Cultural Differences Between Saudi And American Culture

The cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and America will be discussed according to Hofstede five cultural dimensions.

Power distance

This dimension is the most popular category in Hofstede's study. It considers the degree to which inequality and power are accepted. The power distance dimension is viewed and accepted by the low-level citizens. Cultures varies from high power distance to low power distance. Saudi Arabia is a great example of a high power distance culture. It values hierarchy, rank, and a high respect to authority and position. While the American culture is more of a low power distance where everyone is equal. It has a flat organizational structure along with personal responsibility and informality. To illustrate, Saudi treat parents as authority. They are taught to obey under any circumstances. On the other hand, Americans parents treat children as equals and vies versa.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is sought to answer the question to what extent uncertainty and ambiguity are accepted in a culture? This category considers two different levels: high uncertainty avoidance and low uncertainty avoidance. Saudi culture has high uncertainty avoidance where people are careful, afraid of trying new things, and following strict rules. In contrast, American culture in which uncertainty and ambiguity are highly accepted; and people are open to new ideas, creativity and risk-taking. This can be seen in Saudi Arabian labour market, where everyone prefers a safe government job over a risky job in private sections.

Collectivism vs. Individualism

This demotion view culture whether as me-cantered or we-cantered. Collectivist cultures as Saudi give greater importance to family and groups. The self-images is represented as "We". To give an illustration, advertisements in Saudi are always promoted using the sense of family as in Dettol commercial where the model says, "to protect my family, I choose Dettol". Whereas American culture is an individual culture that sees happiness as personal fulfilments and its self-images is represented as "I".

Masculinity vs. Femininity

Masculinity vs. femininity dimension concerned with the disparity between the expectations of men and women. Masculine societies tend to be more assertive, competitive, and focus on material success (Hofstede, 2011) While feminine societies are more modest, caring and nurturing. Saudi and American culture both come under the umbrella masculine societies.

Long-Term Orientation vs. Short-Term Orientation

This category describes how cultures maintain their time horizon by linking the past and dealing with present and future. Long-term orientation as Saudi culture give more importance to the past and future. Historically, this can be seen in their old poems where most poets remise the past and miss it. While Short-term orientation as American culture give a higher value to present and future over the past. American culture can be identified as persistent, persevering, and easy to fit in any situation.