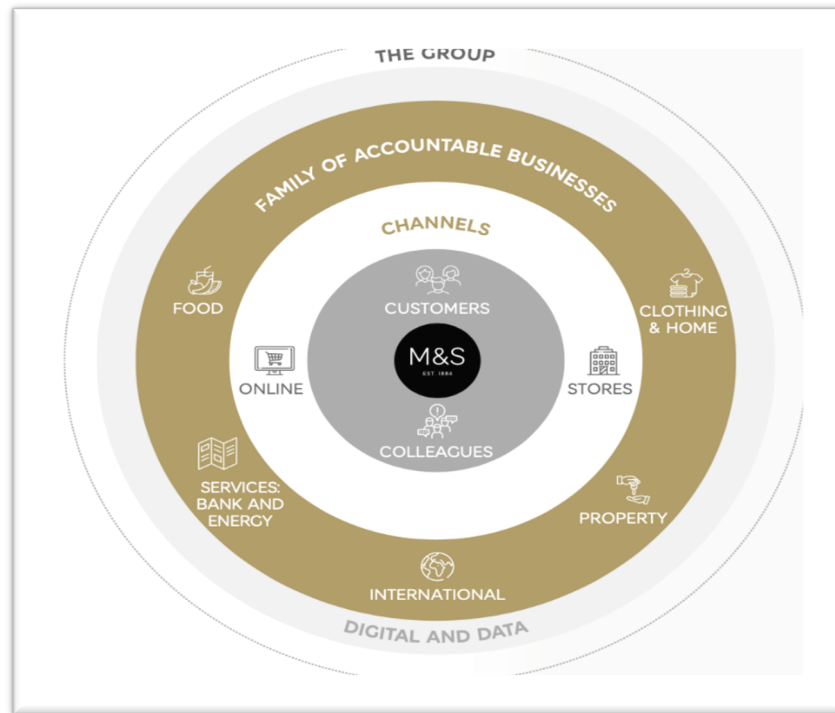


Figure 1: M&S company overview

(Marks and spencer,2010)

The headquarters of M&S is based in the London UK from here it operates all over the world and it employed almost 80,0000 people from all regions of the world from different diversity backgrounds and cultures to operate day to day business activities who almost serve 32 million customers (Marks & Spencer, 2019).

M&S has flat organisation structure which means few layers of management from top to bottom level to ensure the employees are empowered to perform the duties and communication among the staff can be carried out efficiently among the various level of management. Such type of structure aims to give more power to employees to perform their duties effectively (Sherman, 2019). The Board of Directors (BOD) of M&S are mainly responsible for accessing the performance of organisation by accessing individual performance to ensure the managers are working efficiently. The BOD of M&S is composed of independently appointed chairman, two executive and 7 non-executive directors. However, the M&S structure is divided into several major departments such as communication and human resources department, Operating committee, Finance department, Information Technology (IT) department etc. These departments also access the performance of the company daily or quarterly basis and report this to BOD to ensure the performance targets are met (Marks & Spencer, 2019).

As M&S has employed people of various ethnicity, backgrounds and cultures from all over the world in stores and at board level. M&S has developed a strategy of training the staff and providing them platform for learning the cultural aspects of M&S business environment to all employees so they can work in current business model (M&S People Principles, 2019).

In order to understand the cultural aspects of M&S the Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory will be used which was given by Geert Hofstede a Dutch scientist to understand the cultural diversity for the business among different nations (Hofstede insights, n.d). To analyse the cultural diversity, I will be focusing on the UK and France that how the M&S has coped with the cultural differences while operating in different European nations. Hofstede has given six dimensions which are in the following figure along with relevant score of each nation.

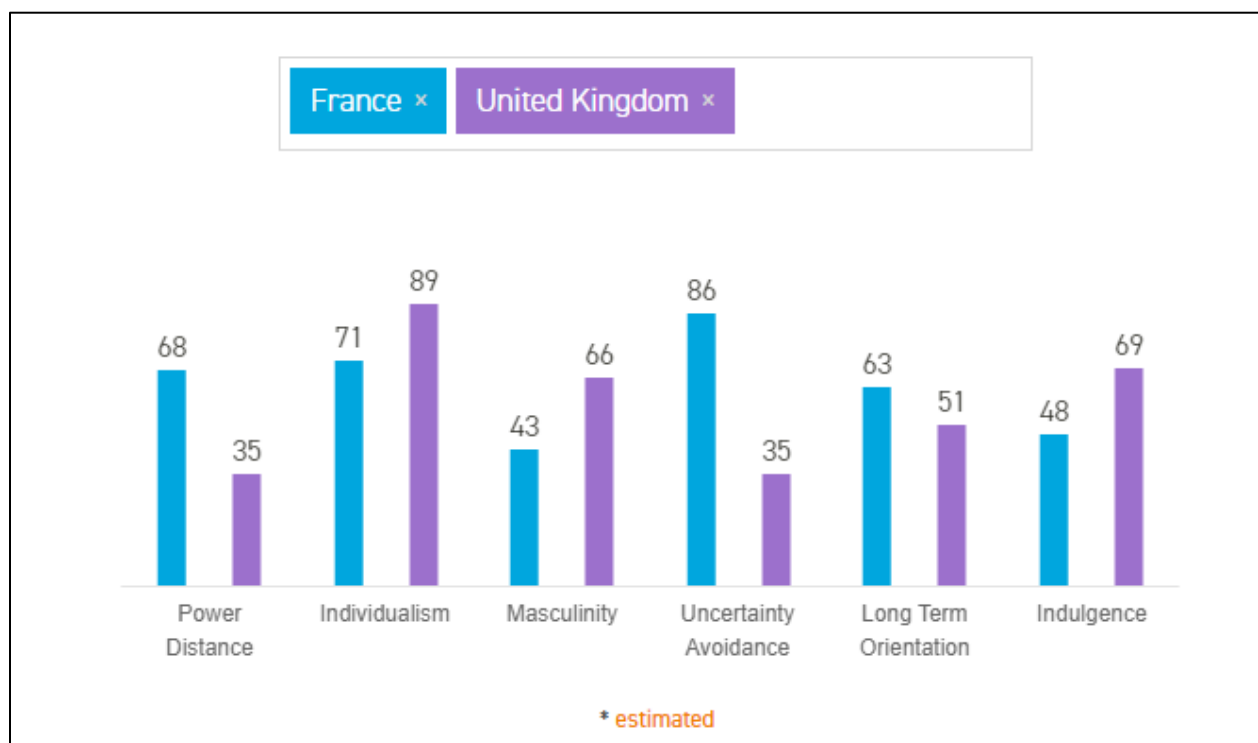


Figure 2: Hofstede 6 dimensions index for UK and France

(Compare countries - Hofstede Insights, 2020)

Hofstede cultural Dimensions

Power Distance

This dimension deals with distribution of power among the members of organisations. This can also be referred to the existence of inequality in the society. In low power distance inequality tends to be minimised among the individuals and groups as subordinates tend to be consulted the superior in decision making within the organisation for instance (Winterich and Zhang, 2020). As per above figure it can be observed that the score of UK and France is 35 and 68 respectively which means UK is minimising the power distance within organisation and decision making authorities are consulting the subordinates to take any action or decision. However, in High power distance in France decisions are taken by the superiors and subordinates tend to follow the decision without questioning them (Daniels and Greguras, 2014).

M&S have flat organisation structure and low power distancing in United Kingdom which means people in the organisation have same opportunities as they are equal and have autonomy in organisation (Rishipal, 2014). The firm believes that all employees are precious source to lead the success because all employees have opportunities to meet or contact the CEO or senior managers accordance with their queries which are dealt accordingly by the management (Marks & Spencer, 2019).

In France M&S has to cope with national culture while establishing the business due to cultural difference among the UK and France. In 2001 M&S board took decision to close all stores among the Europe but however in 2011 company decided to re-enter the business in France (BBC News, 2011). In order to get success in France the company established a strategy based on French culture follow the high-power distance within the organisation where the decision maker were the key senior employees, but the subordinates were not considered while making any decision for the organisation (Hofstede Insights, n.d).

Individualism

This dimension means the independence of individual among the members of society and ties of individuals among the members of society are not strong. As per business perspective to achieve the goals organisation employees are not motivated to work as a team. However, in collectivism individuals are in groups and take care of each other (Brewer and Venaik, 2011). In Collectivist business culture employees work in a team to get success in business. Both UK and France are high individualist societies as per there score 89 and 71 respectively where “I” culture is stronger than “we” culture (Triandis, 2015).

In UK and France individualism score is very high, but at M&S within the organization culture the individualism is very low as the company operates with family accountable business model. Employees are working in the organization in such a way that they do not need motivation from the management of the firm, but the values of the company are based on cooperation between different layers of management. M&S is more oriented into collectivism culture rather than “me”

culture. It can be observed from the annual report management concentrate much effort to develop a culture of collectivisms, since they operate with a family accountable business even the index says clearly that in UK the culture of “I” is very predominant (Marks & Spencer, 2019).

Masculine

This dimension is not about the gender male or female and should not be confused among them. In masculine culture strong and powerful individuals are given respect to take the decision. Success is based on productivity, competition and competence. However, in feminine culture the quality of life is the symbol of achievement, the focus is on communication compromise. The power is not given to individuals decisions are taken collectively in group (Sarhan, Wasfi and Istaiteyeh, 2015).

United Kingdom has got a high score 66 in masculinity as compared to France which is 43 but at M&S organization culture both masculine and feminine aspects are considered to get success in business. The seniors are making crucial step to make sure that the principle of respect take place and make sure every employee is being listen within the organization. Employees within the organization have given chance to take decisions individually and are getting promoted over their performance and qualification level in the organization. Human resources department and head office is accessing the performance of each individual globally and within the region so that they can give power to key employees. In M&S internally, employees are given powers to take decision by consulting with junior management, but they are working in team to achieve the target (M&S People Principles, 2019).

Uncertainty Avoidance

This dimension deals with the reaction and tolerance level of societies and business to an unexpected situation and uncertainty and how the business or nations deal with the ambiguity when it arouses (cbkcuhk, 2016). The scores of France and UK are 86 and 35 respectively which means businesses in France has power to deal with the uncertain situations and they are highly prepared to deal with it. In France organizations plan and structure the businesses to deal with the all kind of unknown situations. However, in UK the score is less which means the individuals in UK are less interested in Uncertainty avoidance and they are happy to accept the uncertainty so there for the business in UK did not require detailed planning to deal with the uncertainty .The people in UK accept the uncertainty and deal with it as a part of normal life which require the business to review the business activities on daily basis and change it according the situations (Hofstede Insights, n.d). In dec,2019 a new deadly corona virus COVID-19 were diagnosed in Wuhan China (World Health Organization, 2020),which later spread to all over the world and sadly thousands of people died till April,2020 (Murdoch, Romei and Giles, 2020). M&S also taken initiative based on the government's advice and employees' suggestions in UK and France. According press release on 30 march,2019 In UK the firm has closed all of the stores and started the sale online

except food business to deal with the situation. However, in France the firm already started sales online and food stores were open to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak based on government suggestions (M&S press release, 2020).

Long-Term Orientation

In long term orientation the organization and societies focus on long term planning rather than focusing on short term, societies are ready to delay short term material and social success. While short term orientation focuses on present as compared to future, Societies and businesses plan to achieve short term goals and satisfy social needs as obligation (Keough, 2019). The score of France and UK are 63 and 51 respectively from where it can be observed that French society is pragmatic. Individuals believe the reality depends on the time and situation. They adopt it as tradition with the passage of time and accept the change. However, in UK society and businesses are neutral which clearly shows how the business resolves the current challenges based on past practices (Hofstede Insights, n.d).

In UK M&S is operating its business based on current practices and situation while linking it to past by offering several rewards to staff to meet the short term goals and offering occasional and seasonal discount to consumers (Marks and Spencer, 2020), but in France the M&S has planned long term by moving its sales online as company also introduced French website for the customers so they can order online without any language barrier (Butler, 2016).

Indulgence

This dimension reflects to what extent society responds to the basic needs of human. Indulgence society's possess certain characteristics which let comparatively free quenching of natural human needs related to enjoying life and having fun whereas Restraint societies are more likely to believe that such free quenching needs to be restrained and delimited by strict norms. Indulgent cultures will lean towards one's pleasure and well-being, leisure time is more essential and there is greater freedom and personal control (Hofstede insights, 2020). The score of UK is 69 which is more likely to be indulgence and the score of France is 49 which means the society and organisations are restrained by certain rules and regulations.

M&S in UK and overseas has given its employee safe and healthy working environment and it has organization culture that promotes personal development, respect and cultural diversities. Freedom of expression is given to employees work hard for the success of business (M&S People Principles, 2019). But as UK is high indulgence score employees are more likely to leave the work according to their own satisfaction level if they are happy they will continue to work (Eltringham, 2017), however in France the culture is in a way that employees are more like restrain by the rules and regulations in an organization will not leave. The positive emotions are infrequently conveyed, Freedom and leisure's are not given any importance (Hofstede insights, 2020).

Conclusion

From the above analysis it can be concluded that the M&S has clear cultural policies and business structure for the employees to understand sustainable working environment in France and UK. M&S is able to cope with the cultural diversity in France and UK by adopting the policies which will not harm the working environment and employers sentiments. M&S has given its employees the freedom of expression and flexible working environment beside the cultural differences as well as giving it's employs a chance to give suggestions and take decisions. It has also been observed that the firm is also supporting the garment by following the guidance during uncertainty.

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