



The Overview of Cultural Dimensional Impact on Iranian Architectural Design in Foreign Project: A Case Study

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Abstract

A worldwide business success requires a respect for local customs. International marketers need to recognize and appreciate varying cultures. Culture plays a significant role in influencing consumer perception, which in turn influences preference and purchase. The aim of this study is to find out the most important attribute of culture characteristics impact on foreign project while the researcher take into consideration the model of Rabi and Bhagat, 2008. Iranian architectural companies were asked to evaluate the dimension of culture when they accomplished the project in abroad. Cumulative, Socially shared, Facilitate communications learned subjective, enduring, perspective and dynamic, are the main dimension on culture which caused main influence on designing. The questionnaire finally consisted of twenty and four statements as a driving factor and architectural company were asked to indicate the degree of importance. It was administrated to ninety one architectural companies with grade 1 participated in this Research in Tehran , therefore the snowball sampling method is an appropriate non probability sampling method to collect the date . The result showed that, communication, learned and subjective dimensions of culture should take into consideration when they are designing the project performed in abroad through Iranian architectural company. To put in the nutshell, the Iranian architectural companies with grade 1 need more emphasis on Touristic city, Prevalence of internet utilization and Citizens-Foreigners communication as various pillars of communication.

Key words: Culture; Architectural; Design; Perspective; Communication; Subjective; Dimension; Iran

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INTRODUCTION

Architects as designers of different type of construction projects should consider different items during designing such as land specification, Climate, Style, Beauty, Technical aspects, and so on. One of these items is culture and its characteristics such as, culture of workers, culture of residents, culture of owners, and culture of contractors (Giulia Calabretta, 2008).

A worldwide business success requires a respect for local customs. International marketers need to recognize and appreciate varying cultures. Culture plays a significant role in influencing consumer perception, which in turn influences preference and purchase. A good marketing plan can easily go awry when it clashes with tradition. A marketing mix can be effective only as long as it is relevant to a given culture. One should expect that a product may have to be modified, that a new distribution may have to be found, or that a new promotional strategy may have to be considered (Sak Onkvisit, 2008).

Culture as one influential factor in marketing especially in International marketing has studied for a long time. Many researchers have introduced different definitions and practical explanations about culture and its characteristics (Hofstede, 2005). The root of word “culture” is an ancient Latin word “cultura”. It entered

into the English language after 1430. According to (Stephen Barthorpe, Rosanna Duncan, & Miller, 2000), culture has three fundamental aspects:

- **Technological:** It is concerned with materials, tools, techniques.
- **Sociological:** It involves the relationships into which people in the work and in the family.
- **Ideological:** It consists of beliefs, rituals, magical practices, art, ethics, religious practices and myths.

Yaprak (2008) defined culture as shown in Table 1:

Table 1
Definition of Culture with Variety of Aspects
(Yapark, 2008)

Topical	Culture consists of everything on a list of topics, or categories, such as social organization, religion or economy
Historical	Culture is social heritage, or tradition, that is passed on to future Generations
Behavioral	Culture is shared, learned human behavior, a way of life
Normative	Culture is ideals, values, or rules of or for living
Functional	Culture is the way humans solve problems of adapting to the environment or living together
Mental	Culture is a complex of ideas, or learned habits, that inhibit impulses and distinguish people from animals
Structural	Culture consists of patterned and inter-related ideas, symbols, or Behaviors
Symbolic	Culture is based on arbitrarily assigned meanings that are shared by a Society

This study is trying to find out the best possible answer to the following questions for Iranian architectural companies who intend to accomplish project in foreign countries:

Table 2
Definition of Each Dimension of Culture (Rabis & Bhagat, 2008)

1	Prescriptive	It prescribes the kinds of behaviour considered acceptable in the society. The prescriptive characteristics of culture simplify a consumer's decision-making process
2	Socially Shared	It is based on social interaction and creation. It cannot exist by itself. It must be shared by members of a society
3	Facilitate Communication	One useful function provided by culture is to facilitate communication. Culture usually imposes common habits of thought and feeling among people.
4	Learned	Culture is not inherited genetically-it must be learned and acquired. Socialization or enculturation occurs when a person absorbs or learns the culture
5	Subjective	People in different cultures often have different ideas about the same object
6	Enduring	Because culture is shared and passed along from generation to generation, it is relatively stable and somewhat permanent
7	Cumulative	Culture is based on hundreds or even thousands of years of accumulated circumstances. Each generation adds something of its own to the culture before passing the heritage on to the next generation.
8	Dynamic	Culture is passed along from generation to generation, but one should not assume that culture is static and immune to change. Far from being the case, culture is constantly changing-it adapts itself to new situations and new sources of knowledge.

(1) Research Objectives

- To find out the most important attribute of culture characteristics impact on foreign project designing from the architect viewpoint.
- To evaluate the most essential cultural dimension on designing of foreign project on the basis of gender opinions.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

At present, research activities in the area of cultural dimension in Iranian Architectural companies who constructs the project in abroad are very limited.

As we have already defined, Culture means many things to many people because the concept encompasses norms, values, and customs. this research try to understand the various dimensions of culture on Architectural designing in Iran to understand most important factor influence on their designing . Research adopted the following dimension of culture for their research.(Stephen Barthorpe, *et al.*, 2000)

According to the following model ,The culture consists of eight dimensions: perspective, socially shared, facilitated communication, learned, subjective, enduring, cumulative and dynamic (RABI S & BHAGAT, 2008).

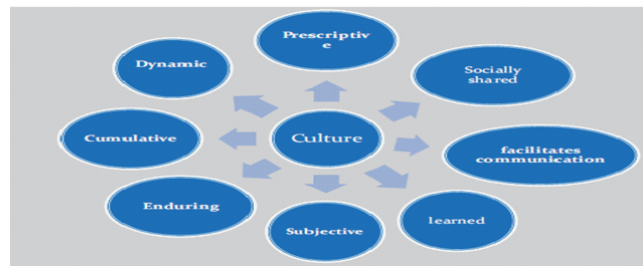


Figure1
Dimension of Culture (Rabi S & Bhagat, 2008)

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to discover and analyse the impact of various dimension of culture impact on architectural design in abroad. Culture is considered as one of the important as driving factors in every business now.

Initially, an exploratory study was conducted among 10 architectural companies to identify the factors which would be considered and used in structuring the final questionnaire. The study was conducted in the Tehran. The questionnaire finally consisted of twenty and four statements as a driving factor and architectural company were asked to indicate the degree of importance with these on a five point scale (1 = very low, 5 = Very High). It was administrated to ninety one architectural companies participated in this Research in Tehran , therefore the snowball sampling method is an appropriate non probability sampling method to collect the date .

The questionnaire included a set of preordained

questions to collect data from architectural company through questionnaire method as the main primary data collection method. The questionnaire was designed based on factors which were extracted from existing literature related to dimension of culture on architectural design with respect to Rabi and Bhagat model. The questionnaire was distributed between ten architectural companiesto make sure that the questions are understandable and direct us to final questionnaire since there is no ambiguous among the questions. For assuring the accuracy of collected data, we performed appropriate design, wording and validation of the questionnaire by pre-test and also carrying method of administration.

The research developed three questions for each construct to understand the impact of culture on designing. Research was asked the following questions from architectural company to measure the impact each cultural dimension on designing.

Table 3
Various Questions for Measurement of Each Culture Dimension

	Research Questions	Cultural Dimension Constructs
1	Life style-interior design Life style-out door design Selecting elevation materials	Perspective
2	Municipality regulations Personal privacy Citizenship rights	Socially Shared
3	Touristic city Prevalence of internet utilization Citizens-Foreigners communication	Communication
4	Graduation level Religious believes Architectural style propensities	Learned
5	Meaning of colors Meaning of modern architectural elements Meaning of local architectural elements	Subjective
6	Fixed local architectural principles Fixed Local life style Cultural values	Enduring
7	Flexibility of local culture-new ideas Flexibility of local architecture-modernism Flexibility of local culture-new technology	Dynamic
8	Being familiar with local culture before designing Being familiar with local architecture before designing Architect's believes impact on design	Cumulative

2.1 Evaluating Measurement Scale

Reliability of the questionnaire was examined by calculating the Cronbach's alpha. The total Cronbach's alpha of all 24 measures is 0.8.13 which is above the cut-off value (0.70) recommended by (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) and the reliability of the questionnaire is considered

high (Hair, J., & Samouel, 2007) .

To illustrate content validity or face validity, we conducted eight interviews with architectural companies to validate the items and variable which are extracted from related literature and to find new items that are used or can be used in Iran's market. In addition, after collecting

data from interviews, we consulted with two marketing professors to verify the factors and variables which are extracted. Then, questionnaire was prepared based on the gathered data and was distributed among 10 architectural companies to answer, after that their ideas and comments about the questions were collected.

2.2 Duration of Research

The survey was conducted in July and August of 2011 and the participants were selected through snowball sampling method from architectural company with 1 in Tehran. There are three levels of architect companies in Iran which are assessed by a specialist council called “AnjomanMohandesinMoshaver” with grad I, II, and III. The companies from grade III to I become more expertise and qualified respectively. For this research the companies with grade I selected as segment to investigate the answers. They are 101 companies in all over the Iran. Their contact information was found in MPORG.IR, a governmental website. These companies were selected because they have good potential to design a foreign project.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

3.1 Conceptual Model

In this survey, respondents are asked to evaluate the dimension of culture on architectural companies. Cumulative, Socially shared, Facilitate communications, learned subjective, enduring, perspective and dynamic, are the main constructs that cause main influence on designing. These are the main purposes of cultural dimension strategies. Each of these constructs includes three statements as tools as illustrated in Figure 1.

The main objective of this study is measuring the impact of each promotional tool in architectural companies and analysing their effect based on demographic characteristics of customers. The questionnaire contains questions which ask about the amount of impact these factors on customers mind. The factors are the cultural dimension extracted from related literature review and modified by professionals in marketing fields. Table 3 shows the source of scale items which is used in this study.

3.2 Statistical Inferential

The first step of the analysis investigates the priority of the cultural dimension and measuring the effectiveness of them in response to the research questions. Friedman test is used to test the hypothesis of mean equality of K related samples. Table 4 shows the results of Friedman

test. It shows that the mean ranks of tools are different because the amount of Asymp. Sig. is 0.000. It is lower than 0.05 so the hypothesis of equal effectiveness dimension of culture is rejected. We were keen to know the status of various dimension of cultural on respondent satisfaction. For this purpose two statistical tests were used. The Friedman test was conducted to compare the effectiveness of the eight constructs. Friedman test is used to test the hypothesis of equality of the eight constructs which are the cultural dimensions. The lower mean ranks in Friedman test show the more important factors which are weak and need more attention but in this study we asked the respondents to rank the most influential tools in architectural designing in Iranian construction market.

Table 4
Mean Rank for Cultural Dimensions

Prescriptive	4.76
Socially Shared	5.87
Communication	3.16
Learned	3.30
Subjective	4.25
Enduring	5.10
Dynamic	4.92
Cumulative	4.65

With respect to the statistical inferential, we discovered the communication is considered as one the most important factor, followed by learned and subjective are most crucial dimension of culture which architectural company should take into consideration and highlight while designing and implement project in abroad.

Table 5 illustrates the results of compare means of men and women attitudes towards different dimension of culture. By looking at the Table 5, the researcher discovered that all significance levels for test of equal variance are higher than 0.05 so the assumption of equal variance is not rejected and we can continue with this assumption. Also it shows that there is no statistically significant difference between men and women respondents. The tables indicate the same importance of construct exist among the man and woman when they are considering the various dimension of culture in designing the foreign project.

Table 5
Paired Sample T Test Result Between Gender

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances							
		Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
							Lower	Upper	
Prescriptive	Equal variances assumed	.041	.839	-847	84	.399	-.14674	-.49111	.19763
	Equal variances not assumed			-851	83.353	.397	-.14674	-.48985	.19637
Socially Shared	Equal variances assumed	3.174	.078	.063	84	.950	.01087	-.33003	.35177
	Equal variances not assumed			.062	73.721	.950	.01087	-.33647	.35821
Communication	Equal variances assumed	.060	.807	-.071	84	.944	-.01486	-.43310	.40339
	Equal variances not assumed			-.071	83.526	.944	-.01486	-.43119	.40148
Learned	Equal variances assumed	.019	.891	-.239	84	.812	-.03768	-.35179	.27643
	Equal variances not assumed			-.239	82.722	.812	-.03768	-.35148	.27611
Subjective	Equal variances assumed	.567	.454	-.003	84	.997	-.00054	-.33384	.33275
	Equal variances not assumed			-.003	79.124	.997	-.00054	-.33669	.33560
Enduring	Equal variances assumed	.004	.949	-2.239	84	.028	-.31884	-.60199	-.03570
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.220	78.668	.029	-.31884	-.60468	-.03300
Dynamic	Equal variances assumed	.399	.529	.095	84	.925	.01268	-.25286	.27822
	Equal variances not assumed			.094	78.642	.925	.01268	-.25540	.28076
Cumulative	Equal variances assumed	.044	.834	.753	84	.454	.10580	-.17366	.38525
	Equal variances not assumed			.748	79.985	.456	.10580	-.17551	.38711

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The most vital dimension of cultural dimension tools in the architectural companies were extracted from related literature and interviews with expert in the field of construction designing in domestic or foreign companies. The first analysis was Friedman test which was conducted on twenty four cultural dimensions impact on cultural design. The results of the test which was presented in Table 4 demonstrated that there are significant differences exist among the different dimension of culture, therefore some factors has more priorities and effectiveness in respondent mind while design the project. The result showed that, communication, learned a subjective dimension of culture should take into consideration when they are designing the project in abroad performed by Iranian architectural company. The next achievement of this research was there is no difference exist among the different culture dimension between the men and women. To put in nutshell, the Iranian architectural companies with grade 1 need more concentration on Touristic city, Prevalence of internet utilization and Citizens-Foreigners communication as various pillars of communication. Furthermore they should also improve the various direction of learned and subject as two main and vital dimensions of culture after communication whenever they have plan to accomplish project n abroad. This research empowers architectural companies to take sharp look on different aspect of culture in their foreign projects,

the result of this study again emphasised the essential needs of cultures as one of the powerful tools in business especially in this competitive world. "Culture plays a significant role in influencing consumer perception, which in turn influences preference and purchase".

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