**China Culture**

**Abstract**

In this paper, we comprehensively analyze the Chinese culture. It specifically covers a brief history of China, its language, arts, food and demographics. Additionally, it covers the economic growth in the country as well as the impact it has on the people, it also addresses the environment. In the same line, we evaluate the religious practices of the country, cultural values and government system, how they affect its people and the nation. Lastly, in relation of culture, we analyze the manner in which the country related to the six Geert Hofstede’s Value Dimensions as well as business practices.

**China Culture Paper**

China is situated in the Eastern part of Asian continent. The official name of the country is People’s Republic of China. Its land area is approximately 9.6 million square kilometers, which makes it the second largest nation after land in land mass terms. The capital of the country is Beijing, which is the administrative center and the major business hub as well in the Asian Continent.

**History of China**

Before 1911, China was seen as a feudalistic economy under Qing authorities (Yasheng, 2010). By the year 1949, it was a predominant agricultural economy (Zhun, 2013). The duration from 1949 to 1956 was referred to as the golden era of industrialization in China (Zhun, 2013). It was in the course of this period that primary industries like steel, chemical, textile, automobile and defense were established. The GDP growth rate of the country was over 20% per annum (Yasheng, 2010). Mao Tse Tung, summoned his fellow countrymen so they could speed up the process of industrialization; unfortunately, this led to the 1958 and 1959 economic recessions (Yasheng, 2010). During the start of 1960s, under Liu Shaoqi leadership China’s economy recovered (Keyser, 2013). But, as Liu amassed more power within the communist party, Mao felt threatened. Consequently, he begun the Chinese Cultural Revolution with the aim of suppressing Liu and his followers (Keyser, 2013). It was during this period of industrialization spread that the entire region of China became industrialized (Keyser, 2013). Under dictatorship of Mao, a large number of talented Chinese students pursued engineering and science courses rather than art which explained emergence of a high number of talented scientists and engineers.

Following the death of Mao in 1976, Deng Xiaoping arose as the leader of the country and introduced pro-capitalism economic ideology (Keyser, 2013). During this period of leadership, the economic growth rate of China rose by 10% more per annum. He managed to bring the country back to economic development path which has been interrupted significantly during the last year of Mao’s leadership. His focus was on 4 core modernization areas which included defense, science, agriculture and technology. Additionally, he dismantled the communes established by Mao and replaced them with Household Responsibility System via which every household was held accountable to the state for what it agreed to produce an was permitted to keep surplus production which could be used privately (Keyser, 2013). Economic restructuring which was initiated by Deng Xiaoping led to significant efficiency gains and also contributed to over tenfold increase in the nation’s GDP from 1978. As of 2012 China’s economy was the largest economy in the world in terms of power parity purchasing (CIA, 2013). However, in the terms of per capital income, China still fell below the world average, with 13.4% of its population living below poverty line (CIA, 2013).

**Demographics**

As of July, 2013, according to the CIA, the population of China was estimated to be 1.3 billion people. With this large population, the country is the most populated globally (CIA, 2013). A large percentage of the people in the country are aged 25 to 54 and they account of the total populace (CIA, 2013). The elderly (65 years and above) are a minority and they account for 9.4% of the country’s population (CIA, 2013). The population growth rate still remains at 0.46. Majority of people are moving from rural areas to cities as such, the rate of urbanization stands at 2.85% (CIA, 2013). The cities that are most densely populated include Shanghai with 16.575 million people, the capital city with 15.594 million people, Chongqing with 9.401 million people, Shenzhen with 9.005 million and Guangzhous with 8.884 million people (CIA, 2013). In regard to literacy, 95.1% of all people aged from 15 and above can not only read but write as well.

**Economic Growth, its Impact on the People and Environment**

From the time market reforms were introduced in China in 1978, the country moved from one with an economy that is centrally based to a marked based one. According to Yasheng (2010), the country also witnessed rapid economic and social development. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth accounted for 10% per annum and majority of people were lifted from poverty (World Bank, 2013). In relation to millennium development goals, all MGDs have either been achieved or within reach. However, China is still undergoing development (World Bank, 2013). During the financial year of 2012, the per capital national gross income stood at $6,091 and was ranked as the 90th in the world (World Bank, 2013). China comes second place after India in term of number of poor people. As such, poverty reduction is a major challenge in the country.

Rapid economic growth has also equally caused numerous challenges which include growing inequality between the rich and the poor (World Bank, 2013). For example, economic development is more pronounced in coastal provinces when compared to interior resulting to huge income disparities between these two regions (Yasheng, 2010). Also, there are challenges related to rapid urbanization (Yasheng, 2010). Equally, the country faced population pressures which are linked to aging population and internal labor migration (Yasheng, 2010). The policy of one child in the country is the major negative effect and it also contributes to the country’s quickly aging population. These challenges need significant policy changes for the country to enjoy sustainable growth.

In the same manner, rapid economic transformation results to significant environmental damage, which in turn threatens the long term growth within the country (Zissis and Bajoria, 2013). China faces 3 major environmental challenges which are the result of rapid economic transformation. First, it suffers from water pollution and water shortage. Close to 33% of the Chinese populace cannot access clean drinking water. Approximately, 70% of the rivers and lakes in the country are polluted already. According to the News Agency (2005), in 2004 alone, two hundred million tons of industrial sewage and waste got channeled into Chinese waterways. Secondly, the desertification level in the country results in loss of close to 5,800 square miles of grasslands annually largely due to overgrazing.

Due to desertification, the country continues to suffer from dust pollution and sand storms, which ranked third among air pollutants in the country. Thirdly, China is a leader in terms of emission of greenhouse gas. In 2008, according to Zissis and Bajoria (2013), the nation overtook the United States as the largest emitter of GHGs in the world by volume. This increase was the result of China’s dependence on coal which essentially supplies two thirds of the country’s energy requirements (Zissis and Bajoria, 2013). This results to sulfur dioxide emission which cases acid rain and falls on more than 30% of the country (Zissis and Bajoria, 2013).

**Language, Religious Practices, Food And The Arts**

Chinese language has 7 major dialects which include Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Wu, Min, Xiang and Gan (Chinalanguage, 2011). While this is the case, so far, Mandarin is the most popular dialect and as such, the official language used in mainland China (Chinalanguage, 2011). However, among Chinese communities oversees and these in Hong Kong, the most common language is Cantonese (CIA, 2013).

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In China, there are 4 major religious practices which are based on Chinese folk religion and Confucianism. These practices are however equally influenced by Taoism and Buddhism (History cultural china, 2013). These include, ancestor worship. Mainly, this involves making offerings to the dead so they can take care of their welfare in the afterlife, which they imagine to be the same as earthly life. The second one is prayer (History cultural china, 2013). Both Buddhism and Taoism have prayer as that part of their day-to-day religious ritual. The Chinese, additionally perform longevity practices which are rituals and lifestyles aimed at living a longer life or even achieving immortality (History Cultural China, 2013). The last practice is Chinese astrology and domination; these practices however, are on the decline due to suppression by government (History cultural china, 2013).

In regard to food, the highly common stable food in the country is rice. It is served with different kinds of dishes so as to ensure the people enjoy balanced nutrition. There are other foods in the country such as meat, dumplings, millet, Noodles, barley, Chinese wonton, eggs, poultry, sorghum and wheat (Chinese Recipes, 2013). Additionally, the country also has a rich history in arts. Some popular works of art in China include calligraphy, embroidery, paper cuttings, folk toys, bronze vessels, painting, porcelain and opera (Travelchinaguide, 2013).

**Political System And Its Effect On The Country**

For 64 years, the Party in power has been the Chinese Communist Party. The authoritarian political system in the country is under control of the party (Lawrence and Martin, 2012) and is committed to maintaining permanent monopoly on power as well as suppressing those questioning the party’s right to rule. All public appointments, state owned enterprises, military, the media and judiciary are controlled by the party (Lawrence and Martin, 2012). Implementation of the party’s policies on day-to-day basis is as well entrusted on the state, headed by state council which includes commissions and ministries. State officials at senior level of administration as well hold senior posts in the party in order to ensure the party is in control of all activities. The National People’s Congress provides oversight to state council, to the presidency, the Supreme People’s Court, the prosecutor’s office as well as the military (Zhun, 2013).

In practice though, the National People’s Congress is controlled fully by the Communist Party; as such, it does not have the ability to provide oversight over the institutions that are under its supervision. Due to the attitude the communist party has towards the law, China generally has a weakness when it comes to enforcement of laws, regulations, decisions and policies (Lawrence and Martin, 2012). The party is in support of the law as a tool for governance not rule of law (Lawrence and Martin 2012). In case a member commits wrongdoing, the party carries out its own investigations and makes its decision on whether the accused should be handed over to the judiciary. Additionally, it undermines judiciary independence (Lawrence and Martin, 2012). The Party’s commissions of law and politics oversights the work of the courts, prosecutor and police (Lawrence and Martin, 2012). As a result of poor governance, corruption within the country is widespread.

Those who seek favors give lavish gifts to government officials (Lawrence and Martin, 2012). Bribes are offered widely in exchange for permits, approvals, lucrative positions and jobs (Lawrence and Martin, 2012). In the same manner, embezzlement of public funds is high as well. The government loses its revenue as a result relatives, friends and associate of party members who are exempted from the regulations and laws of the country (Lawrence and Martin, 2012). A report by the country’s central bank, in 2011 indicated between the mid-1990 and 2008, approximately $ 120 billion had been embezzled by party officials who were corrupt (Lawrence and Martin, 2012, p. 19).

**Analysis Of Chinese Culture Based On Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions**

**Power Distance**

According to Geert-Hofstede (2013), the dimension is a reflection of the fact inequality exists amongst individual in society and the attitude of the cultures towards these inequalities among the people. In terms of power distance, China has a score of eighty compared to that of the U.S which is only forty (Geert-hofstede, 2013). This implies the Chinese culture accepts inequality amongst the people. The junior-senior relationships are overemphasized. No defense exists against abuse of power by individuals in senior positions. Individuals are greatly influenced by formal sanctions and authority (Geert-hofstede, 2013. This culture encourages individuals to have aspirations that are in line with their rank (Geert hofstede, 2013).

**Individualism**

In this aspect, China scores twenty compared to US which scores 90. The dimension measures the extent to which society members are dependent on one other. With a value of 20, China is mostly a collectivist culture in which people are overly concerned with interest of a group rather than that of an individual. People in the country belong to groups and these give the care and in exchange, the people give loyalty (Geert-hofstede, 2013). As such, unlike in the U.S in-group considerations like being a family member is what influences job promotions, preferential treatment and hiring. Employees show far less commitment to an organization compared to how committed they are to people within the organizations.

**Masculinity and Femininity**

In this dimension, china has a value of sixty six compared to that of the US which is sixty two (Geert-hofstede, 2013). In masculine cultures, competition, achievement and success are the major drivers of society, with winners viewed as successful. As such, the Chinese society is one that is success oriented and driven. Majority of the Chinese would sacrifice leisure time and even the family for work (Geert hofstede, 2013). For instance, migrant workers would leave families in villages that are far off then move into cities in order to secure better pay and work (Ruixiang, 2012, p. 76). In the same manner, compared to a Student, a Chinese student will show more concerns for their exam grades since it is the ultimate measure of their success.

**Uncertainty Avoidance**

In this dimension, China Score 30 while the U.S scores 46 (Geert-hofstede, 2013). This dimension is an indication of just how society deals with the fact the future is not certain. With a low score, the Chinese people are comfortable with uncertainty. As such, a flexibility in adherence to rules to laws exists. Rules and laws can be related to fit actual situations. Even the Chinese language has meanings that are unclear that people from the United States might find difficult to follow (Geert-hofstede, 2013). This provides an explanation as to why relationships in China are taken seriously than even contracts (Geert-hofstede, 2013).

**Long Term Orientation**

According to Geert-hofstede (2013), this dimension is linked closely with Confucius teachings. It deals with societal search for virtue. China, in this dimension scores highly at 118 compared to the US which scores 29. This is an indication that China, is a society that is long term oriented where perseverance and persistence are viewed as normal. Nice individuals tend to be cautious in how they spend and they also use resources sparingly. Investments are also directed in projects that are long term such as real estates.

**China’s Business Practices**

**Greetings**

In business dealings, the acceptable greeting is a handshake. A nod or light bow is also equally used as a form of greeting (worldbiz, 2013). When addressing someone, the surname is what comes first before their first name. For purposes of business, it is important to address someone using their business title for instance, President Hu. If the individual does not have a business title, then the surname only should be used, for instance, r. Hu (worldbiz, 2013).

**Business Cards**

Business card exchange occurs after initial introduction. One side of the business card is supposed to be translated into simplified Chinese characters. When making a presentation of business cards, both hands are supposed to be used as they are a sign of respect; the Chinese are supposed to face out (Worldbiz, 2013). After receiving the business card, examine it, read then acknowledge the title and name before keeping it (Worldbiz, 2013).

**Business Meetings**

Chinese meetings are very formal and they should be scheduled in advance (Worldbiz, 2013). Arriving late at meetings is looked upon as an insult. As such, one is supposed to either show up on time or early (Worldbiz, 2013). Conversations are supposed to be positive when talking about experiences in the country and politics must be avoided. Seating arrangement is done based ranks with senior officers seating opposite one another. While talking, address the most senior representatives from the Chinese company (Worldbiz, 2013). Chinese people have the tendency of being non-confrontational in nature and might not say ‘no’ directly. As such, any answer apart from a ‘yes’ could be a ‘no’. If a meetings involves discussion of subjects that are very technical, it is always advisable to be accompanied by an interpreter (Worldbiz, 2013).

From this analysis, there are several unique aspects about China and the culture of the country that visitors and people ought to know before they vest in the country. First, it enjoys a large market of 1.3 billion people coupled by a rising middle class. Secondly, the country is diverse in terms of food, arts and even languages. With regard to how they conduct business in the country, it is a fact that the Chinese attach great value to relationships and they prefer conducting business with friends.

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