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THE IMPORTANCE OF GLOBAL BUSINESS ETIQUETTE
IMPORTANȚA ETICHETEI ÎN AFACERILE INTERNAȚIONALE

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Abstract: *Lucrarea analizează importanța etichetei în afacerile internaționale în contextul globalizării și al interacțiunilor interculturale tot mai frecvente. Scopul cercetării este de a evidenția modul în care diferențele culturale influențează comunicarea, negocierile și comportamentul profesional. Metodologia utilizată este una calitativă, bazată pe analiza comparativă și pe literatura de specialitate, utilizând modele teoretice precum dimensiunile culturale ale lui Hofstede și teoria contextului cultural a lui Hall. Studiul compară practicile de etichetă în afaceri din spațiul occidental și oriental. Rezultatele evidențiază diferențe semnificative între aceste regiuni și subliniază rolul esențial al competenței interculturale în prevenirea neînțelegerilor și în dezvoltarea relațiilor de afaceri durabile.*
Key words: *etichetă în afaceri, interacțiuni interculturale, networking, mentalitatea unei națiuni, succes pe termen lung, competitivitate globală*
JEL CLASSIFICATION: F5

Introduction

In the context of globalization and the increasing interconnection between economies, the importance of global business etiquette has become more significant than ever. As international trade and mobility expand, business communication has become a complex intercultural process where the first thing one should learn is to respect cultural differences, because different cultures teach different values, and what might be polite in one country could be highly insulting in another one. Ignorance of such things can easily lead to challenges, which may threaten the future success of the business deals and even ruin the business in the long run (Dorozhkov, Kupchinskaya, 2015). Consequently, understanding cultural dimensions—as modeled by scholars like Hofstede and Trompenaars is essential for navigating variations in time perception, communication styles, and social norms.

This report analyzes these dynamics by comparing Western (US, Canada), Middle Eastern (UAE, Qatar), and Eastern (China, Vietnam) contexts. By examining specific behavioral norms and practices, the study demonstrates how cultural awareness prevents misunderstandings and fosters the long-term relationships necessary for success.

Ultimately, mastering global etiquette is about more than politeness; it is about developing the intercultural competence and adaptability required to remain competitive in today's global economy.

Core content

Culture is a generational product of knowledge, laws, and habits that shapes a group's behavior and communication. These influences vary by country and evolve with societal shifts, directly affecting individuals' concerns and actions regarding products and services (Lutz, 2024). Academic literature emphasizes that these differences define communication styles and professional interactions, influencing both verbal and non-verbal cues such as gestures and social expectations (Hofstede, 2011, Rusu, Pirlog, 2022).

Description of research methods used

This qualitative study is based on literature review and comparative analysis of academic sources, intercultural theories, empirical studies, such as Hofstede (2011), Hall (1976), Covas and Pirlog, (2021) and real business etiquette examples to examine differences across Western (USA,

Canada), Eastern (China, Vietnam), and Middle Eastern (UAE, Qatar) cultures in communication style, time perception, hierarchy, negotiation, and social norms, framed by Hofstede's dimensions and Hall's context theory.

Business etiquette across regions

Business etiquette varies significantly across regions, shaped by cultural priorities. In Western countries such as the United States and Canada, it emphasizes efficiency, direct communication, punctuality, and results, reflecting the principle "time is money" (amoBlog, 2025). In contrast, Eastern cultures like China and Vietnam focus on long-term relationships, hierarchy, and harmony, where trust-building precedes business and communication remains indirect to preserve "face". In the Middle East, particularly the UAE and Qatar, etiquette is influenced by tradition and religion, prioritizing personal connections, flexible time, and trust-based negotiations. These differences highlight the importance of intercultural competence in reducing barriers and ensuring successful international business outcomes.

Tabel 1. Comparative analysis of business etiquette across regions

Aspect	Western (the USA, Canada)	Middle East (the UAE, Qatar)	Eastern (China, Vietnam)
Communication	Direct, explicit	Relational, flexible	Indirect, implicit
Time perception	Strict, punctual	Flexible	Long-term oriented
Relationships	Secondary	Essential	Essential
Hierarchy	Low	High	High
Negotiation style	Task oriented	Relationship-oriented	Relationship-oriented

Source: Author's compilation based on Hofstede (2011), Hall (1976)

By analyzing the table, we can note that Western cultures prioritize efficiency, punctuality, direct communication, structured meetings, fast decisions, and open opinions. Eastern cultures emphasize relationships, trust, harmony, indirect/non-verbal cues, hierarchy, and complex decisions. Middle Eastern cultures combine relational/hierarchical elements, valuing personal trust, informal prelude to formal negotiations, time flexibility, and strong negotiation. Success requires adaptability, cultural awareness, and context-tailored strategies.

Hofstede cultural dimensions in country comparison

One of the most relevant theoretical frameworks in this domain is Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, which explains differences through the variables seen above in the figure. (Hofstede, 2011).

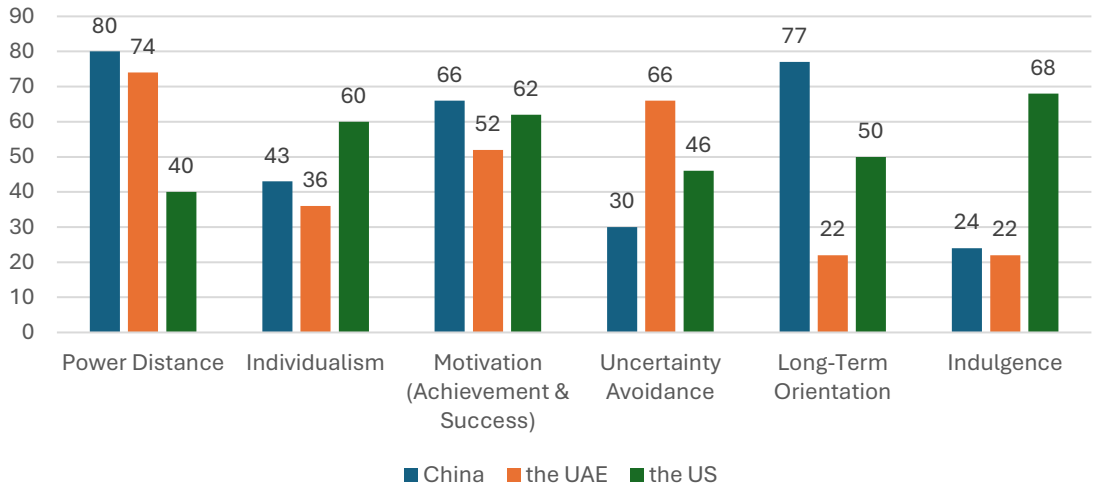


Figure 1. Hofstede dimensions, countries-comparison: the US, the UAE, China
Source: https://www.theculturefactor.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=china%2Cunited+arab+emirates%2Cunited+states

Complementary to this, Hall's theory distinguishes between high-context and low-context cultures, emphasizing how communication can be either explicit or implicit depending on the cultural environment (Hall, 1976).

Based on Figure 1, we can affirm that China exhibits a high Power Distance Index (PDI) of 80, accepting inequalities and hierarchical structures where subordinates defer to superiors without challenge, while the UAE scores 74, embracing centralized authority and a benevolent autocrat ideal. In contrast, the US scores low at 40, emphasizing equality, accessibility, and participative communication aligned with "liberty and justice for all." On Individualism (IDV), both China (43) and the UAE (36) are collectivist, prioritizing group loyalty, family ties, and in-group favoritism over individual interests, whereas the US (60) is individualistic, fostering self-reliance, merit-based decisions, and loose social bonds. For Masculinity (MAS), China (66) and the US (62) show high achievement orientation, with the Chinese sacrificing leisure for success and Americans displaying a "can-do" winner-takes-all mentality; the UAE is balanced at 52 with no strong preference.

China scores low on Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) at 30, embracing ambiguity, pragmatism, and adaptability, unlike the UAE's high 66, which favors rigid rules, punctuality, and security. The US (46) is moderately low, tolerant of innovation but context-influenced. In Long-Term Orientation (LTO), China (77) is pragmatic, focused on perseverance and thrift, contrasting the UAE's normative short-term 22, emphasizing traditions and quick results; the US (50) is balanced, practical yet analytical. Finally, both China (24) and the UAE (22) are restrained (IVR), controlling desires due to social norms, while the US (68) is indulgent, promoting "work hard, play hard" despite contradictions like anti-drug efforts amid high addiction rates.(Almutairi, Heller, Yen, 2020).

Conclusion

In conclusion, global business etiquette represents a critical factor in the success of international economic relations, as it directly influences communication, negotiation strategies, and the development of trust between partners. The comparative analysis confirms that cultural differences between Western, Eastern, and Middle Eastern regions shape business practices in distinct ways, requiring adaptability and intercultural awareness from professionals engaged in global markets.

For future diplomats and international business practitioners, it is essential to develop strong intercultural communication skills, emotional intelligence, and the ability to interpret both verbal and non-verbal cues within different cultural contexts. Continuous training in cultural competence should be prioritized to enhance negotiation effectiveness and prevent conflicts.

For researchers, further studies could explore the impact of digitalization and virtual communication on business etiquette, as well as the evolution of cultural norms in increasingly hybrid and globalized work environments. Understanding these dynamics will remain crucial for fostering sustainable international cooperation

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