

ROMANIA – REGIONAL CULTURAL PROFILE

ROMÂNIA – PROFIL CULTURAL REGIONAL

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Abstract. *Cultural specificity operation as a source of competitive advantage for firms whose managers are interested in this, is gaining higher and higher importance. Research on elements of cultural specificity and cultural differences extends, and the managers accept the fact that the influence of culture on attitudes, mentalities, values, positions with the individual action is important. In this article we present the results of such research, which aimed to examine regional cultural differences, on equivalent samples, with respondents from Oltenia, Ardeal and Moldavia, drawing in such subcultures a specific profile.*

Key words: culture, regional differences, management, competitive advantage

Rezumat. *Exploatarea specificității culturale, ca sursă de avantaj concurențial pentru firmele a căror manageri sunt interesați de acest lucru, capătă o importanță din ce în ce mai mare. Cercetarea elementelor de specificitate culturală și a diferențelor culturale ia amploare, iar managerii acceptă faptul că influența culturii asupra atitudinilor, mentalităților, valorilor, pozițiilor față de acțiune ale individului este importantă. În acest articol prezentăm rezultatele unei astfel de cercetări, care a avut drept scop analiza diferențelor culturale regionale, pe eșantioane echivalente, cu respondenți din Oltenia, Ardeal și Moldavia, conturând la nivelul acestor subculturi un profil specific.*

Cuvinte cheie: cultură, diferențe regionale, management, avantaj concurențial

INTRODUCTION

Because of internationalization and globalization, many and many companies are concerned about maintaining and extending on new markets and maintaining or approaching specialists able to bring positive results. As a consequence of this reality, cultural and intercultural research become more and more important and they provide exploitable/valorising recommendations due to identification and analysis of cultural specificity elements and/or national/regional cultural differences.

In other words, individuals' “cultural inheritance” becomes a source of potential advantage. In this regard, the present article presents the Romanian regional cultural differences, emphasized in a research that represented the basis of the doctorate thesis “*Valorisation of Cultural Differences in the Romanian Companies Management*”.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The research methodology was a complex one, based on the recommendations made by specialists on the intercultural research field (Hofstede, 1996; Schwartz, 2003; Zaiț, Spalanzani, 2006; Nicolescu, 2006; Moscovici, Buschini, 2007; Dupriez, Simons, 2000; Vanderlinden, 2007). Their major concern was to build up a methodological design that allows adjustments to the Romanian cultural specificity: using the pragmatic-interdisciplinary model, the holistic and synchronic dominant, the mixed approach (the ethic-emic one), the quantitative-qualitative approach, the inter-conditional among positive, interpretative and constructivist approaches, the inductive-deductive argument and triangulation as fundamental issue.

One of the stages, whose results we present in this article, consisted in the based-on-questionnaire inquiry; the inquiry was realized using pair samples, respecting the equivalence conditions. The inquiry included 562 respondents, students from the faculties from Oltenia, Ardeal and Moldavia, in the period of 4th – 16th of May 2009. 479 questionnaires were applied, and subsequently to ensuring the functional equivalence, a number of 398 questionnaires were validated (146 from Oltenia, 78 from Ardeal and 174 din Moldavia). The variables taken into consideration for ensuring the functional equivalence were: faculty, specializations, study year, age, sex, environment (rural/urban), number of years of education and employment status.

The considered regional cultural specificity dimensions (cultural differentiation criteria) were the following: *power distance, individualism-collectivism, gregarism-solidarity, gender equality, masculine values - feminine values, uncertainty avoidance, time orientation, constancy – flexibility, hedonism-constraint, action-sedentariness*. Some of these dimensions are superpose or interfere of those proposed by specialists in analysis of national cultural differences (Hofstede ș.a., 2008; House ș.a., 2004; Schwartz, 2003; Gelfand), but they were adapted to the national cultural specific. The author proposed two dimensions consequently to an inventory of the Romanian values, inventory that was elaborated upon the analysis of the papers/studies from the pre- and inter-war period, but also of those elaborated after 1989 (Drăghicescu, Ralea, Rădulescu-Motru, Blaga, Cioran, Ionescu, Toma, Catană&Catană, Voicu&Voicu, Șerbănescu, Luca etc.).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Analysing the questionnaire's answers that referred to the integrable values in the above-mentioned cultural dimensions, the following regional cultural differences were resulted (table 1):

- the highest power distance is taken by Moldavia, followed by Oltenia at a distance of 1.9 points; Ardeal County is 3.55 points away from Moldavia and 2.57 points away from Oltenia;
- for individualism-collectivism the maximum medium difference appears between Moldavia and Ardeal (4.13 points), and the minimum difference between Moldavia and Oltenia is 2.82 points; between Oltenia and Ardeal the difference is 3.29 points; a medium individualism level is resulted slightly higher in Moldavia and Oltenia, comparative with Ardeal;

- for gregarism–solidarity dimension, Oltenia registers the highest score in favour of gregarism, having an appreciable distance from Ardeal (6.63 points) and 2.24 points more than Moldova; there is a 4.66 points difference between Moldova (placed on the second position) and Ardeal;
- for gender equity we notice high values for all regions; however, the first position is taken by Ardeal, situated at 0.6 points distance from Moldavia and 5.7 points difference from Oltenia; the distance from Moldavia and Oltenia is 5.1 points;
- regarding masculine values - feminine values dimension we noticed that the Romanian society mixes the feminine values (benevolence, understanding need, social isolation avoidance, intuition) with the masculine ones (need of success, of welfare, argument oriented, acceptance of competition); despite this, some slight emphasises of the masculine values appear for Moldavia and Ardeal, while Oltenia accentuates the feminine ones; 2.52 points is the distance between Moldavia and Ardeal, 4.22 points between Moldavia to Oltenia, and 3.67 points between Ardeal to Oltenia;
- uncertainty avoidance is increased in all regions, especially in Oltenia and Moldavia; the difference between Oltenia and Moldavia is 2.57 points, between Oltenia and Ardeal there are 4.11 points, and between Moldavia and Ardeal there are 3.78 points; to be remarked the situation in Ardeal where we did not obtained any integrated value of this dimension with maximum score.
- the score for time orientation dimension indicates that Ardeal obtained higher marks for the values related to long time orientation, in comparison with Moldavia and Oltenia; the difference between Ardeal and Moldavia is 3.62 points, there are 3.77 points between Ardeal and Oltenia, and a distance of 1.34 points between Moldavia and Oltenia; significant differences regarding the values of protestant types (economic spirit and perseverance) appear between Ardeal and the other two regions;
- for the constancy-flexibility dimension we remark an emphasis of values that indicates flexibility for all regions, but we also have differences between them: Moldavia has the highest score, at a distance of 1.24 points from Oltenia and 3.71 points from Ardeal; the difference between Oltenia and Ardeal is 2.62 points;
- regarding the hedonism-constraint dimension the results show that the people from Ardeal are more „hedonic” than the Moldavian or Oltenian ones, even if all the regions are rather „hedonic”; the distance between Ardeal and Moldavia is 2.89 points, the distance between Ardeal and Oltenia is 4.2 points; between Moldavia and Oltenia the distance is 3.15 points; the inhabitants of Oltenia are oriented especially to the „profane” and „expensive” hedonism and the people from Ardeal accentuate the spiritual hedonism spiritual, „cheaper” in general.
- action-sedentariness dimension points out that the Romanians are more action oriented, but there are some differences, as happened to the other dimensions: Moldova, with the highest score, is 1.99 points in front of Ardeal

and 3.05 points in front of Oltenia; the difference between Ardeal and Oltenia is 2.08 points.

Table 1

Absolute differences				
No.	Absolute differences	Oltenia-Moldavia	Oltenia-Ardeal	Moldavia-Ardeal
1.	Power distance	1.90	2.57	3.55
2.	Individualism	2.82	3.29	4.13
3.	Gregarism	2.24	6.62	4.66
4.	Gender equality	5.10	5.70	0.60
5.	Masculine values	4.22	3.67	2.52
6.	Uncertainty avoidance	2.56	4.11	3.78
7.	Time orientation	1.33	3.77	3.62
8.	Flexibility	1.24	2.62	3.70
9.	Hedonism	3.15	4.20	2.89
10.	Action	3.05	2.08	1.99

Figure 1 presents the cultural differences, in a comparative manner.

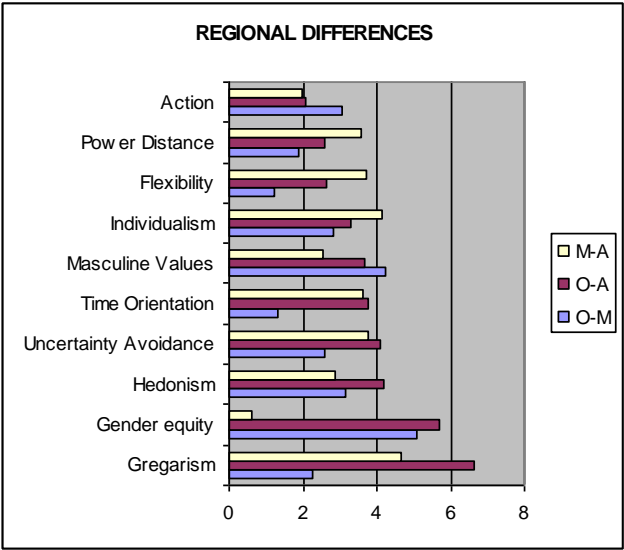


Fig. 1. Average of absolute differences on pair comparisons between samples
 Legend: Moldavia-M, Ardeal-A, Oltenia-O

Noticing these differences, we emphasize the following:

a) regarding the *cultural proximity*, we notice that *for six out of ten dimensions of the regional culture, the minimum differences may be found when we compare the sample from Moldavia with the one from Oltenia (power distance, individualism-collectivism, gregarism-solidarity, uncertainty avoidance, time orientation constancy-flexibility)*, therefore the two regions

are closer from the cultural point of view; *there is not a cultural dimension for which we may have a minimum distance between Oltenia and Ardeal*, therefore the highest difference is between these two regions.

b) regarding the *cultural distances*, the most numerous dimensions for which we registered maximum differences are for the Oltenia - Ardeal comparison (gregarism-solidarity, gender equity, uncertainty avoidance, time orientation and hedonism-constraint); *there are only two dimensions for which the distance are maximal in the case of Moldova - Oltenia comparison: masculine values-feminine values and action-sedentariness.*

Regarding the obtained results we make the following **notifications**:

- what we measured were perceptions of the individuals regarding attitudes, behaviours, action related positions, which means *values* (what is *wanted* for the people from a certain region). The real behaviour may be different by what they perceive themselves regarding the above mentioned issues. But, being familiarize with these perceptions, it is an advantage for the manager who may valorise the “given” situation, by anticipating the actions provided by the predispositions reflected on the unconsciousness level;
- the getting results are relevant at the level of this comparison – they can not be just undertaken while the cultural comparison elements are changed (because the equivalence conditions imposed by the intercultural comparison are not fulfilled any longer).

The obtained results consequently to this research stay at the basis of providing valorization recommendations of the regional differences / regional cultural specificity (see also the “*Valorization of Regional Cultural Specificity Elements*” article from the present tome), thus the companies that develop their activity in the Romanian business environment achieve positive effects.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The accomplished research pointed out the existence of regional cultural differences. Even if there is a common cultural fond, the one of the regional culture, the importance awarded to values is fluctuant, thus the individuals who belong to different regional sub-cultures have a distinct cultural profile.

2. Between Oltenia and Moldavia, there is a high cultural proximity, and the highest differences are noticeable between Ardeal and Oltenia (at the level of this research, that included the three above-mentioned regions).

3. Managers may exploit the achieved results in an intelligent manner; that means they may valorise, on one hand, the elements of cultural specificity (through a proper approach of the managerial processes) and, on the other hand, the cultural differences (through synergy and organizational training).

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