THE SIGNIFICANCE FACTORS OF BUSINESS NEGOTIATIONS IN JAPAN

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SUBMITTED IN THE PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, INTERNATIONAL

PROGRAM, GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS SIAM UNIVERSITY

BANGKOK, THAILAND

2021

Research Title : The Significance Factors of Business Negotiations in Japan.

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Major : Human Resource Management

Degree : Master of Business Administration Program

(International Program)

Academic Year : 2019

The independent study has been approved to be a partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master in Business Administration

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ABSTRACT

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.... / ..Feb.... / ..2022...

In today's business world with the fast-growing need for International Business, globalization is connecting people from different walks of life through the imparting and exchange of information for the development of good business relation among countries. It is very important to understand the cultural factors of any country before a venture into any type of business (Teodorescu, 2017). The objective of this study was to identify the role culture plays in Japanese Business Negotiation and to understand the steps to take before going into overseas business. A documentary research method was employed for gathering secondary data from sources such as books, newspapers, magazines, dictionaries, journals, government publications and online information. The results revealed that when it comes to decision-making Japanese are group-oriented people, they are seen as a bureaucratic nation with numerous policies, they also emphasis on group goals preferably rather than individual desires or wants, they prefer a win/win approach instead of a win/lose business negotiation. Based on the findings, it was recommended that you must be well informed about Japanese Cultural norms by understanding their systems of communication, and also do not reject or refuse dinner invitations given to you by Japanese counterparts because these are the ways you can build a long-lasting relation with them.

Keywords: International Business, Negotiations, Japan

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I am thankful to God Almighty who has given me the wisdom, knowledge and grace to complete the 2019 Academic year, without is grace this study would not have been possible.
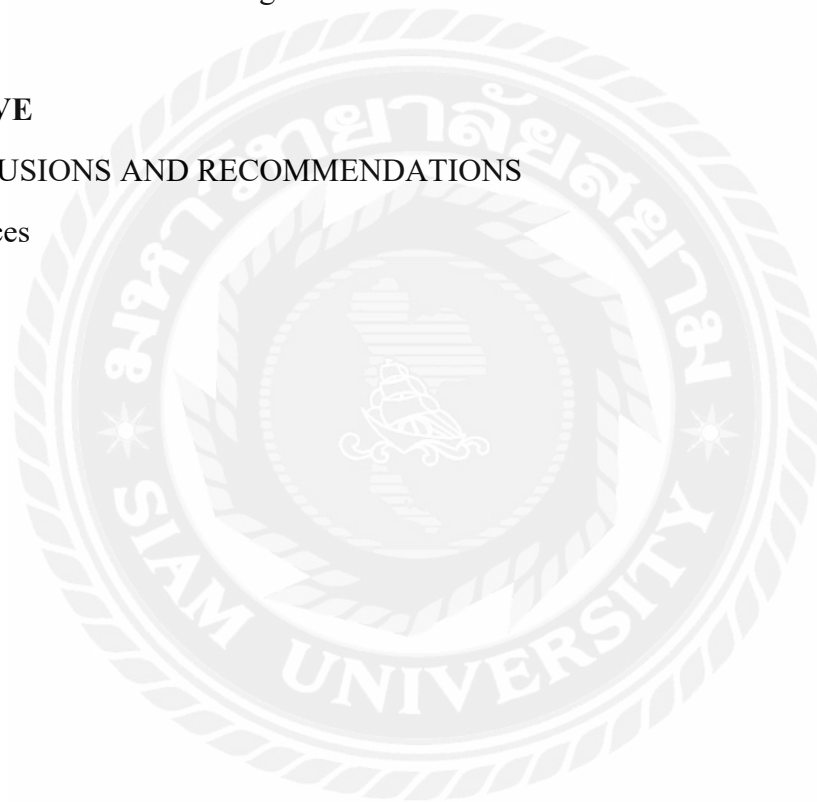
I would like to express my sincere thanks to professor Dr. Tanakorn Limsarun as my research supervisor. To whom, without your supervision, advice and analyses this study would not have been completed. To all the Lecturers and staff of Siam University whom in one way or the other has contributed to my academic success, accomplishment of my learning process, my sincere and special thanks to you all.

Special thanks to my family, my loving mother: Mrs. Isioma Rita Osakwe, my brother: Mr. Emeka Martins Osakwe, and to my friends whom without them this study would not have been possible. Also, a big thanks to myself for not given up when the challenge was enormous. I thank God for the strength and wisdom to persevered throughout my academic years.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

With the complexity and challenges face in International Business world and with the fast-growing need for International Business, globalization is connecting people from different works of life through imparting and exchanging of information for the development of good business relations among countries. Japan is a nation with four major islands located at the western Pacific Ocean with other Asian territories. The largest of the four major Islands is the Honshu, which recorded 60% of Japanese land scape and 80% of the country's population **(Division, 2011).** In addition, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku are the other Japanese Islands why the Ryukyu Islands comprises of Okinawa which reside in the south part of the major Islands.

Map of Japan and The Four Major Islands

Source: https://www.gojapango.com/map-of-japan-islands/
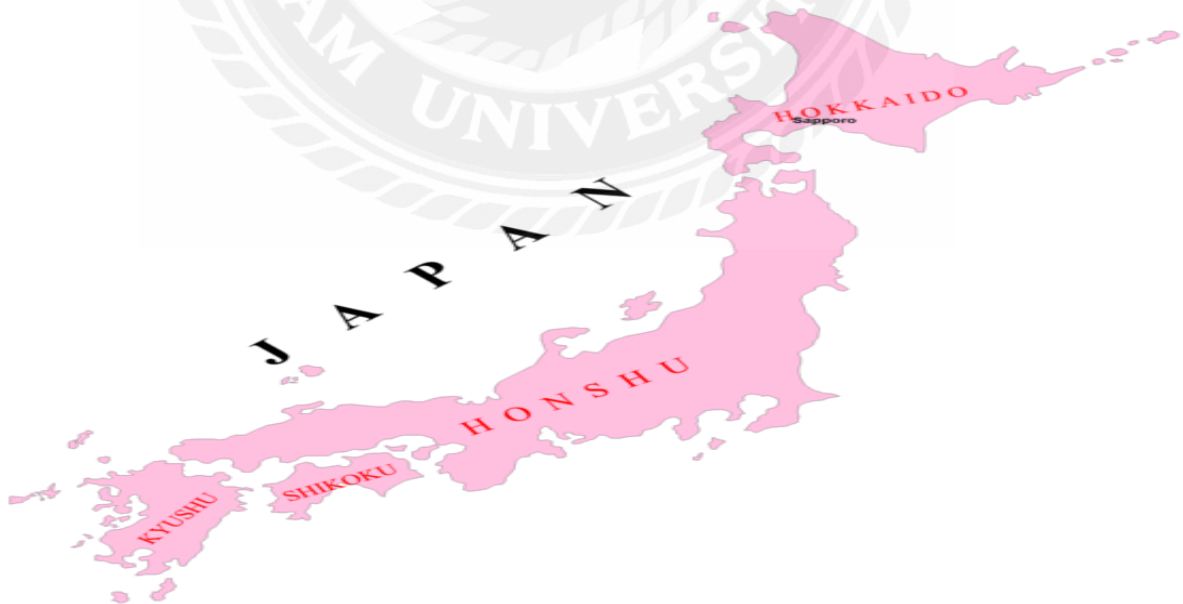
To a certain degree, Japan landscape is small compare to California a state in America with a landscape of 377,835 Sq km - 145,902 Sq mi. The country also shares maritime borderline with China, Taiwan, North Korea, South Korea, Russia and Philippines **(Division, 2011).**

Most importantly, a clear interpretation and expression of the word culture and negotiation should be noted. Culture can be seen as norms and values human being share, for instance this consist of how human beings' reason, behave, talk with one other, and resolve issues. It explains what people eat, wear and their belief, either good or bad **(Gray, 2012).** According to **Stambolska (2012)** Culture is define as a shared behaviors, values and material things, it includes human behavior and ways they communicate by gestures and conduct. Culture also influence community and countries. **Huang (2010),** review that effective Business Negotiations could be obstruct by various cultural factor such as greetings, negotiating approach, attitudes to time, meanings of numbers, gift-giving customs and significance of gestures. The author further clarifies that knowledge is the key to cross-cultural Business Negotiation. To start with, it is very important that individuals perceive the potential difficulty of cross-cultural conversation and try to conquer these issues. It is necessary to assume that one's efforts will not forever achieve success, and change one's behavior properly. It is essential to regard the moderators and their way of life.

According to **Lintzen and Svedjeholm (2006)** states that in a period of globalization there is a continuous necessity to see how culture affects certain work performance. The author also states that individuals from various nations get things done in various ways and culture is one approach to clarify this variety in conduct. Series of research have been carried out on the subject matter "Negotiations". **Chang (2006)** define negotiation as the means of consultation, communication, discussion, exchanging of idea, coming to an agreement and settlement. This can be seen as a business conduct, taken places in a public or official location arrange for business meeting and discussion. **Gray (2012),** states that the growth and survival of

international business is progressively depend on the success of business negotiations. The author claims that the major problem in negotiation is the misinterpretation of countries ways of life, particularly in the standards they utilize in transacting.

International negotiations have turned out to be every day movement as opposed to a periodic occasion. Negotiations between countries take place in small & medium size enterprises and multinational companies to build a particular method for exporting, importing, putting in place joint ventures or overseeing backups in overseas nations. Effective coordinated effort of any sort requires an ability to interact. Nevertheless, negotiation become unsuccessful not because each party need to achieve a successful collaboration but cultural aspects are the key causes of failure rather than economic or legal **(Yusuf, 2014).**

1.2 Background of the Problem

As early discuss in this study, there are series of cultural problems that could set back effective business negotiations and this includes;

- Culture (Example: Greetings, Custom)
- Negotiating approach
- Meanings of numbers
- Gift-giving customs
- Gestures

To start and finish your Business meeting with the Japanese counterpart **RODGERS (2017)** stated that the most difficult part start with the introduction before the business of the day. In Japanese culture, greetings are very important to them; people from Europe or North America are unfamiliar with this, and can extend a handshake alternatively. **Universal (2018)** stated that no shaking of

hands, you must bow and you must maintain a direct eye contact when greeting. **RODGERS (2017)** stated further, if you must reciprocate the courtesy to "Bow" then your back should be straight and your hands at the sides, while women should clasp their hands in front.

The author also mentions that in some case, a bow and a handshake often come together and if this occur gently move to avoid bumping of heads. In addition, checking your phone and putting your hands in your pockets while communicating with them means dissatisfaction and unconcern, they believe that the meeting should be of more paramount to you than anything else.

In negotiating styles, Japanese people prefer indirect ways of communication, which is far more different from the western approach, they like to stay away from disagreement to maintain balance and demonstrate much indirect communication approach that can be seen as elusive and ambiguous **(Teodorescu, 2017).** In Japanese culture, the meaning of numbers such as "4" and "9" can be seen as bad luck, four (Shi) simply means death while nine (Ku) simply means suffering, if you must give a gift in Japanese culture, refrain from giving anything that has set of four and nine **(RODGERS, 2017).** The author stated that tipping is not usual in some cases, it is considered inappropriate and rude to Japanese people. He also mentions that gift given to a guest in Japanese culture can only be open if you are asked to do so. **Katz (2009)** stated that, gift giving after endorsing an agreement can be seen as an appreciation and make sure when receiving a gift from Japanese people you should use your two hands.

The body is a powerful communication device, which interpret body language and should be use with caution because some hand gesture has different explanation in meaning. According to **eDiplomat (2018),** it is very important you nod your head when a Japanese is communicating and most importantly in English, it means you're paying attention and you understood what the person is saying.

The author also explains some important fact about body language to avoid and these include;

- Keeping a little distance and avoid touching them

- Do not hug or slap their shoulder in public

- Do not cross your ankle over your knee instead sit upright with two legs on the floors

- Do not point your four fingers wide open and thumb folded in

- Prolonged and direct eye contact is believed to be rude.

- Moreover, silence is natural and expected form of non-verbal communication and do not feel a need to talk or interrupt when the meeting is going on.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study aim to identify the role culture play in Japanese Business negotiation and also to understand the step to take before going into oversea business.

1.4 Scope of the study

This study covers culture and business negotiation as case study and the geographic territory and setting of this research is limited to Japan.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that, we get to learn more on Japanese culture and ways they carry out their business negotiation. It will serve as knowledge, learning tools for students and many that are willing to do business in japan, also added to many other research works done and useful for research study.

1.6 Definitions of Terms

Business Negotiation

Can be define as a procedure in which a group of people taking part in a business meeting examine their goals and ambition respectively, discus strategical knowledge and follow possibility that is favorable to them **(Ma & Härtel, 2009).**

Communications

Is the process of transmitting and obtaining of spoken and unwritten communication in an organizational setting. The author further elaborates that, communication refer to the method of creating, communicating, obtaining and explaining written or recorded communication within group of people, social setting and by means of communication **Conrad & Newberry, (2011).**

Culture

Can be describe as an incompatible and distinctive characteristic of a community in view to their values, norms, behavior and custom that differentiate them from different social groups **(Azad, Adair, Sycara, & Lewis, 2012).**

Negotiation Attitude

This can be defined as the method or ways of reaching a consensus that meet the expectations of all individuals involved. Example is a win-win or win-lose attitude toward negotiation which is usually embrace from separate cultures **Teodorescu, (2017, p.284).**

Negotiation Goal

According to **Michael & Service, (2007)** goals can be define as the needs, wants and priority people have in mind before discussing on any business negotiation. Why **Loewenstein & Brett, (2007)** define goal as a purpose a negotiator aim to achieve.

Time Sensitivity

Time sensitivity can be High or Low depending on the cultural dissimilarity in view towards time and period of time committed to a negotiation. Example of High or Low context situation, a negotiation which might take three days to finalize in United State will certainly last more than two week in japan **Smith (2000).**
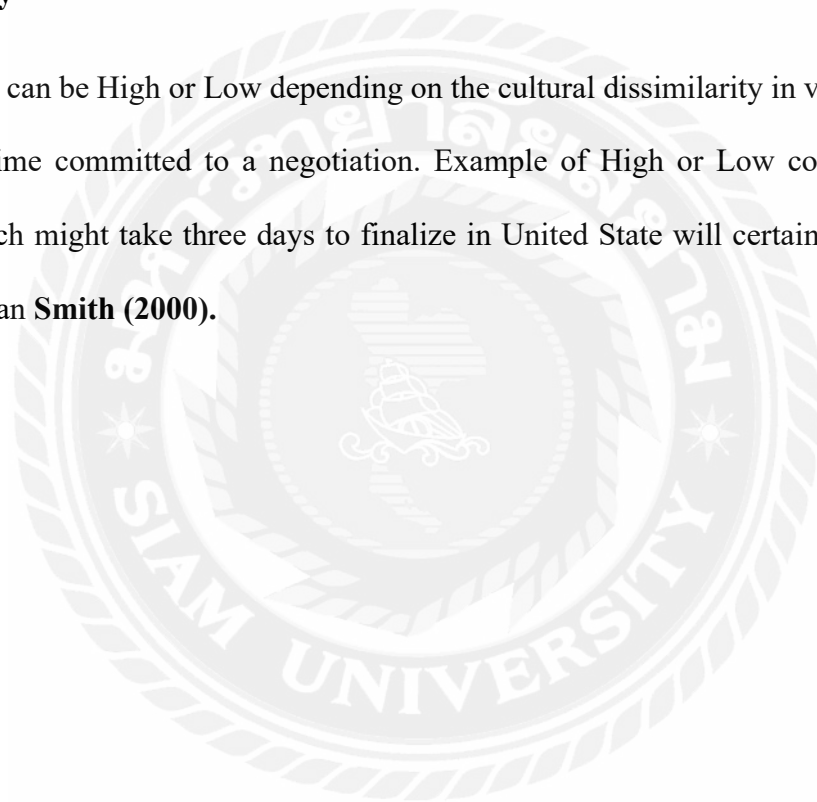
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Background of Business Negotiations

Baranowski (2016) states that negotiation is often used in our day-to-day life, he also mentions that negotiation often take place in our work-place, with friend, even at home and oftentimes when this happen people do not recognize they are negotiating. The universal business negotiation is not only the conversation and collaboration within the financial field, however the conversation of culture between different nations **Gray (2012).** The author further explains the method of negotiation plan and behavior are prompted through their own social group and there is immense differentiation in reasoning method, value view, group consciousness, gain recognition and law awareness between Western and Eastern cultures. These variations mostly influence the methods and result of negotiations; these are essential elements we should consider within the negotiation. The author further review that effective negotiations need the knowledge of individual's culture and also need the integration of the negotiating approach so it could be constant with other different culture **Gray (2012).**

The process of negotiation differs from culture, some individuals could embrace a more direct or straightforward system of communication, whereas some might embrace a system which is more indirect or complicated **Chang (2006).** The author further explain that every culture has its own norm, and one behavior that determined meaning in a certain culture can be explain differently in another. For instance, it is an appropriate gesture to call individuals from United State or Australia by their family names but it is rude and disrespectful to do so with individuals from France, Japan,

or Egypt **Chang (2006).** When negotiating with individuals from overseas countries or territory of significant cultural variation, their cultural beliefs should be notice.

2.2 Attitudes

Research shows that negotiation behavior of human being differs due to the underlying dissimilarity built-in every one culture, which impart and control ways to human conversation **Blechschmidt (2013).** The author also notice that attitudes, rule, values and customs embedded in the cultural setting of negotiators influence the different phase of the negotiating proceedings. There is proof that high/low communication context and individualism /collectivism element have significant implications for the negotiation experience **Blechschmidt (2013).** In present-day negotiation, the purpose of negotiation is to focus and work with one another rather than focus on customary argumentative or the hero-takes-the entire outcome. Individuals from various cultures usually embrace a win-win or win-lose attitude to negotiation because a win-win negotiation is a favorable settlement for all parties whereas a Win-lose negotiation can lead to aggressive approach because the loser is required to take something of minor value **Teodorescu (2017).**

2.3 Communication

Blechschmidt (2013) states that various communication approach is usually seen as an obstacle to integrative method and negotiation outcome. **Chang (2006a)** states that Japanese people generally communicate indirectly or in a diplomatic way, the manner in which they communicate to one another is usually simple. Nevertheless, verbal or spoken word, which seem positive, might

become opposite and this usually mislead their opponent. The author explains in details, when a Japanese say yes to a business project, it will be hard to change their decision as they usually stick to their word.

2.4 Culture

Gray (2012) explains how culture transcend from one age groups to other. He also explains how norms and values acquired from their guardian (primary socialization) such as their background, training and work place (secondary socialization) which is transcend to the coming generations. **Sangkrit (2013)** emphasize that learning cultural dissimilarity of two separate cultures will confidently give the negotiator the major accomplishment in the negotiation; nevertheless, if the individual cannot act on it, then it means that the knowledge is nothing. He also mentions that, an individual should not only have cultural knowledge but also know how to act so as to enable them think that the individual comes from the culture, by this way you can anticipate their move and behaviors. **Teodorescu (2017)** reveal that Intercultural negotiation need cultural understanding between the parties involves, this require more than proper recognition, table manners, fancy dress and business card etiquette, etc. In addition, the author states that intercultural understanding demand more knowledge and thinking model, he also mentions that negotiation fail because of cultural misinterpretation. Finally, intercultural study and work observation have confirmed the general areas of misinterpretation in intercultural negotiations which consist of individual view about the concept of time and it significance, nature, identify the objective of the negotiations, negotiating approach, communication method, resolution approach and high or low risk-taking **Teodorescu (2017).**

2.5 Goal

The term goal usually signifies " what a person plan to achieve, this can be seen as the purpose or plan of an action" **Tasa, Whyte, & Leonardelli (2013).** To some society, the fundamental goal of negotiations is to come to an understanding and endorse an agreement, whereas other societies see it as a foundation to a long-lasting partnership among the groups, which in the end lead to agreement **Gray (2012).** Goal setting are often recommended in negotiation, this subject has been reviewed to have long-lasting events in negotiations books and writings publications. The author states further that goal is potentially very important in negotiation, it can have positive or negative outcome in negotiator performance and result, moreover, it relies on the kind of negotiation, kind of goal, and the ways goals are express and recognize **Tasa, Whyte, & Leonardelli (2013). Blechschmidt (2013)** emphasis that negotiators usually begin a negotiation with the willingness to achieve a goal, this impact their thought and behavior for instance the idea of honesty, information processing and negotiation result. In addition, past discovery concerning negotiator motive have noted that it is related with social behavior of a society, but little on the systematic investigation into the study have evaluate culture different in which negotiator objective and purpose impact their activity in negotiation approach.

2.6 Time Sensitivity

Chang (2006 at P 136, L31-33) explained, the culture meaning of time which impacts how individuals transact, consequently the misinterpretation that regularly happen in international negotiations are generally caused by the distinctive misunderstandings of time in various societies. **Blechschmidt (2013)** states that a large amount of research reveals the idea of time and the

important of time which differs between various societies and might have a substantial meaning on cross cultural negotiation. **Teodorescu (2017)** explain that the attitudes to time generally differs between society, and the way individuals consider and utilize it regularly relies upon how their way of life values time. Time has a separate significance to people as well as to entire groups or societies. The author further explains, Japanese negotiators wish to start and end meetings at flexible times; they take time off when it is convenient and pleasant for them and implied meaning by reading every one feeling and reasoning.

2.7 Review of Related Research

Culture is a major element affecting worldwide negotiations and action, values and norms, which consist of culture, can influence negotiation either in a positive or negative way. The authors claim that culture responsibility and group membership can influence not only the strategy to associate in negotiations but will probably affect the result of the negotiations **Peleckis (2013). Fjellstrom (2005)** mention that, behavior, idea, customs, rules, values and traditions are planted in the culture that influence negotiation and correspondence approach. He also mentions that culture determine individual approach and influence which plan and method to follow. Culture is what we acquire as a knowledge in our surroundings, knowing cultural difference helps anticipate the outcome of intercultural meeting, value how individuals in particular society talk, behave, transact or make decisions. Negotiating with overseas partners, individuals have to examine the component of international surroundings, recognize cultural differentiation and element that might affect their counterpart behavior and decision-making **Teodorescu (2017).**

The author mentions further, negotiating with individuals from various cultural surroundings need planning, tolerance, cooperation and full knowledge of the intercultural problem, which might influence negotiation approach. **Hjelte (2011)** mention two important hindrance to effective intercultural conversation such as the dissimilarity in language and culture. If not the two members are honestly bilingual and bicultural, they will discover the conversation approach extremely hard and even more disappointing.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction:

Research methodology is a precise method or strategies employed to identify, select, process, and examine statistics approximately a topic. The method permits the reader to carefully evaluate a research's overall validity and authenticity. The research method addresses two important questions; How data was generated and analyzed **Wilkinson, 2021.**

3.2 Research design:

This paper explores the documentary research methodology. **Ahmed (2010)** defined documentary research as any register documentation other than a record which was not constructed especially in reply to certain demands from the examiner. Documentary research methodology is most suitable for this research because it reviews existing documents and helps you understand and obtain sensitive or privileged material and also provides documentary value. **QuestionPro, 2021** states the advantage of data collection from documentary research because it is readily available in various sources.

3.3 Data Collection

Data used in this research were gathered from relevant secondary sources such as books, newspapers, magazines, dictionaries, journals, government publications and unpublished sources

and online sources, which were used to supply background information and other required data to attain the purpose of the research.

3.4 Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis technique is the procedure of cleaning, transforming, and modeling statistics to find out beneficial records for enterprise decision-making. This process is used to analyze our past and future in decision making. In this study it is used to review and evaluate data collected from existing literature on cultures such as Customs, laws, dress, architectural style, social standards, religious beliefs, traditions and business negotiation.
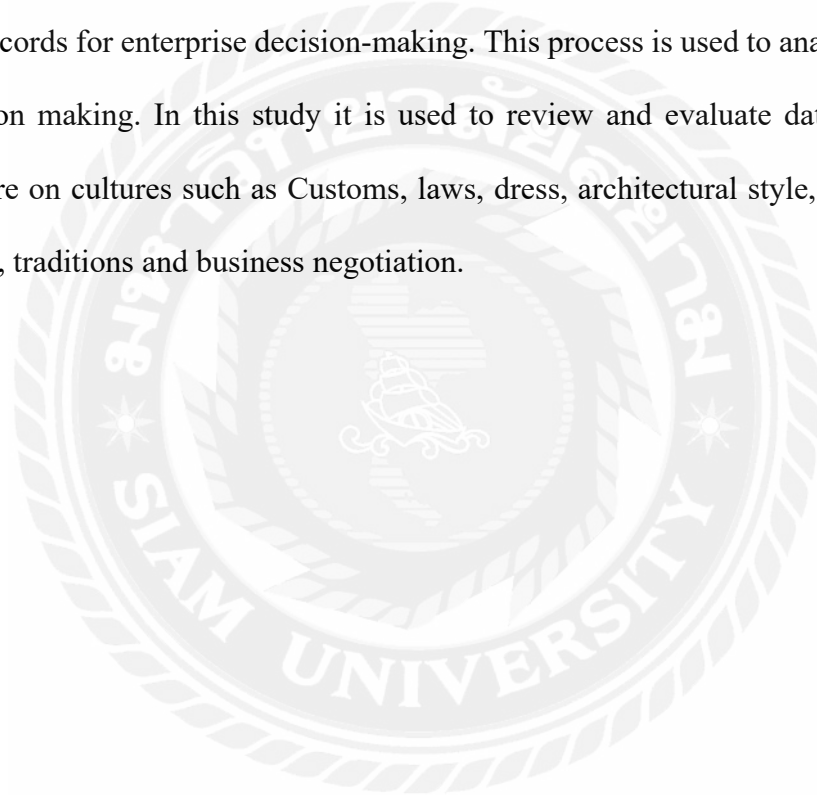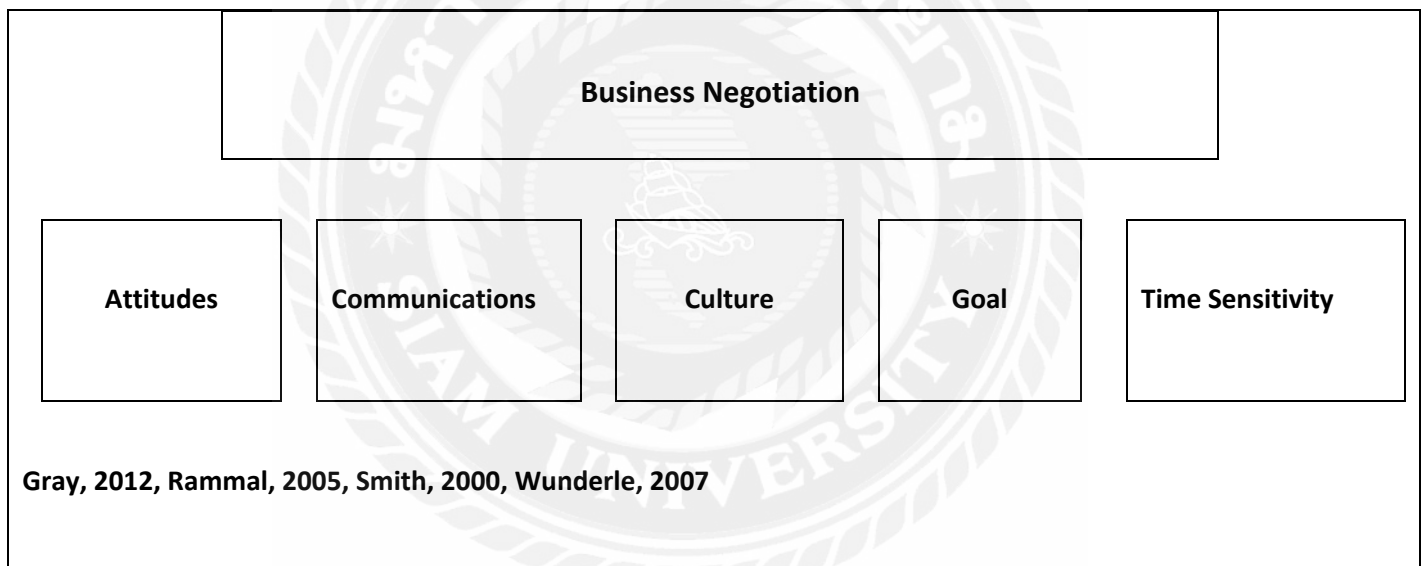
CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This section explains the research finding on the role culture play in Japanese business negotiation and also to understand the step to take before going into oversea business. Studies have indicated, elements affecting cross-cultural negotiations. The findings are presented in the table below.

Business Negotiation Framework

Business Negotiation				
Attitudes	Communications	Culture	Goal	Time Sensitivity

Gray, 2012, Rammal, 2005, Smith, 2000, Wunderle, 2007

### 4.2 The Role Culture Plays in Japanese Business Negotiation

The study review that when it comes to decision-making Japanese people are group-oriented people, when they make decision or bargain, general opinion of the entire group is required. Japan can be seen as a bureaucratic nation with numerous policies, rule or directive, decision making by

Japanese people takes longer time because negotiators require consent from the management. They also emphasis on group goals preferably than individual desire or want, this create less unforeseen problem after because everyone is in the same boat, they also place high values on the other bargaining group members and prefers a win/win approach instead of a Win/Lose business negotiations **Kadoi (2015).**

Source: **https://japanintercultural.com/free-resources/articles/why-do-japanese-take-so-long-to-make-decisions/**

Japanese people prefer to communicate indirectly rather than a direct approach, they believe that directness approach frequently cause conflict within negotiation which must be refrain from in Japan. Below chat show an example of Japanese indirect way of communication.

Source: https://prezi.com/izgpxorr7k3o/japanese-high-context-cultures/
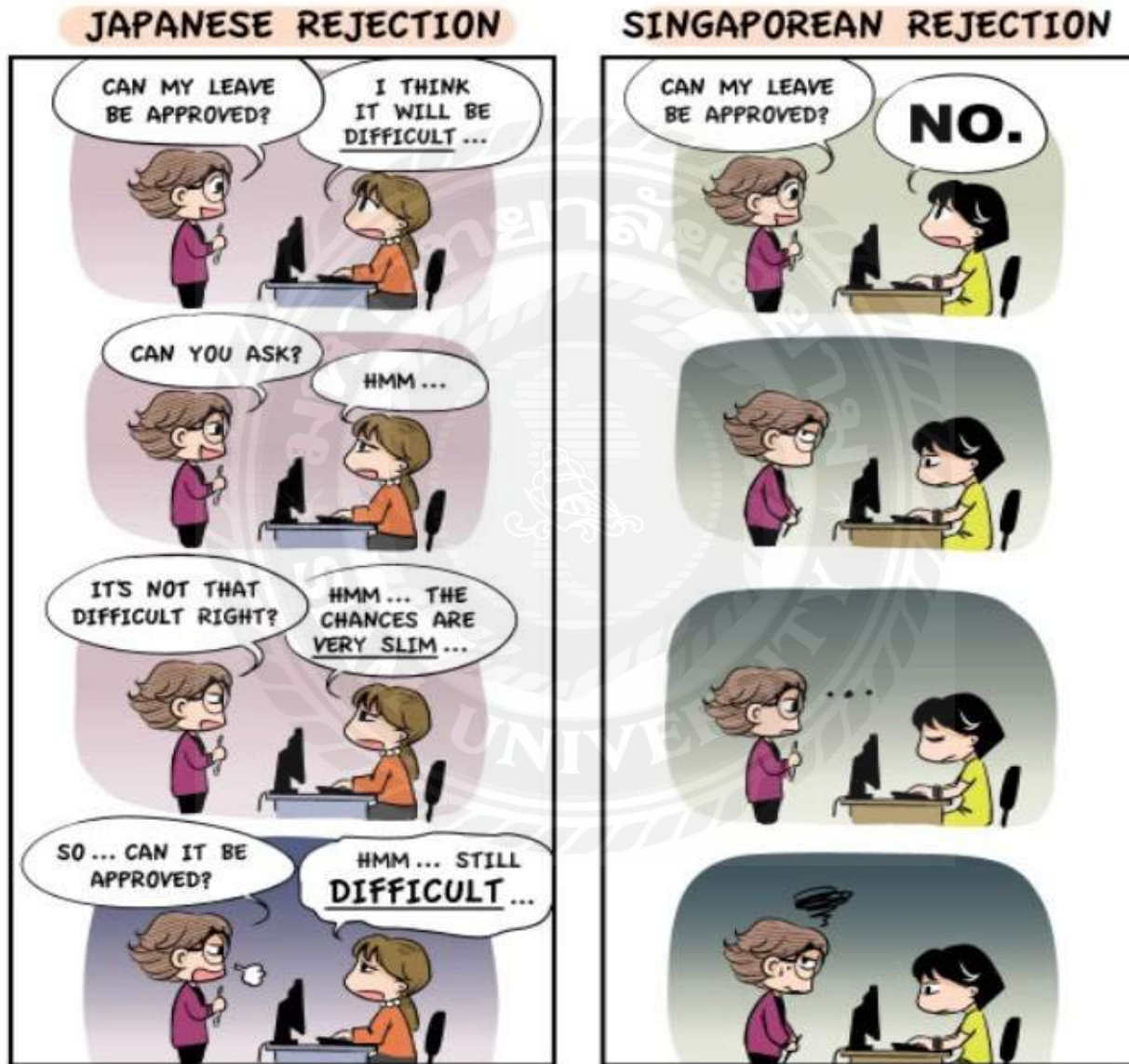
Japanese observer becomes tense when you communicate your opinion directly either verbally or non-verbally. Non-verbal transmission in Japanese culture signify the use of one body parts which are regularly used in non-verbal transmission such as head, face, eyes, arms, fingers, and legs. Cultural knowledge of a society demands more thinking model, many negotiations fail because of cultural misinterpretation between the parties involved. Research on intercultural study and work observation confirm the common areas of misinterpretation in intercultural negotiations and this include; the concept of time and it importance, nature, knowing the objective of the negotiations, negotiating method, communication approach, resolution approach and high or low risk-taking **Teodorescu (2017).** Culture transcend from one age groups to other, norms and values acquired from guardian are transcend to the coming generations. Language is a cultural product that may help to understand how cultural factors influence social action and reflects society values and ways of behaving.

Japanese culture can be seen, as a high context culture where selfhood greatly affect the relationship with others, in pre-negotiation period it is important for Japanese negotiators to build relationships within the other group, they prefer building a relationship instead of contract, which can be seen as western approach. Japanese people spend more time in learning other group, they seek to achieve and sustain a long-term relationship, before signing any contract with the other groups they need to be sure, they are reliable. Sustaining a relationship specify the belief that current business profits generate a long-term profit, which is the purpose Japanese people are flexible about time in view of building a genuine relationship. Negotiating with the Japanese might take longer time to advance because a high precedence is given in other to know the other groups as much as they can. Culture's perspective about time which vary in different societies, it is quite significant for some as some culture value time more than others, it is reveal that Germans are

punctual at all times while Latin's have the habit of late coming, Japanese negotiator are very slowly, Americans are fast in making a contract, and to them time is money that must not be waste **Salacuse (2004).** Research has proved culture meaning of time which vary in different societies and how it impacts individuals transact, cause distinctive misunderstandings in various societies, and might have a substantial meaning on cross cultural negotiation. Time has a separate significance to people as well as the entire groups or societies, Japanese negotiators wish to start and end meetings at flexible times because in Japanese high context culture time is more plentiful and if not infinite.

4.3 Step to Take before Going into Oversea Business

Ramirez (2014), the theory of Ideology and Culture say Knowledge is Power. Before going into any oversea business, it is advisable you take your time to research on the country cultural norms, unwritten rules that govern social behaviors, business etiquette, government rules, policy and regulations before taken any step. Knowing about a country norms, tradition and ways they behave or do things will help you know what to expect in terms of attitude, way they think and behavior. For instance, in a high context culture like Japan you do not say "NO" because your Japanese opposition are well informed that a disagreement must be transform into a mutually favorable consensus.

You do not cross your ankle over your knee; instead sit upright with two legs on the floors.

DO INSTEAD
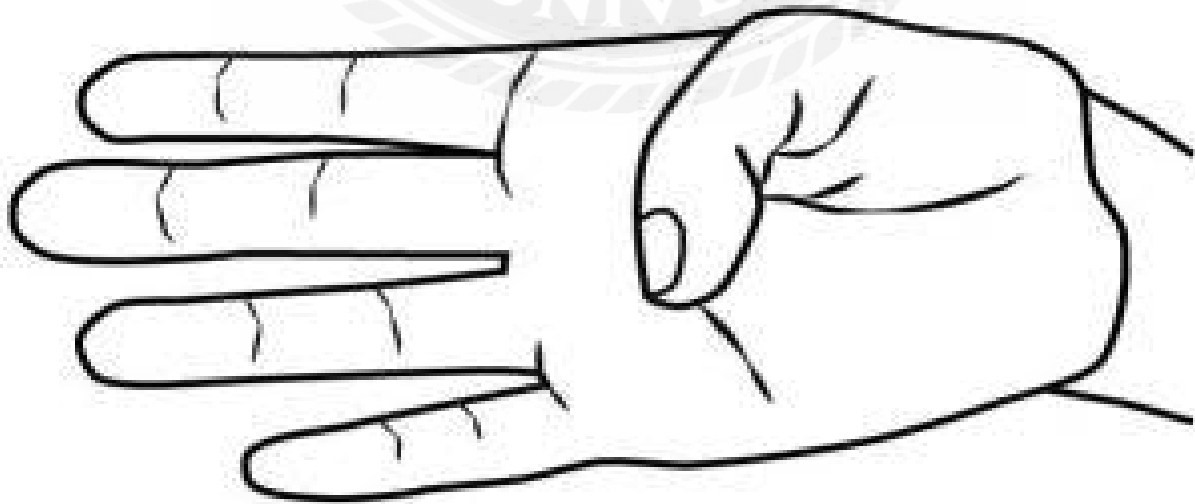
DON'T

You do not prolonged eye contact with a Japanese businessperson, as they believe it is rude and it means defiance or challenge.

You do not point your four fingers wide open and thumb folded in.

also learn about gift giving and numbers such as "4" and "9" can be seen as bad luck, four (shi) simply means death while nine (ku) simply means suffering. You do not point it at them, generally they see it as unlucky number **RODGERS (2017).**

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The world has become a global village and globalization is connecting people from all works of life in terms of international trade, exchange of capital, goods and services across international boundary or territories. This research will be beneficial to top management level, middle management level, operational management level also applicable to Korean, Chinese, Europe and America business men and woman; it will serve as learning tools for students on culture and business in japan. Knowledge about international business should be acquired before venturing into any overseas business trip. One should define his business plan or objectives before entering into any international business. It is essential if your objectives can ascertain your results. Your goal should be how to learn and adapt to new culture and if possibly make it your culture.

The author's recommendation is as followed, understanding Japanese decision-making process when negotiating or doing business with Japanese counterpart will create a sustainable and long-term relationship between both parties. You must learn how to be patient with them because decision-making process takes longer time as they need the consent of the management before making any decision. They prefer a Win/Win approach instead of a Win/Lose business negotiation **Kadoi (2015).** To have a good business relation with the Japanese counterpart, understanding their systems of communication which is based on indirect systems of communication can sometimes be confusing as verbal or spoken word, which seem positive, might become opposite and this usually mislead their opponent **Chang (2006a).** To have a good and long-lasting business relation with Japanese people, you must be well informed about Japanese cultural norms and

refrain from giving anything that has set of four and nine because four (shi) simply means death while nine (ku) simply means suffering **RODGERS (2017).**

In a high context culture, relationships matter a lot to Japanese people, they like to socialize with their counterparts after a business meeting; this is also a process of establishing an effective working relationship. Do not reject or refuse a dinner's invitation, business lunches and dinners can be seen as a perfect hour to know your Japanese counterparts and also used in building a long-lasting relationship **Price (2018).** To have an effective business relation with the Japanese counterpart, you should be able to understand culture's attitudes toward time in Japanese context. How it influences individuals transact, cause distinctive misunderstandings in various societies, and might have a substantial meaning on cross-cultural negotiation **Chang (2006).**
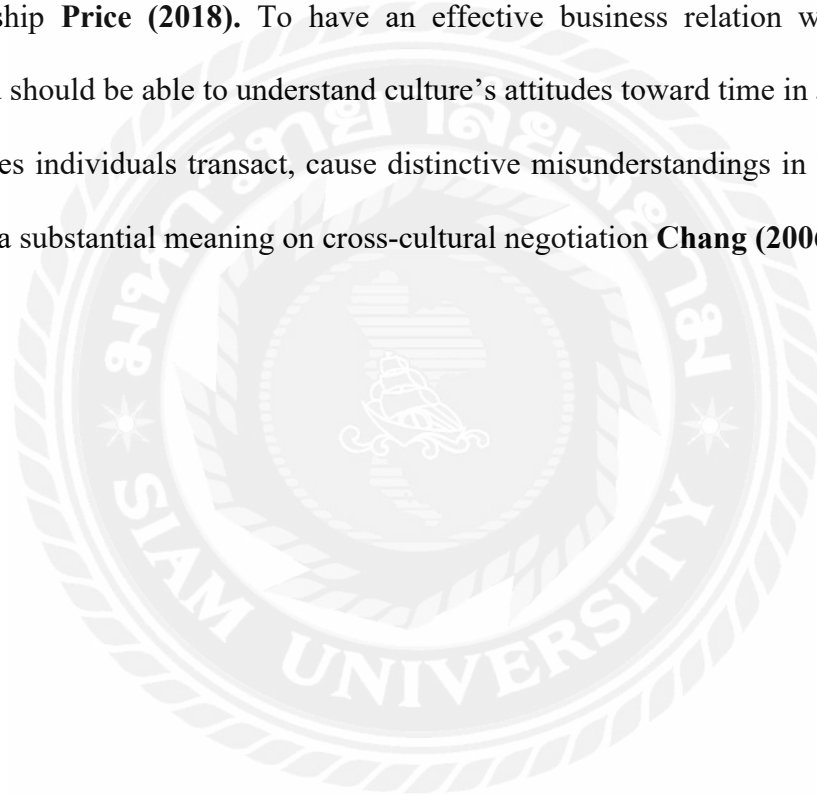
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