Cultural theories

Cross-cultural management in leisure and recreation

Why study cultural theories?

- Provide frameworks to compare and understand cultures.

- Help predict cross-cultural interactions.

- Support effective leisure service design.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions

- Key dimensions:
  - Power distance
  - Individualism vs. Collectivism
  - Masculinity vs. Femininity
  - Uncertainty avoidance
  - Long-term vs. Short-term orientation
  - Indulgence vs. Restraint

Power distance (PDI)

- Degree to which less powerful members accept unequal power distribution.
  - High PDI: hierarchical, authority respected.
  - Low PDI: flatter structures, more equality.
- **Hospitality example:**
- High PDI: staff rarely challenge manager decisions (common in many African hotels).
- Low PDI: staff may openly share ideas with managers (e.g., Scandinavian hotels).

Individualism vs Collectivism (IDV)

- Individualist cultures: personal goals, independence.
- Collectivist cultures: group loyalty, harmony.
- **Hospitality example:**
- Collectivist: East African staff often support each other in shifts, covering duties collectively.
- Individualist: American staff may expect recognition for individual contributions.

Masculinity vs Femininity (MAS)

- Masculine: competitiveness, achievement, material success.
- Feminine: cooperation, quality of life, caring for others.
- **Hospitality example:**
- Masculine: hotel may emphasize luxury, status, and awards.
- Feminine: focus on comfort, work–life balance, and sustainability.

Uncertainty avoidance (UAI)

- High UAI: strict rules, dislike ambiguity.

- Low UAI: flexible, adaptable, risk-taking.

- **Hospitality example:**

- High UAI guest: demands clear booking confirmations, strict schedules.

- Low UAI guest: open to improvisation, changing plans last minute.

Long-term vs Short-term orientation (LTO)

- Long-term: persistence, thrift, adapting traditions.
- Short-term: respect for tradition, quick results.
- **Hospitality example:**
- Long-term: Asian investors planning eco-lodges for 50-year sustainability.
- Short-term: entrepreneurs focusing on immediate profit.

Indulgence vs Restraint (IVR)

- Indulgence: free gratification, fun, leisure.
- Restraint: strict norms, self-control.
- **Hospitality example:**
- Indulgent guests: expect entertainment, nightlife, casual freedom.
- Restrained cultures: value modesty, stricter behavior codes.

Class exercise (Hofstede)

- Activity: "Hotel Reception Scenario"
  - You are a receptionist. A guest insists on speaking only to the manager.
  - Question: Is this a cultural expectation or personal preference?

Trompenaars' seven dimensions

- Universalism vs. Particularism
- Individualism vs. Communitarianism
- Neutral vs. Emotional
- Specific vs. Diffuse
- Achievement vs. Ascription
- Sequential vs. Synchronic Time
- Internal vs. External Control

Universalism vs Particularism

- Universalism: rules and standards apply equally.
- Particularism: relationships determine how rules are applied.
- **Hospitality example:**
- Universalist guest: expects hotel policy applied equally to all.
- Particularist guest: expects exceptions based on relationships or loyalty.

Individualism vs Communitarianism

- Individualism: personal freedom prioritized.
- Communitarianism: group responsibility prioritized.
- **Hospitality example:**
- Individualist guest: books solo trips, values privacy.
- Communitarian guest: books family/group packages.

Neutral vs Emotional

- Neutral: emotions controlled in public.
- Emotional: open expression of feelings.
- **Hospitality example:**
- Neutral culture: staff trained to remain calm and detached.
- Emotional culture: warmth and visible enthusiasm expected.

Specific vs Diffuse

- Specific: separate work and personal life.
- Diffuse: overlap between personal and work relationships.
- **Hospitality example:**
- Specific: staff keep strictly professional distance.
- Diffuse: staff treat guests as "family."

Achievement vs Ascription

- Achievement: status based on performance.
- Ascription: status based on age, connections, or titles.
- **Hospitality example:**
- Achievement culture: young manager respected if competent.
- Ascription culture: older manager respected regardless of results.

Sequential vs Synchronic time

- Sequential: time linear, punctuality valued.
- Synchronic: time flexible, multiple tasks at once.
- **Hospitality example:**
- Sequential: expect exact check-in at 2:00 PM.
- Synchronic: "African time," flexibility around schedules.

Internal vs External control

- Internal: people control environment, proactive.
- External: adapt to nature/environment.
- **Hospitality example:**
- Internal: insist resort activities proceed regardless of rain.
- External: adjust plans to weather or local traditions.

Example from East African hospitality

- Particularism: Personal relationships influence service (regular customers receive special treatment).

- Emotional culture: Expressiveness in greetings, singing/dancing in resorts.

- Ascription: Titles ("Doctor," "Professor") used with respect.

Edward Hall's high & low context cultures

- High-context: Communication relies on non-verbal cues, shared understanding.

- Low-context: Communication is explicit, direct.

High vs Low context cultures

- High context: meaning embedded in context, relationships, non-verbal cues.

- Low context: explicit, direct communication.

- **Hospitality example:**

- High context: Ugandan guest expects staff to "read the situation."

- Low context: German guest expects clear, direct explanations.

Monochronic vs Polychronic time

- Monochronic: one task at a time, schedules strict.
- Polychronic: multiple tasks at once, flexible schedules.
- **Hospitality example:**
- Monochronic guest: frustrated if dinner starts late.
- Polychronic staff: view delays as normal part of interaction.

Space (Proxemics)

- Cultures differ in personal space and physical distance.
- Some prefer closeness, others maintain distance.
- **Hospitality example:**
- Guests from North America may want more personal space.
- African hospitality may involve closer physical proximity.

Fictional case study: UGC Safari Lodge

- **Scenario:**
  A Ugandan safari lodge hires staff from multiple cultures (Ugandan, Kenyan, Tanzanian, European interns). Guests come from Brazil, Russia, Togo, Germany, USA, and China.
- Staff conflicts arise: Europeans complain Ugandans are "always late."
- Guests complain about unclear schedules, while others complain service feels too "cold."
- **Questions:**
  – Which cultural theories help explain these tensions?
  – How can the lodge manager bridge these cultural gaps?
  – What strategies ensure both staff harmony and guest satisfaction?

Conclusion

- Reflection question:
- Which theory best explains hospitality culture in Uganda?
- Which framework resonates most with your experiences