Cultural dynamics and business strategies in international markets

Dinámicas culturales y estrategias empresariales en los mercados internacionales

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ABSTRACT

Through an analysis of cultural dynamics and global markets, this study probes the interplay of cultural and global influences on business strategy in the context of international expansion. Data are collected from 217 respondents through structured questionnaires that are distributed via Qualtrics, and the research uses Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze this data. The findings indicate a negative effect of perceived cultural barriers on business performance (β = -0.229), through cross-cultural communication (β = -0.249), indicating a need for a culturally adaptive communication strategy. On the one hand, the impact of cultural intelligence on market adaptability is significant (β = 0.618), but its direct effect on business performance is not significant, suggesting that market adaptability should be combined with other strategic efforts. the study also shows that cultural diversity enhances creativity without directly

yielding competitive advantage as shown by its weak impact on purchase intention (β = -0.042). Finally, the study concludes that those businesses that embed cultural complexities and successfully manage them tend to have better results in the global market. It also points out that business schools should pay more attention to cultural intelligence. It gives real-world advice for developing course materials, preparing globally skilled experts, and helping business leaders adjust to cultural differences on a global scale.

Keywords. Business Education, Intercultural Competence, Cultural Intelligence, Teaching Global Strategy, International Business Curriculum, Global Learning

RESUMEN

A través de un análisis de las dinámicas culturales y de los mercados globales, este estudio examina la interacción entre las influencias culturales y globales en la estrategia empresarial en el contexto de la expansión internacional. Los datos se recogen de 217 encuestados mediante cuestionarios estructurados distribuidos a través de Qualtrics, y la investigación utiliza el modelado de ecuaciones estructurales por mínimos cuadrados parciales (PLS-SEM) para analizarlos. Los resultados indican un efecto negativo de las barreras culturales percibidas sobre el rendimiento empresarial (β = -0.229), a través de la comunicación intercultural (β = -0.249), lo que pone de manifiesto la necesidad de una estrategia de comunicación adaptativa culturalmente. Por un lado, el impacto de la inteligencia cultural en la adaptabilidad al mercado es significativo (β = 0.618), pero su efecto directo sobre el rendimiento empresarial no lo es, lo que sugiere que la adaptabilidad al mercado debe combinarse con otros esfuerzos estratégicos. El estudio también muestra que la diversidad cultural fomenta la creatividad, aunque sin generar directamente una ventaja competitiva, como lo demuestra su débil impacto en la intención de compra (β = -0.042). Finalmente, la investigación concluye que aquellas empresas que integran y gestionan con éxito las complejidades culturales tienden a obtener mejores resultados en el mercado global. Asimismo, destaca que las escuelas de negocios deberían prestar mayor atención a la inteligencia cultural, ofreciendo recomendaciones prácticas para desarrollar materiales docentes, preparar expertos con competencias globales y ayudar a los líderes empresariales a adaptarse a las diferencias culturales a escala mundial.

Palabras clave. Educación Empresarial, Competencia Intercultural, Inteligencia Cultural, Enseñanza de Estrategia Global, Currículo de Negocios Internacionales, Aprendizaje Global.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a dramatic change in the global marketplace for multinational corporations that must deal with economic and logistic problems as well as complex cultural dynamics that affect consumer preference, brand perception, and market participation (Akram et al., 2022; Rana and Sharma, 2019). Cherunilam (2020) explains that this globalization emerged as a major force in the 1980s and has made it easier for businesses to easily penetrate international markets to adopt strategies that look to balance global potential with relevance at the local level. Viral marketing has also been used as a powerful strategy for businesses to go viral beyond the limitations that digital platforms afford companies to become worldwide consumers (Bhattacharya et al. 2019; Mukherjee et al., 2023). Cultural intelligence stands as an emerging critical asset in global marketing, defined as reading and taking intelligent measures to face different cultural contexts (Setti et al., 2022). The use of cultural intelligence makes businesses grow prepared to design marketing activities that can appeal to either international standards or domestic preferences (Paiuc, 2021).

In cyberspace where borders are almost meaningless, brand messages can be delivered in seconds across borders to global firms, who need compelling marketing content that is culturally relevant, but transcends cultures and language barriers, building emotionally appealing connections with consumers (Katsikeas et al. 2019; Appel et. al., 2020). However, globalization offers great business opportunities for expansion and diversification, further with higher awareness of the cultural aspects of the marketing strategy (Homer & Lim, 2024). Risk is an integral part of global marketing by multinational corporations. The most serious issue is failing to understand how cultural differences impact consumer behavior and market response (Kotabe & Helsen, 2022). In reality, many companies adopt a uniform marketing style, and as such, marketing is incompatible with differences in culture, resulting in poor reception and decreased brand loyalty (Hult et al., 2022).

This research addresses the problem of cultural misalignment in global marketing through the analysis of the role of cultural dynamics in enhancing business marketing strategies in international markets. Specifically, it looks into the obstacles companies face when dealing with cultural differences while expanding abroad: entering markets, placing products, and running marketing campaigns. The research also investigates how a person's cultural intelligence impacts their business strategy when dealing with people from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, it looks at how using cultural diversity can help organizations spark innovation and compete more effectively worldwide.

In addition to strategy, this research points to the key role of cultural intelligence in building the next generation of global business leaders. Considering the global demand for culturally aware jobs, this study suggests ways to enhance and change business school curriculum and teaching strategies. By bringing these issues to light, the study hopes to guide curriculum development, increase student participation in international business issues and encourage teachers to incorporate cultural competence in their lessons. It helps educators achieve global awareness, empathy for different cultures and flexible teaching with practical ideas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With technological advancement and globalization, the world has become a village, and therefore organizations ought to understand cultural differences. This paper draws from the literature review to explain how culture impacts the market, consumers, and business strategies. The review also addresses the effects of globalization on cultural systems, the difficulties in business conducting businesses across cultures, cultural sensitivity in business strategies, and its contribution to innovation.

Globalization and cultural dynamics in business

Steger and James (2019) argue that globalization serves to stimulate the study of global cultural impacts of control over market conduct and consumer choice. From this view of Steger and James (2019), firms looking forward to venturing into international markets must be able to comprehend cultural factors in various sections of the world to enable them to achieve their goals. This is consistent with Hopper (2007) that organizations face a multitude of problems in internationalizing. This is because as globalization progresses to expand interactions with different cultures, it heightens the significance of culture in defining business strategies. Organizations today are required to build trust and improve the communication process, and innovation in the cross-cultural environment is now also a critical factor for cross-cultural competence. Steers, Osland, and Szkudlarek (2023) state that such competence enables organizations to navigate the cultural environments in which they operate, giving them the ability to develop culturally sensitive and appropriate relationships, which are critical to International Business.

In areas such as Africa, where cultural sensitivity is both profitable and vital to conducting business, cultural intelligence plays an increasing role. According to Ginzarly, Houbart, and Teller (2019), the integration of community values in business strategies is more efficacious in achieving the acceptance and loyalty of consumers due to its consonance with the community preference in the African market. Rogers (2020) indicates that in the West African region organizations experience significant gains with the presence of cultures in decision-making, and bargaining systems and practices associated with the culture. Such culturally related approaches aid in the anticipation of local norms and are evidenced in the African success stories.

For digital and e-commerce businesses, the culture of adaptation is usually provided through differential services. Nigerian e-commerce platforms, as mentioned by Lave (2021), have adopted cash-on-delivery options to facilitate the needs of customers who prefer cash-on-delivery rather than using electronic payment platforms that are not widely adopted in that part of the world. As Morrison-Smith and Ruiz (2020) indicate, businesses not only improve consumer trust by conforming to the local payment systems but also ensure their brand is culturally relevant and appropriate in the markets. Furthermore, consumer behavior and brand identification are affected by cultural factors in the specific cultural context. A clear difference in markets that are very globalized and markets of developing and fast globalizing are captured in the study of Daraojimba et al. (2023), where local brand authenticity takes precedence in the former, and prestige of the global brands is key in the latter. Sharma et al. (2023) nicely articulate this duality whereby the firms can attract many consumers by using an adaptive branding policy that harks to the global desire but upholds the local identity. This strategic flexibility allows firms to simultaneously satisfy the two conflicting requirements of global standardization and local adaptation, so much the normal in consumer markets worldwide. Thus, for business, it is necessary to consider cultural elements as a part of the business environment, especially when global trends and local culture converge.

Cultural challenges in international business

The strategic management of international businesses is significantly impacted by cultural differences when they are attempting to enter foreign markets. These differences can cover values, norms, behaviours, and institutional arrangements which present barriers to companies looking to run globally. To succeed in cultural adaptation, one needs to not only understand cultural value systems but also recognize how the cultural environment impacts business operations and strategy. Recent research suggests that culture exerts a strong influence on how companies should enter international markets, how they should communicate, manage brands, and implement their overall international business plan (Hennart and Sutherland, 2022; Huang, 2023).

A particularly challenging aspect of international business is market entry, which is influenced by cultural factors that determine the perceptions of customers, legal structures, and dynamics in business (Meyer et al. 2023). Cultural inertia is a major obstacle to this process as firms resist changes in their internal organization and processes to reflect the new cultural environment. This rigidity of practices, according to Meyer et al. (2023), prompts businesses to overfocus on domestic practices and underappreciate the importance of localization. For example, when Western companies expand to Asian markets, they often face the problem of moving from hierarchical to group consensus and respect for authority-driven, collectivist structures (Su, 2023). In addition, the organizations must have personnel with sensitivity and cross-cultural training for the management of such differences. Research by Wang and Liu (2022) underscored the significance of training employees in charge of international operations to facilitate the smoothness of negotiations, foreign contract agreements, and local alliances (Huang, 2023; Meyer et al., 2023). The lack of such training can prevent, or even stop, the market entry efforts.

Market entry further becomes complicated because of cultural dynamics within cross-cultural teams. Diversity on its own promotes innovation and flexibility but it can lead to misunderstandings and conflict that adversely affect productivity especially at early stages of market development

(Hilmersson et al., 2022). Various studies have reported that a lot of joint ventures in Africa have failed, partly due to the baseless assumptions of foreign firms that regard local engagement practices as unimportant (Oguji and Owusu, 2020). However, those that will succeed best are firms that adapt effectively to local culture. One such notable example is when Xiaomi has expanded into India, where the company localized its marketing, supply chain, and product offerings to cater to Indian consumer values, thereby gaining major market share (Su, 2023). On the other hand, emerging market advertising campaigns of companies like PepsiCo have sometimes failed because their campaigns accidentally clashed with the local cultural values (Witt et al., 2023).

Cultural differences also prevent easy communication and branding beyond market entry. Building strong relationships with audiences as well as brand narratives that resonate with the target audiences requires effective cross-cultural communication (Shalini, 2023). Nevertheless, language and communication styles as well as societal values may present difficulties in coordination (Meyer et al., 2023). Invisible cultural barriers plague branding strategies: non-verbal communication norms, cultural perceptions of symbols, and different views on humour. As Shalini (2023) points out companies often miss out on these in favor of other, more obvious linguistic differences. For example, humorous ads designed for U.S. audiences may be perceived as offensive in Japan because of different views about humour (Chabowski et al., 2023).

Amid the rise of digitalization, cultural risks in communication are becoming further amplified. On the one hand, technological advancements provide firms with an opportunity to reach hundreds of people, but on the other, they heighten the risk of miscommunication if the content is not culturally relevant. For instance, automated translation software can generate grammatically correct, but semantically incorrect messages that offend target consumers (Hennart & Sutherland, 2022). Thus, more and more, businesses invest in localization teams to guarantee culturally appropriate digital activity. Furthermore, stakeholder relationships present challenges in communication, especially when facing regulatory environments. According to He et al. (2019), foreign banks entering China confronted some barriers because of their unfamiliarity with local cultural norms. But firms that adopted culturally iconic messaging, for instance, by branding financial services as a way to secure family prosperity, did better than firms relying on global branding strategies only.

In summary, cultural challenges in international business impact both the market strategies and the communication efforts. Firms that embrace cultural adaptation and localization gain a comparative advantage, whereas those that ignore and do not incorporate the aspects of cultural differences into the organization and operations of their business are at a disadvantage.

Cultural adaptation in international business

For organizations going international, cultural adaptation is an essential part of aligning business strategies, marketing approaches, and product offerings with local cultural norms. Such a process builds relationships and boosts market success especially in the globalized economy where understanding cultural differences is fundamental. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions and Cultural Intelligence Theory offer insight on how to assess and improve cultural competency to allow businesses to navigate the many environments (Hofstede, 1984; Steers et al., 2023). Specifically, "glocalisation" ensures that the company keeps a strong presence across the world while personalising offerings to local requirements, ensuring brand authenticity and avoiding cultural missteps (Steenkamp, 2019).

Cultural adaptation relies heavily on marketing and communication, so branding, messaging, and digital content need to be adapted to local audiences. Localized branding enhances consumer trust like the adoption of cultural values in an advertising campaign by global technology brands (Meyer et al., 2023). In addition, storytelling and humour are some of the techniques used in cross-cultural communication to bridge cultural gaps and the example of Coca-Cola in India shows how it was successful (Tripathi, 2024.). Digital localization involves making changes to websites and content that adapt to cultural norms, for instance, Airbnb adapted its website interfaces and content

(Garg, 2023). Advertising also uses symbolism to strengthen brand appeal in financial brands in Asia; they link products to cultural values such as family wealth to create consumer trust (He et al., 2019).

Cultural adaptation goes beyond marketing and extends into product development, where changes improve the acceptance of the product by the consumers. Companies reformulate product features, like Nestlé's reformulation of Maggi noodles to comply with the Indian palate (Inderjeet & Choudhary, 2023), enabling them to have greater relevance in a local market. Another vital aspect is packaging since colors and symbols have different meanings in different cultures thus impacting the decision to purchase (Wang & Liu, 2022). Both practical and cultural needs are addressed in functional adaptations like energy-efficient appliances designed for markets with power fluctuations (Shalini, 2023). In the end, if businesses can use cultural adaptation effectively as part of their strategy, it will create long-term success for companies in the international markets.

Cultural diversity and innovation

In the global business environment, cultural diversity is increasingly recognized as a major force for innovation and business competitive advantage (Azeem et al., 2021). New cultures bring different viewpoints and solutions as they help organizations respond to any market uncertainty and reach out to a wider number of people. Yet cultural diversity can be used effectively only if it is balanced with challenges in communication. Diverse viewpoints are successfully managed by the management of these dynamics to leverage them positively for the organization as well as for the decision-making process.

The role of cultural diversity in fostering innovation, especially in interconnected and cross-functional business environments, cannot be overlooked. Ideation is made possible through multicultural teams where they bring different thinking perspectives that help in better problem-solving and decision-making (Jones et al., 2020). Structural communication with cultural intelligence is highlighted as a driver of innovation performance in the pharmaceutical industry, based on studies. Nevertheless, communication barriers and conflicts may obstruct productivity if they are not actively controlled (Bouncken et al., 2016). Strategies for optimizing diverse team dynamics include encouraging shared objectives and fostering collaboration

Many organizations are today making use of digital platforms to administer dispersed teams efficiently mainly because of technological advancements. Common challenges such as lack of cultural exposure and inability to collaborate remotely in real-time are eliminated through virtual collaboration tools and cultural sensitivity training, making it possible for real-time teamwork in different places (Hur et al., 2020). Hur et al. (2020) add that while businesses continue to operate worldwide, the integration of digital solutions with inclusive team management strategies makes it possible for them to leverage the power of cultural diversity to achieve sustained innovation and growth.

Figure I. Relationship between cultural dynamics and innovation
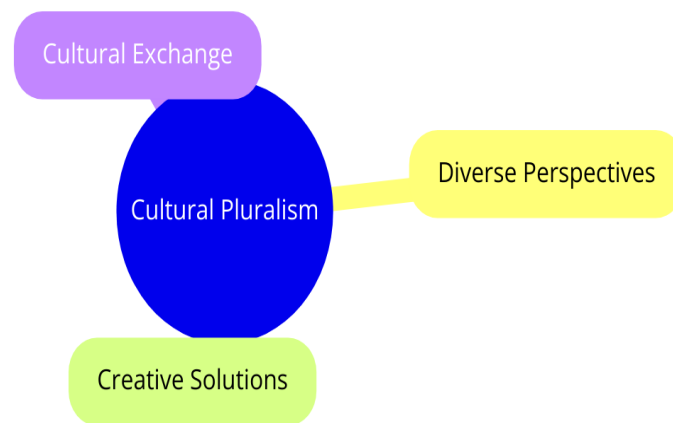
## Theoretical perspectives on cultural dynamics

This study integrates the Cultural Intelligence (CQ) Theory and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory to advance a complete picture of how cultural effects affect business strategies and corporate behaviour. Earley and Ang's (2003) CQ theory is based on individuals' individual and team-level abilities to function effectively in multicultural settings through cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioural intelligence. The cognitive CQ enables individuals to understand cultural norms, the metacognitive CQ helps them adapt strategically, the motivational CQ enables them to be resilient to different environments and the behavioral CQ enables them to communicate with others across cultures (Headley, 2021). CQ has great potential to improve teamwork, decision-making, and conflict resolution, and therefore it is very useful for businesses operating in global markets. Ang and Dyne (2015) and Liu et al. (2022) cite the role that it plays in increasing intercultural collaboration and engaging with customers.

Figure II. Cultural intelligence theory (Earley and Ang, 2003)
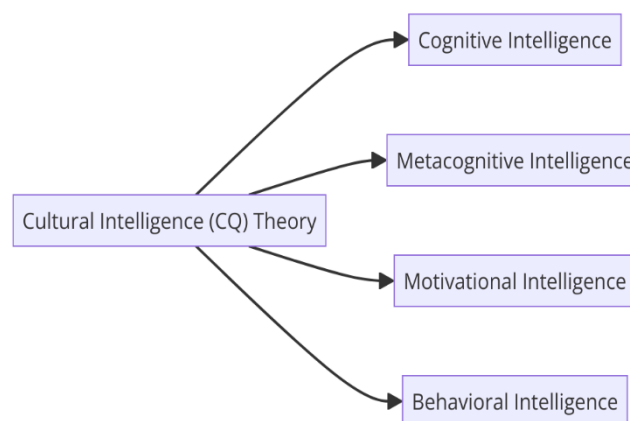
In contrast, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory is a framework of national-level cultural impact on business operations, the styles of leadership, and market behavior. This model examines the six dimensions of power distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long Term vs. Short Term Orientation, and Indulgence vs. Restraint; through them, the model outlines how cultural factors shape organizational strategy. The application of the model in tourism, innovation, and AI integration is implied by research of Huang and Crotts (2019), Gallego-Álvarez and Pucheta-Martínez (2021), and Masoud et al. (2023).

Figure III. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede and Bond, 1984)
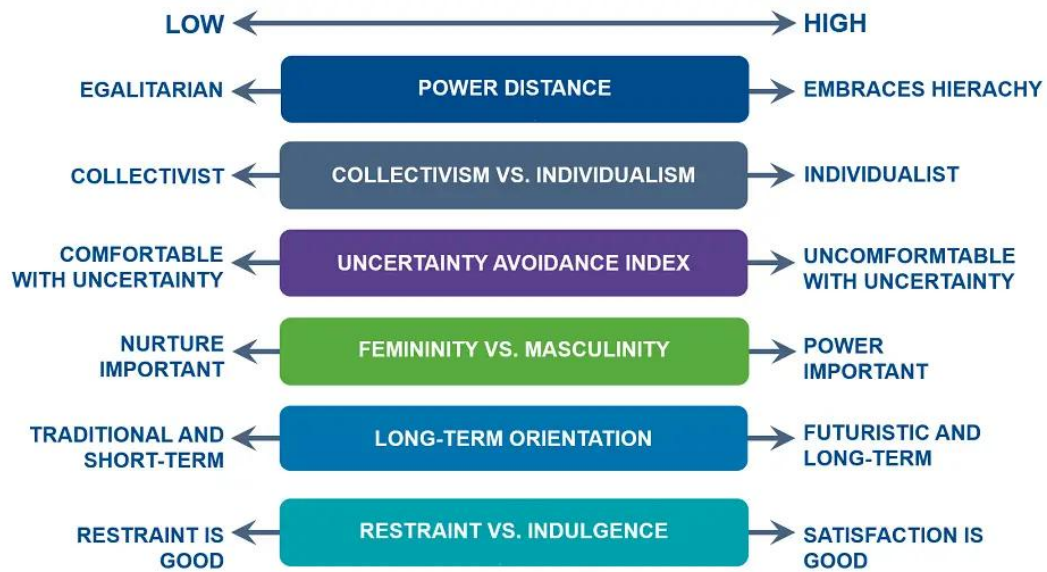
Critics suggest that Hofstede's model oversimplifies the character of cultural processes (Khlif, 2016), but the combination of CQ theory and Hofstede's model yokes this study together to enable the reconciliation of macro- and micro-level perspectives. This research interplays national culture and individual adaptability by using two frameworks to capture the multidimensional effects of cultural diversity on business performance.

Hypotheses Development

Based on the study's objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed

H1: Perceived cultural barriers negatively impact cross-cultural communication, which mediates their effect on business performance.

H2: Cultural intelligence positively influences market adaptability, which mediates the relationship between cultural intelligence and business performance.

H3: Innovation mediates the relationship between cultural diversity and competitive advantage.

They are built on the ideas of the Cultural Intelligence Theory (Earley & Ang, 2003) and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (1984).

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research design in the form of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) has been used in this study to examine relational complexity between variables thus managing to provide indispensable predictive accuracy and robust interpretation of the data. It aims to explore the cultural influence in branding & consumer behaviour to target marketing professionals, consumers, and cultural specialists across different regions. The approach is a multi-stage sampling procedure, where purposive sampling is used to select culturally diverse countries based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, and stratified random to make random selection with adequate representation of demographics. The sample size is 217, which is consistent with Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) recommendations to improve statistical power. Cabanelas et al. (2025) suggest that when studying different cultural and regional aspects in B2B and cross-national markets, a size such as this should be used together with directly chosen and structured segmentation techniques. They suggest that researchers apply culturally appropriate, evenly distributed samples to reach good external validity.

Data are collected via a combination of online and field-administered surveys. Field surveys are conducted in regions where internet penetration is low while, depending on the population of technological connections, online surveys are conducted using Qualtrics. Demographics, cultural dimensions (Hofstede & Schwartz frameworks), consumer behavior (CETSCALE), and brand perception (Aaker's brand equity model), are covered in the structured questionnaire. Back translation was used for non-English participants and 50 participants pre-tested to ensure clarity and cultural appropriateness. This framework consequently strengthens the study by improving its reliability, validity, and cross-cultural applicability, as said, towards one better and more comprehensive understanding of how cultural factors influence global market behaviors. Since data is gathered online and on-site, this technique meets current standards and helps make the research accessible to more people, even when technology is lacking or fast Internet is not available. This approach is also in accordance with the emphasis on context in today's methodological standards for international business research (Cabanelas et al., 2025).

RESULTS

Demographic statistics of respondents

Table I. Demographic statistics

Age	N	%
18-24	72	33.2%
25-34	61	28.1%
35-44	44	20.3%
45 and above	40	18.4%
Total	217	100%
Gender	**N**	**%**
Male	91	41.9%
Female	85	39.2%
Prefer not to say	41	18.9%
Total	217	100%
Nationality	**N**	**%**
United States	42	19.4%
Germany	60	27.6%
India	74	34.1%
Nigeria	41	18.9%
Total	217	100%
Occupation	**N**	**%**
Employed (full-time)	41	18.9%
Employed (part-time)	34	15.7%
Self –employed	107	49.3%
Unemployed	35	16.1%
Total	217	100%

The demographic data comprise a sample distributed across age, gender, nationality, and occupation in 217 respondents. There is a fairly balanced age distribution, with the majority (33.2%) being 18-24, next (28.1%) 25-34, and the smallest (18.4%) group being 45 and above. In terms of gender, males (41.9%) slightly outnumber females (39.2%), with 18.9% that prefer not to say. The

nationality data suggests a mix at the national level, with India (34.1 percent) leading contributions among the leading contributors followed by Germany (27.6 percent), the U.S. (19.4%), and Nigeria (18.9%). Occupationally, self-employed people are predominant (49.3 percent), followed by full-time employees (18.9%) and part-time (15.7%). A mix of economic backgrounds is suggested by the unemployed category (16.1%). This demographic composition represents a diversity of cultural perspectives, employment status, and age, which makes it applicable to different demographic segments.

Path coefficient, reliability and validity

Table II. The path coefficients

Path Coefficient	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values	2.50%	97.50%
Business Performance -> Consumer Engagement	2.95	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.653	n/a
Competitive Advantage -> Innovation	0.791	0.793	0.074	10.658	0.000	0.641	0.933
Cross-Cultural Communication -> Business Performance	-0.249	-0.254	0.058	4.308	0.000	-0.362	-0.139
Cultural Differences -> Brand Perception	0.907	0.906	0.018	50.949	0.000	0.87	0.939
Cultural Intelligence -> Competitive Advantage	0.54	0.538	0.102	5.299	0.000	0.32	0.722
Cultural Intelligence -> Market Adaptability	0.618	0.619	0.085	7.314	0.000	0.442	0.777
Innovation -> Cultural Differences	-0.049	-0.047	0.08	0.609	0.543	-0.193	0.112
Market Adaptability -> Business Performance	-0.058	-0.06	0.082	0.705	0.481	-0.214	0.103
Perceived Cultural Barriers -> Cross-Cultural Communication	0.917	0.919	0.028	32.388	0.000	0.858	0.968

The path coefficient analysis from Table II indicates the strength and significance of the relationship between constructs. Brand Perception (β = 0.907, p = 0.000, T = 50.949) is highly influenced by Cultural Differences which implies that cultural nuances influence brand evaluations. Competitive Advantage also predicts Innovation (β = 0.791, p = 0.000, T = 10.658), thus supporting the notion that organizations with a competitive advantage have a higher probability of achieving innovative outcomes. On the contrary, Cultural Differences (β = -0.049; p = 0.543, T = 0.609) do not significantly relate to Innovation, which implies that innovation may not directly contribute to cultural perception differences. Similarly, Business Performance is unaffected to a large extent by Market Adaptability (β = −0.058, p = 0.481, T = 0.705), which therefore might suggest that adaptability cannot alone raise performance without other strategic factors. Interestingly, Business Performance is negatively influenced by Cross-Cultural Communication (β = -0.249, p = 0.000, T = 4.308) suggesting that weak cross-cultural communication may harm business performance.

Perceived Cultural Barriers also heavily affect Cross-Cultural Communication (β = 0.917, p = 0.000, T = 32.388) indicating the difficulties in manoeuvring cultural variation posed by businesses.

Table III. Reliability and validity of data

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Competitive Advantage	0.849	0.861	0.852	0.660
Cross-Cultural Communication	0.571	0.912	0.732	0.560
Cultural Adaptability	0.895	0.896	0.895	0.739
Cultural Differences	0.937	0.942	0.938	0.834
Cultural Intelligence	0.844	0.855	0.844	0.646
Cultural Values	0.752	0.868	0.779	0.562
Innovation	0.800	0.806	0.798	0.507
Market Adaptability	0.802	0.834	0.817	0.603
Perceived Cultural Barriers	0.901	0.915	0.900	0.753

The overall quality of measurement of the constructs is given by the reliability and validity statistics from Table III. Most variables have strong internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (rho c) with Business Performance (0.927) and Cultural Differences (0.938) both well above the recommended 0.70 thresholds. Relative to measurement error, most constructs explain a lot of variances, as indicated by average variance extracted (AVE) values greater than 0.50, and convergence validity, as assessed by AVE, is above 0.50 for most constructs. Strong factor loadings are shown by Cultural Intelligence (0.646), Cultural Adaptability (0.739), and Perceived Cultural Barriers (0.753).

Table IV. R-Square of the construct

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
Business Performance	0.064	0.055
Competitive Advantage	0.291	0.288
Cross-Cultural Communication	0.840	0.839
Cultural Adaptability	0.654	0.653
Cultural Differences	0.002	-0.002
Innovation	0.626	0.624
Market Adaptability	0.382	0.379

The R² values from Table IV indicate how much variance in an independent variable is explained by each construct. Cross-cultural communication is important in that a significant amount of its variability has been accounted for, as shown by the result (R² =0.840). Nevertheless, Business Performance (R² = 0.064, adjusted R² = 0.055) is a poor explanatory variable as its predictors do not provide significant variance. Similar results were obtained for Cultural Differences (R²= 0.002, adjusted R² = -0.002), which indicates that its determinants do not provide evidence of accounting for the variation in it. The predictive power for Competitive Advantage (R² 0.291) and Innovation (R² 0.626) is moderate to strong, testing the role of competitive strategies in fostering innovation. The market adaptability (R² = 0.382) indicates moderate but significant effects, indicating that cultural values and intelligence affect the formation of preference and adaptability.

Table V. The total effects

Variables	Total effects
Competitive Advantage -> Cultural Differences	-0.038
Competitive Advantage -> Innovation	0.791
Cross-Cultural Communication -> Business Performance	-0.249
Cultural Differences -> Brand Perception	0.907
Cultural Intelligence -> Business Performance	-0.036
Cultural Intelligence -> Innovation	0.427
Cultural Intelligence -> Market Adaptability	0.618
Innovation -> Cultural Differences	-0.049
Market Adaptability -> Business Performance	-0.058
Perceived Cultural Barriers -> Business Performance	-0.229
Perceived Cultural Barriers -> Cross-Cultural Communication	0.917

Total effects from Table V show how overall the independent variables impact across dependent constructs including direct and indirect effects. Brand Perception is strongly influenced by Cultural Differences and the importance of cultural alignment in consumer decision-making is stressed through Brand Perception (0.907). However, some of the constructs have poor or negative or weak effects which suggests there are potential theoretical or measurement issues. Furthermore, Business Performance is negatively affected by Cross-Cultural Communication (-0.249), meaning that ineffective communication strategies adversely impact all levels of a company from the market ticket to interactions with consumers. Similarly, Business Performance is negatively affected by Perceived Cultural Barriers (-0.229) which suggests that cultural resistance is still one of the largest barriers to market success. On the other hand, Cultural Intelligence (0.427) helps in fostering innovation and Market Adaptability (0.618), thereby affirming the requirement of understanding of the cultural context while building strategic positioning in business.

Overall, it can be said that while Brand Perception, Cultural Differences, and Cultural Intelligence significantly influence purchase behavior and adaptability, communication, and cultural barriers pose areas that call for a strategic remedy to foster better business engagement with the consumers.

Test of hypotheses

For H1, which evaluated that perceived cultural barriers negatively impair cross-cultural communication and subsequently business performance through the effect mediated by cross-cultural communication, the analysis showed a strong positive effect of perceived cultural barriers on cross-cultural communication (0.917) and a negative evaluation of business performance (-0.229). In addition, cross-cultural communication was also found to negatively affect business performance (-0.249), indicating conversely that ill-designed communication strategies negatively affect business performance. Thus, H1 was adopted, indicating the difficulty in overruling cultural barriers established in performing international business operations.

H2 argued that cultural intelligence positively influences market adaptability, where it in turn mediates its impact on business performance. The study found that the impact of cultural intelligence on market adaptability was strong and positive (0.618) but not significant on business performance (-0.058, $p > 0.05$). This suggests that cultural intelligence helps with adaptability, but may not be the most important factor in determining business performance outcomes.

H3, which posits that cultural diversity is mediated by innovation in generating competitive advantage, is not supported, whereby innovation did not affect cultural difference (-0.049) and purchase intention (-0.041). This finding suggests that while diversity catalyzes creativity and innovation, merely promising innovation is not necessarily sufficient for a competitive advantage unless there are additional strategic elements.

Thus, combined, the findings indicate that cultural factors play an intricate role in business performance. The results also supported the impact of business performance with cultural barriers (H1) and highlighted the need for an appropriate cross-cultural communication strategy. H2 was indeed confirmed for the role of cultural intelligence in market adaptability, but business performance effects were inconclusive (partially supported). In addition, H3 posited that there was no link between innovation and competitive advantage, implying that on their own, diversity cannot ensure business success without innovative strategies.

Addressing the research questions

The research questions outlined in this study were successfully addressed through the examination of the effects of cultural influences on globalization challenges, cultural intelligence, and diversity-driven innovation.

In this study, cultural barriers were identified to be the biggest hindrance to businesses pursuing globalization (H1). The results reveal that perceived cultural barriers negatively affect business performance (-0.229) and this relationship is negatively mediated by cross-cultural communication (-0.249). This demonstrates the need for businesses to adopt culturally adaptive communication strategies to facilitate their global business markets.

The study also showed that cultural intelligence improves market adaptability (H2, 0.618) which only proves its strategic significance in addressing the challenges of International Business. It, however, had no significant direct effect on business performance, which showed that adaptability is not enough without complementary strategic efforts. The findings on cultural diversity and innovation (H3) revealed that diversity encourages innovation without leading directly to competitive advantage.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are consistent with the present literature on how cultural barriers affect cross-cultural business communication and performance. This is supported by the work of scholars like Hennart and Sutherland (2022) and Huang (2023) who assert that difficulties arise when international expansion occurs as there are language differences, social norms, and communication styles that compound the difficulty in engaging with the consumers, stakeholders, and business partners. Without cultural sensitivity, organizations find it difficult to build trust and negotiate, as well as to localize, which results in poor business performance (Wang & Liu, 2022). Improper communication strategies in International Business reduce engagement with customers, and marketing failures and could result in reputational risks (Yang & Leppaaho, 2023). According to Meyer et al. (2023), cultural inertia or difficulty in adapting to the new cultural environment leads to failed market entry strategies.

It also emphasizes the significance of cultural training and management for business success. Through the cross-cultural competence training, employees and management can learn how to handle cultural nuances without miscommunication and thereby improve business operations (Huang, 2023; Wang & Liu, 2022). This aligns with the broader conversation regarding branding and cultural adaptation because Americans tend to draw the line when cultural misalignment occurs between symbolism, humor, and messaging, which can tarnish a brand's reputation (Shalini, 2023). Additionally, the study supports previous research regarding market entry failures caused by cultural missteps. The lack of local engagement strategies leads to the failure of many foreign firms in African markets (Oguji & Owusu, 2020).

By validating previous research (Steers et. al., 2023) that regards cultural intelligence as a strategic asset in international business, the results support that cultural intelligence leads to greater market adaptability. Nevertheless, the study stresses that cultural intelligence itself does not ensure global success; rather, it must be combined with competitive pricing, operational

efficiency, and product differentiation (Meyer et al., 2023). The market adaptability hence involves digital localization and cross-cultural branding as pillars, and all that has to be based on technological and financial strategies for long-term profitability (Chabowski et al., 2023). As per Wang & Liu (2022), cultural intelligence assists businesses in handling foreign markets however, a strong operational structure meanwhile is known to come with sustainable growth (Meyer et al., 2023).

Due to the increased focus on cultural intelligence in global business markets, integrating cultural intelligence into the business education curricula is very important as these future leaders need to be equipped with skills to navigate diverse business environments.

The increased attention to cultural intelligence in the global business markets makes it highly relevant to integrate cultural intelligence in the business education curricula, since these future leaders require the skills to maneuver through the various business landscapes. This is reinforced by Blanco-Gonzalez et al. (2024) who argue that business study needs to be linked to reality and culture as well as strategy problems, and in support of this urge, a more internationally- and practically-related curriculum is desirable. Virtual exchanges and global immersion programs can contribute to how a student can operate within cross-cultural settings (Shadiev et al., 2021). An example is some of the course literature on intercultural management and global strategy, which ought to consider examples of companies expanding internationally founded on cultural intelligence, including Unilever and McKinsey as company case studies (Ferdowsi, 2024). Executive training programs should also be equipped with cultural intelligence, because cultural intelligence has been indicated to enhance the performance of leaders in multinational teams (Setti et al., 2022). Guided by emerging technologies, such as generative AI, the approach to teaching and learning is changing. Jeyaraj and Sethi (2025) show that generative AI tools are a valuable resource that can facilitate use in software education and digital literacy with business students. Borreguero Arias et al. (2024), in turn, detail the importance of using AI to model and predict cross-cultural financial behaviour, in which AI exposes its dual character in both international strategy formulation and education. These trends indicate the advantages of incorporating AI-based cultural simulations and adaptive tools as the means of developing the cultural intelligence among students training to work in international business.

The unexpected finding of the study that innovation does not significantly mediate the relationship between cultural diversity and competitive advantage disputes the assumption that diversity directly causes innovation-driven success. Cultural diversity enhances creative thinking, but it needs to be grown strategically within an enabling organizational frame (Bouncken et al., 2016). Jones et al. (2021) also found that multinational teams need structured systems of collaboration and communication framework when it comes to maximizing innovation potential. Furthermore, studies also confirm that diversity is not a guarantee of business success (Alfawaire & Atan, 2021), rather it is the combination of structured mentoring and sharing of knowledge as well as inclusive human resource practices that result in competitive advantage. The study finds that the true value of diversity is in the opportunities it provides for innovation, and yet businesses need to recommend that diversity becomes part of structured frameworks, executive leadership strategies, and R&D initiatives to reap the rewards (Xia et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study delves into the intricate interplay between cultural dynamics and business strategies in the contemporary digital landscape. Improving the company brand image and building a customer relationship with a company demands that organizations be able to perform well in different cultural settings. This skill allows organizations to spot cultural variations in order to roll out plans for their consumer groups. To develop customer loyalty, businesses have to use marketing approaches that are tailored for each customer and culturally suitable in their locations.

Language adaptation for content and marketers can also need to change messaging elements to fit with the cultural practices of a given region's consumers. Achieving lasting accomplishments in worldwide markets requires companies to handle cultural intricacies properly in their strategic development. Companies are enabled to achieve effective market success by uniting global operational efficiency with cultural understanding at a local level and developing organizational cultural intelligence.

Theoretical implications

This study adds to the theory by supporting the importance of Cultural Intelligence Theory and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in today's global businesses. It outlines how culture affects communication, and branding and has a role in shaping both business outcomes and how an organization comes up with new ideas. Furthermore, it argues that straightforward views on diversity-making innovation alone are not enough, as more careful examinations must take structure and an organization's culture into account.

Scholars and researchers can apply this research, finding the theoretical foundation and the empirical testing of a framework that links micro-level variables such as cultural intelligence to macro-level processes such as national cultural dimensions. It gives further evidence of how cultural variables do not act in isolation, but work by means of mediated channels such as adaptability and communication-improving on the current models on international business behaviour. Along with both theoretical and methodological rigor (employing PLS-SEM on cross-national sample data) this research direction creates fresh avenues of academic research into the influences of cultural diversity and intelligence on global strategy, innovation performance, and educational practice in business schools.

Practical implications

Structured innovation frameworks can be used by organizations to leverage the impact of cultural diversity on innovation and competitive advantage. Studies stress that multicultural teams generate ideas, but to maximize the effect on innovation, the team must be properly managed, as impediments created by structure and communication can impede their positive role in generating ideas. Thus, there is a need in businesses to create cross-functional teamwork, structured collaboration systems, and mentorship programs to ensure that diverse perspectives will yield their efforts into tangible innovation.

Moreover, leadership is very essential to harnessing the full potential of diversity-driven innovation. Leaders who actively support and strategically use diversity in multicultural teams provide organizations with the opportunity for valuable consumer insights. To do this, companies should invest in leadership training programs to teach managers how to develop cultural intelligence skills, which enables companies to create and maintain an inclusive and innovation-friendly workplace. Furthermore, businesses, that want to gain a competitive advantage through cultural diversity, have to find the delicate balance between cultural adaptation and fundamental business principles in the case of global companies. To ensure sustainable growth, organizations need to realize a strategic pricing decision, making operational efficiency, and differentiating the product, based on cultural intelligence, and a holistic market adaptation approach.

By adopting these recommendations, organizations can progress from seeing cultural diversity as a separate asset and begin weaving it into processes of structured innovation, leadership strategies, digital collaboration, and market adaptation.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

To verify the global nature of the detected behaviors further research is required to explore changing patterns of cultural identity influence on consumer choices across different business and geographical areas. This will assist businesses in finding out which glocalization strategy works the

best in different types of cultural settings and how that differs from the traditional localization method. Longitudinal research exploring the effects of employee cultural intelligence training on both staff performance levels and customer satisfaction would produce beneficial findings.

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