

**The Influence of Culture on Knowledge Exchange
between International Consultants and Local Clients:
The Case of Saudi Arabia**

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Abstract

Aim: This research investigates the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients.

A gap in the research into knowledge exchange has been identified at three levels: industrial, organizational and interpersonal. At the industrial level, the significant influence of culture on the international work of consultancy has been insufficiently studied. At the organizational level, the influence of various meanings of the symbolic representations of the consulting organisations and their services in new environments remain unstudied. Also, it is not yet clear how consulting organisations utilise their knowledge systems in new cultures. At the interpersonal level, the influence of culture on the client-consultant relationship has been only implicitly acknowledged in the literature. This implicit acknowledgement is related to the ability of people from different cultures to understand the knowledge they receive from those from other cultures. This remains unaddressed in the specific context of international consulting.

Following an extensive literature review, a theoretical review was conducted to develop an understanding about the relationships between the main components constituting the research question, namely, culture, knowledge, power and language. This research takes an interpretive position towards culture and the ways in which it can be analysed. The relationships between these components and culture in the context of the client-consultant relationship have been operationalised by the deployment of social constructionism.

Data was collected through deep semi-structured interviews from both sides of the client-consultant relationship with the aim of contributing to the neglected client side in consultancy research.

The early empirical findings from the study suggest that the distribution of impact can be detected during three chronological instances. Firstly, during the hiring stage when different symbolic representation may cause conflicts. Secondly, during the advice development stage when advice is culturally conditioned to accommodate the clients' culture. Thirdly, during the advice implementation stage when advice implementation is subject to differing expectations of duties, and to independent power barriers.

The thesis makes a novel contribution by theorizing about the role of experience in the ability of international consultants to recognise and accommodate explicit and implicit cultural elements that affect their cross-cultural work. Therefore, the developed theory suggests that country-specific work experience plays a significant role in accommodating the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international clients and consultants.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This research aims to investigate the influence of culture on the knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients. The investigation responds to a broad gap in the consultancy research concerning the lack of understanding of the role that culture plays in the consultant-client interaction in international assignments.

This chapter offers an overview of the thesis. It offers an introduction to the international expansion of the consulting industry to new territories. Additionally, it offers an overview of the development of the consulting research. The research context and the structure of the thesis are also outlined in this chapter.

The overarching objective of this research is based on the premise that increasing international demand for consulting services requires an adequate understanding of the role that cultural differences play in interaction, which might impact the dissemination of the consulting knowledge.

1.2 The Consulting Industry

“In a relatively short period of time management consultants and management consultancy have come to occupy a significant role in modern organizations. Many major decisions in a wide range of organizations and sectors are made with the assistance of management consultants. The impact of their advice is hard to avoid. Indeed, whether we are aware of it or not, many of us will have experienced the outcome of some kind of consultancy-led initiative or programme. It is this sense of influence and power, combined with concerns in relation to their accountability, that has heightened the profile of management consulting in the academic literature and made it a thriving area of research” (Kipping and Clark, 2012).

The above statement by Kipping and Clark is the opening of the first chapter of the Oxford Handbook of Management Consulting, first published in 2012. It offers two interrelated key insights. Firstly, it suggests that the role of consultancy is increasingly broad, and has an influence on major decisions, initiatives and programs that affect our lives. Secondly, it suggests that this broadening role has resulted in increased research in the field. Growing attention indicates that this field is relatively young (McKenna, 1995; Saint-Martin, 2011), which means gaps in the research in this developing field must be addressed to ensure the continued growth and positive impact of the industry. The following sub-sections elaborate on these two insights.

1.2.1 The Increasing Demand for Consulting Services

Kipping (1999), McKenna (1995), and Glücker and Armbrüster (2003) affirm that the consulting industry has experienced phenomenal growth since it first emerged in the 1890s.

They attribute this growth to the rising complexity of modern management (Glücker and Armbrüster, 2003, McKenna, 2006), and the increase of international competition (McKenna, 2006). Moreover, the growing internationalisation of companies from different industries has prompted clients to develop new procedures, structures and technical solutions for their organisations (Glücker and Armbrüster, 2003). Payne (1986) and Simon and Kumar (2001) assert that the increasing demand for management consultancy is caused by rapid economic, political and technological changes, continuous recession, inflation, business uncertainty, and the desire to operate globally (Payne, 1986; Simon & Kumar, 2001). Thus, clients hire consultants with the latest management knowledge and market background to provide analytical and procedural advice on tasks that they cannot accomplish on their own (Glücker and Armbrüster, 2003).

The phenomenal growth of the consulting industry has affected its size and complexity (Kipping, 1999; McKenna, 1995; Glücker and Armbrüster, 2003). This section elaborates briefly on this.

The consulting industry originated in the US at the turn of the twentieth century (Kipping, 1999; McKenna, 1995; Saint-Martin, 2001). Since then, it has experienced increasing demand inside and outside the US, especially in Western Europe (Kipping, 1999; McKenna, 1995, 2006). Demand for the services of American consulting firms was exceptional in Western Europe during the 1960s to the extent that it was described as the 'golden sixties' (Kipping, 1999).

Demand continued to increase and Schlegelmilch et al. (1992) state that at the end of the 1980s, growth in the management consulting industry was rapid and massive. Payne (1986) estimated the turnover of the industry to be £2 billion in 1980 and £3.3 billion in 1986. In the UK, the number of local clients rose from 497 in 1960 to 15,296 in 1990, while the number of international clients rose from 254 to 1,948 during the same period (Schlegelmilch et al., 1992).

The ratio of consultants to managers increased from 1:100 in the 1960s to 1:13 in 1995. It was unclear whether this growth would eventually stop, or whether it would continue to the point where every manager employed a personal consultant (McKenna, 2006).

In 2005, it was estimated that the global management consulting industry was worth approximately £60 billion a year (Craig, 2005). In 2016, the global consultancy industry was valued at £193.2 billion (Consultancy.UK, 2016).

In the UK in 2005, the public and private sectors spent over £150 million per week, or £30 million every working day, on management consulting services (Craig, 2005). According to the UK consulting industry statistics report published by *Management Consulting*

Association (MCA) in 2014, the consulting industry in the UK is worth approximately £9 billion and employs over 80,000 consultants (MCA, 2018). In 2016, the consulting industry in the UK was valued at £17.7 billion (Consultancy.UK, 2016).

In Saudi Arabia, there are no figures available about market size or demand for consulting services from a local management consultancy body such as the MCA in the UK. However, according to a report published by Source Global Research (SGR) in 2016, Saudi Arabia has the largest consulting market in the region (SGR, 2016). Ed Haigh, director of business at Source Global Research, published an article in an Emirati newspaper, *The National*, claiming that the value of the consulting industry in Saudi Arabia had jumped from \$1.19 billion in 2016 to \$1.29 billion in 2017, and that demand would continue to grow in 2018 (Haigh, 2018). Consultancy.UK, part of Consultancy.Org Network, attributes the increasing demand for consulting services in Saudi Arabia to Vision 2030, a plan initiated by Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman to diversify the economy from reliance on oil through reform in education, politics and technology (Consultancy.UK, 2016).

In terms of the increasing complexity of the consulting industry, firms started to offer more services and enter into new knowledge jurisdictions to meet increasing demand (Kipping, 1999; McKenna, 1995). Firms with new services derived from new expertise tend to enjoy higher demand (Kipping, 1999). Consequently, the industry has diversified into a wide range of specialties (Payne, 1986; Visscher, 2006). Although current figures about the number of specialties consulting firms operate in are not available, Fuchs (1975) sorted consulting services into 115 specialties under eleven categories in 1975. Visscher (2006) proposes that increased diversity in consulting specialties increases the complexity of the consulting industry.

From the client side, growth in the consulting industry was accompanied by growth in clients' knowledge and requirements, which also increased the complexity of the industry (Schlegelmilch et al., 1992; McLachlin, 2000). Schlegelmilch et al. (1992) note that clients' knowledge and experience make them more particular and more capable of selecting appropriate, high-quality consulting services offered in the market. This ultimately leads to stiff competition between consultants to provide the services required along with the expected level of quality. Moreover, Schlegelmilch et al. (1992) state that clients have become more capable of selecting the right consultants for their projects based on criteria such as previous relationships, reputation and cost. Therefore, as McLachlin (2000) affirms, consultants understand that their success and future work depend on the quality of their services.

This massive growth in the industry's size and complexity, along with increased competition between consulting firms, has resulted in firms becoming involved in different strategic formations such as alliances, takeovers and mergers in order to compete in a rapidly

growing and sophisticated market (Visscher, 2006). A further result of such massive growth is that consulting firms have found it important to distinguish their profiles from those of their competitors in order to enhance clients' perceptions of the services they offer (Payne, 1986). This important issue will be discussed in detail in the second chapter of the literature review.

Such substantial and continuous growth in market size and complexity indicates how massive and influential this industry is becoming. Therefore, studies of the factors that influence its function, such as culture, are vital.

1.2.2 Management Consultancy Research

The development of a management consultancy research interest is linked to the developments within the consulting industry. A research area cannot exist if there is no field to research. Therefore, if the consulting industry is considered to be relatively young, then consultancy research is still under development. A research gap already noted concerns the study of culture in the content of international consulting assignments.

Sturdy et al., (2009) suggest that early research into management consultancy prior to the mid-1990s was undertaken by consultants for consultants. Kipping and Clark (2012) confirm that management consultancy research more prolific from the 1990s onward. Before the 1990s, studies of the industry and its players were usually written by journalists, or consultants and their associates. Although some consultants happened to be scholars working in areas other than consultancy, this was accident rather than design (Kipping and Clark, 2012).

Kipping and Clark (2012) suggest that early management consultancy research passed through two main phases in the periods between 1900-1950, and between 1950-1990.

1900-1950

In the period between the turn of the twentieth century and the 1950s, most investigative work came from three different sources (Jackall, 1988). Firstly, the press, which showed the earliest and most constant interest in management consultancy from its first inception. According to Kipping and Clark (2012), public interest in the field was pursued by the press not because of consultancy per se, but because of the social activities of consultants who were portrayed as celebrities at that time. For instance, Charles Bedaux, who established one of the most distinguished consulting firms during the first half of the twentieth century, received publicity because of the methods he employed to promote his consulting service. One of those ways was holding lavish parties in his chateau in Loire Valley. Bedaux courted fame by hosting the wedding of King Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson. Only two articles out of twenty published about Bedaux between 1930 and 1944 in the New York Times dealt particularly with his consulting activities.

The second source of investigative work during the period from 1900 to 1950 was consultants and their associates (Jackall, 1988). According to Kipping and Clark (2012), consultants themselves wrote and published books during this period, including *Efficiency as a Basis for Operations and Wages* by Harrington Emerson in 1909, *Budgetary Control* by James O. McKinsey in 1922, and *Methods Time Measurement* by Maynard, Stegemerton, and Schwab in 1948. However, according to Kipping and Clark (2012, p. 12), other than a few exceptions (such as *The Theory and Practice of Scientific Management* by C. B. Thompson, 1917), books written by consultants “usually tried to summarize and publicize the consultants’ ideas rather than reflecting on their and the industry’s activities.”

The third source of investigative work during this period was academic research (Jackall, 1988). According to Kipping and Clark (2012), there were numerous studies that focused on scientific management. The main limitation of these studies was that they focused on methods rather than consulting per se. In other words, this academic interest did not recognize the role of consultant in imposing scientific management methods. Lack of recognition for the role of consultants in academic research continued until the 1980s.

1950-1990s

In the period between 1950 and 1990, the press continued to show great interest in consultancy with a particular focus on prominent representatives of the industry such as McKinsey and Booz Allen Hamilton (McKenna, 2006; Kipping and Clark, 2012). Freelance authors and journalists also began to publish books that offered broad overviews of the industry such as *The Business Healers* by Higdon, published in 1969 (Kipping and Clark, 2012). Moreover, consultants themselves continued to write and publish books, and this was the advent of management bestsellers written by celebrated consultants (Jung and Kieser, 2012; Clark et al., 2012).

According to Kipping and Clark (2012), this period witnessed another stream of consultancy research from organizational development (OD) literature, in which academics and consultants were personally and repeatedly involved in giving advice as a consulting activity.

According to Kipping and Clark (2012, p. 13), what united publications by the press, consultants, and academia between 1950 and 1970 is “their generally positive attitude towards management consultancy and their belief that it could make a positive difference if correctly applied and used.” This was to change starting from the mid-1970s, mainly because consultants and academics began to divide into those who saw management consulting as positive, and those who began to question the consultants’ impact on clients. This was the beginning of critical recognition of the role of consultants, and led to academia setting its own course in studying the consulting industry.

1990-2012 (The beginning of this research project)

Sturdy et al. (2009) and Kipping and Clark (2012) assert that consultancy research became distinctly more active from the mid-1990s onwards. Kipping and Clark (2012) suggest that this period saw “academic research on management consultancy come into its own, that is, it treated the industry and its rapid growth as a phenomenon worthy of examination per se” (p. 16).

Kipping and Clark (2012) assert that various academic disciplines have contributed to varying degrees to consultancy research since the mid-1990s. From this perspective, sociology, including organization and management studies based on sociological approaches, along with economics has informed the consultancy research. For instance, sociology has informed consultancy research from a theoretical perspective by producing studies that trace the development of the industry, while economic studies have informed it on important issues such as globalization.

It is important to stress the significance of the work of Abrahamson (1996, 2011), which will be discussed in the second chapter of the literature review. Abrahamson inspired consultancy research with great insights from symbolic and impression management. In their discussion about the impact of Abrahamson’s work, Kipping and Clark (2012, p. 16) state that it “has drawn the attention of researchers towards the notion of ‘management fashion’ and of ‘fashion-setting communities’, and how the latter, which include management consultancies, produce ideas to be consumed by managers. This has sparked the research on the different waves of management fashions”. Moreover, they state that “this research also drew attention to the different actors within fashion setting communities, not least, management consultants, who had so far remained fairly marginal, or rather, tangential in the interests of scholars.”

Surprisingly, much of the research originated in Europe and was published in European-based journals (Kipping and Clark, 2012) despite the fact that the industry originated in the United States, which is its largest market (McKenna, 2006; Wright and Kipping, 2012; David, 2012; Kipping 2012). This is because management consultancy researchers have found it difficult to satisfy the most important conditions to publish in the top-rated journals of management in North America. These conditions are related to the fact the research must contribute to a major theoretical position by collecting systematic and preferably qualitative data for hypothesis testing (Kipping and Clark, 2012). This is difficult because consulting research has yet to find its ‘grand’ theory (Salaman, 2002). The unclear boundaries between different specialties, and the reluctance of actors to share information because of client confidentiality are also obstacles to meeting the conditions for publication in top-rated North American management journals (Kipping and Clark, 2012).

However, some consulting research has found its way into top-rated North American journals by targeting fashionable issues such as knowledge-management (Kipping and Clark, 2012), and widely debated issues related to the evolution of professional service firms (Kirkpatrick et al., 2012; Morris et al., 2012). It is useful to note that most of the research dealing with the evolution of professional service firms stem from central professions such as law and accounting. This is mainly because these professions are able to offer complete and comprehensive data (Nordenflycht, 2010; Kipping and Clark, 2012).

1.3 Broad Research Gap and the Research Question

There are two broad gaps in the consultancy research that this study aims to contribute to. These are neglect of the client side in consultancy research (Sturdy et al., 2009), and neglect of the role of culture in consulting work in cross-cultural settings (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Avakian and Clark, 2012).

Sturdy et al. (2009) state that there has long been neglect of the client side in consultancy research, which tends not to treat clients and consultants as equals in the client-consultant relationship. Clients have been treated as gullible, needy, passive recipients of consultants' advice, while consultants have been portrayed as the main players in the relationship. In other words, the emphasis was largely on the consultant side. The study by Sturdy et al. (2009) is considered a seminal paper that explicitly calls for more acknowledgment of the client side in consultancy research, and echoes Kipping and Clark (2012) by stating that consultants should not be treated as superiors in consultancy research.

This gap was previously highlighted by Kilburg (2002), Hislop (2002), Alvesson and Sveningsson (2004). Kilburg (2002) and Hislop (2002) affirm that differences in the types of clients have a significant impact on the client-consultant relationship and should not be further neglected. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2004) state that most management consultancy research deals with the client as a single unproblematic entity while, in fact, clients have different interests, perceptions, needs and expectations that should not be ignored (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2004).

Sturdy & Wright (2008) claim that clients have different perceptions, identities and images through which they seek to distinguish themselves. Moreover, what makes those perceptions, identities and images more critical for consultancy is the fact that they have developed and become more complicated. This is reflected in the increasing complex ways that clients use and interact with consultants. Clients have become more experienced and knowledgeable in the way they use consultancy, and more knowledgeable about change management. Interestingly, Sturdy & Wright (2008) argue that clients have become ex-consultants knowing the consultancy processes with internal views of the consultancy business in general. Consequently, clients have become more concerned with their purchasing schemes, and more certain about their needs and expectations.

An outcome of this development on the client side is that consultants' job has become more challenging (Czerniawaska, 2007). Consequently, there is an increasing emphasis on research that focuses on differences between clients, and the impact of those differences on the client-consultant relationship (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2004). This gap in the research will be thoroughly discussed in the third chapter of the literature review.

The second gap in the research is the impact of the clients' culture on the consulting work. Clark and Avakian (2012) brought together influential output from numerous principal researchers who inspired the field of management consulting. They pointed out that "there is currently little understanding of how consultants work in cross-cultural settings" (p.58).

Consultancy research confirms that culture is a key element that causes important differences between clients (Hislop, 2002; Kubr, 2002; Geva et al., 2000). Because of these differences, people may respond and react differently based on their cultures (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004). Empirical studies demonstrate that different types of clients result in different behaviours and attitudes that influence the shape of the client-consultant relationship (Kilburg, 2002; Hislop, 2002).

The neglected role of culture in consultancy research will be established through the three chapters of the literature review that traces the role of culture on industrial, organizational and interpersonal levels.

To contribute to these two broad gaps in the literature, this research aims to investigate *the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international consultants and local clients*. A focus on the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between internationals contributes to the gap highlighted by Avakian and Clark (2012), while a focus on the culture of clients and consultants acknowledges the client side, which Sturdy et al. (2009) claim has been thus far neglected.

The following section elaborates on the research context within which this research is situated.

1.4 Research Context and Approach

The above discussion reveals two broad research gaps related to neglect of the client side and the influence of culture on consulting work across cultures. Addressing both gaps requires a research question that considers both, the role of clients and the impact of culture as key components. Therefore, the research question this study aims to answer is about the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international consultants and local clients in Saudi Arabia. This question consists of four key components, namely the client-consultant relationship, culture, knowledge exchange and Saudi Arabia.

The culture component contributes to the broad research gap about the impact of culture on consulting work across cultures, while the client-consultant relationship component contributes to the gap concerning neglect of the client side in consultancy research. The reason for focusing on the process of knowledge exchange between clients and consultants is that it seems to be central to consulting work, as confirmed by authors including Werr et al. (1997), Appelbaum and Steed (2004), Richter and Niewiem (2009) and Teigland and Wasko (2009). Werr and Styhre (2002) confirm that the exchange and construction of knowledge is the goal of consulting activities. Richter and Niewiem (2009) assert that consultants add value to their clients by providing a knowledge intensive service that produces otherwise unavailable or hard to reach knowledge for clients. This type of knowledge intensive service requires actionable knowledge exchange between clients and consultants to produce the necessary knowledge product (Richter & Niewiem, 2009). Therefore, clients appreciate working with consultants who enhance their in-house knowledge and expertise (Appelbaum & Steed, 2004; Teigland & Wasko, 2009).

The reason for focusing on Saudi Arabia is because of the significant cultural differences between the Saudi Arabian culture and the Western cultures from which most of international consultants in the country come from. Also, the researcher is a Saudi national who has been born and raised in Saudi Arabia. This allows the researcher to use his understanding of the country and his network to gain access to data sources that might not be available to non-Saudi researchers.

The following sub-sections elaborate on the researcher's perception and understanding of each of the four components that constitute the research question - the client-consultant relationship, culture, knowledge exchange, and Saudi Arabia.

The phenomenon under investigation consists of these four complicated components operating together. Accordingly, an interpretive approach is thought to be suitable for this study. The next sub-sections offer overviews about the complexity of knowledge, culture and interpretive interaction within which knowledge exchange takes place and the influence of culture is operative. These overviews explain the complexity of the phenomenon and justify the adoption of an interpretive approach.

1.4.1 Complexity of Culture

The conceptual framework chapter provides a thorough discussion about what is meant by culture and how its impact can be studied. This sub-section offers a brief discussion about the researcher's perception of culture, and the definition adopted for this research.

Culture - Definition

Bauman (1999) argues that culture is not a straightforward concept that can be studied in relation to other subjects. Birukou et al. (2009) argue that culture is a slippery concept because of the ambiguity with which it is used to describe behaviours and interpretations. The ambiguity stems from the fact that interpretations and conclusions about culture are derived from the researcher's understanding about what is meant by culture. Therefore, Misra and Gergen (1993), Kim (2003), and Cruz and Sonn (2011) agree that culture is mostly regarded as a problematic variable. This is because researchers tend to handle it in ways that allow them to produce universal theories applicable to all people. This tendency to generalise cultural theories has led researchers to ignore critical details such as different religions, histories and politics that challenge the universality of their theories (Lazear, 1999; Stead, 2004). Therefore, an interpretive approach is thought to be suitable for dealing with such a slippery concept.

One way to illustrate the level of complications involved in discussing culture is to point out that a person may be labelled with more than one culture or sub-culture. Cultural groups may be based on language, ethnicity, geographical location, gender, or sexual orientation. Stead (2004, p. 393) states that, "cultural and cross-cultural psychology tends to bind people within racial or ethnic groups with the result that too often researchers assume that people belong only to one culture. It is important to note that many people straddle two or more cultures depending on to whom they are relating. To attempt to classify some people into only one culture is also to fall prey to limiting role that categorization plays in post-positivist approach science". Bauman (1999) stressed the value of paying more attention to the influence of culture rather than trying to define it within certain terms or dimensions. Therefore, an interpretive approach is thought to be suitable for dealing with multidimensional and interrelated cultural groups.

An interpretative approach is appropriate also because the concept of culture is hard to define. Researchers have provided numerous definitions of culture, each from a different perspective and using different terms (Faulkner et al., 2006). For instance, Olie (1995) listed more than 164 definitions for culture that were discussed until 1951. However, as will be justified in the conceptual framework chapter, for this research, the researcher adopts Schein's (2004, p. 17) definition:

"[Culture is a] pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems."

Cultural Artefacts

According to Schein (2004), culture can be manifested and analysed at three levels; the term 'level' refers to the degree to which cultural phenomena are visible to the researcher. The

first level concerns cultural artefacts. These are the cultural elements that can be seen, heard, and felt by anyone even if they are not familiar with the culture. Artefacts include the visible output of the group such as the architecture or physical environment, arts, language, technologies, style and clothing, emotional displays, manners of address, myths, stories, explicit list of values, rituals and religion.

Cultural beliefs and values

The second level concerns the espoused beliefs and values. Schein (2004) claims that this analytical level of culture is probably the most critical for two interrelated reasons. Firstly, espoused beliefs and values are developed over time and stem from social issues experienced by the members of the society. When these beliefs and values become taken-for-granted, people forget about the reasons or social issues they were developed to resolve. Hence, people might not be able to explain why such beliefs and values are in place although they believe in their value and importance for their social life. Secondly, and consequently, these taken-for-granted beliefs and values are determinants for the validity and applicability of new solutions offered by outsiders in the eyes of those who adopt those beliefs and values. This is why Weick (2009) refers to values and beliefs as 'pre-requisites' for sense making. In other words, an individual's sense-making is governed by the values and beliefs they happen to adopt.

Cultural assumptions

The third level concerns basic underlying assumptions. Schein (2004) argues that basic assumptions are those that have become deeply taken-for-granted to the extent that they are extremely hard to change. This is because there is a level of consensus among community members on the shared assumptions resulting from continuous success of the application of certain beliefs and values to solve issues within the community. So deeply rooted are these basic assumptions that any behaviour initiated on any other premise is inconceivable. For instance, in an engineering organisation, it is inconceivable to deliberately and willingly design a machine that is unsafe. This is because safety is a taken-for-granted assumption, and therefore, suggesting otherwise is inconceivable.

1.4.2 Complexity of Knowledge Exchange

Knowledge is not a simple object that can be built, transferred and used like computers or trucks. Knowledge has certain characteristics that distinguish it from other concepts (Donnelly, 2008). Richter & Niewiem (2009, p. 276) have defined knowledge as "information that has qualities of reliability and validity" which "is thereby distinguished from mere opinions or beliefs." Lathi and Beyerlein (2000) argue that knowledge can be viewed as a type of "intellectual capital" which is capable of changing the way that individuals and organizations view and build the world around them.

In fact, the complexity of knowledge can be seen in its types more than in its definition. Researchers state that knowledge involved in the interaction between clients and consultants can be categorized into either explicit or tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge represents information that can be easily encoded and decoded, while tacit knowledge represents practical knowledge such as know-how (Richter & Niewiem, 2009; Ko et al., 2005). From an epistemological perspective, explicit knowledge is considered to be richer since its values are understandable and can be conveyed through formal language. It is disconnected and can be archived in books, libraries and databases. On the other hand, tacit knowledge is more related to individuals, which makes it harder to be formalized and transferred. It can be seen as a continuous development of understanding in a specific context as a result of continuous actions and involvements; it absorbs opinions, values and perceptions that individuals build through experience. However, there are no clear boundaries between the two types whereby some forms of explicit knowledge are very close to tacit knowledge and vice-versa (Lahti & Beyerlein, 2000).

In the context of consultancy, researchers argue that consulting knowledge is a composite of explicit and implicit knowledge, where explicit knowledge is the most successful transferable type and implicit knowledge is found to be the most difficult due to its informal, unmanaged and unconscious nature (Apostolou & Mentzas, 1999; Lahti & Beyerlein, 2000; Kane et al, 2005).

The interpretive approach is thought to be suitable for this study as it can accommodate the role of implicit knowledge in consulting activity,

1.4.3 Complexity of Client-Consultant Relationship

As will be established in the literature review and conceptual framework chapters, the client-consultant relationship is *interpretive* (Samson & Parker, 1994; McLachlin, 2000; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004) and *interactive* (McGivern, 1983; Fincham, 1999; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Furusten, 2009). Clients and consultants exchange different forms of knowledge that comprise of personal experience as well as the application of specific business methods (Devinney and Nikolova, 2004; Sturdy et al., 2009). The acquisition of knowledge is argued to constitute the main objective of these interpretive interactions (Fincham, 1999; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Sturdy et al., 2009; Furusten, 2009).

The fact that these relationships are central to consulting activity (Werr et al., 1997; Grollic et al., 2003; Richter and Niewiem, 2009; Teigland and Wasko, 2009) implies that the client-consultant relationship is central to this study too. This is because the client-consultant relationship is the interpretive interaction within which knowledge is exchanged. Therefore,

it is important to offer a brief overview about how culture impacts knowledge exchange within these interpretive and interactive relationships.

In this research, a high volume of misinterpretations and confrontation is expected to occur between clients and consultants who belong to different cultures. This is because, from a theoretical standpoint, people from different cultures tend to possess different cognitive and emotional systems that govern their interpretations (Searle, 1995; Durkheim, 2008; Elder-Vass, 2012). According to Elder-Vass (2012), what makes those cognitive and emotional systems different is the fact that they have been socially constructed over time and subject to the cultures and social experiences of the individuals who possess them (Elder-Vass, 2012). Therefore, when people with different cognitive and emotional systems are involved in knowledge exchange interactions, misinterpretations are likely to occur because the systems from which they derive meaning are different (Weick, 2012).

From a social constructionist perspective, Berger and Luckmann (1991) affirm that culture significantly influences the ways people see the world around them. People tend to have different sense-making systems that govern the meanings they derive from signals and symbols (Berger and Luckmann, 1991).

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, Goffman (1959) states that interaction between people is an activity within which they seek to understand each other in their effort to find reality behind presentations and impressions in human relations. Goffman (1959) and Weick (2012) claim that misinterpretations occur because people have different sense-making systems that govern the meanings they associate with signals and symbols. Consequently, misinterpretations are likely within the knowledge exchange interactions that take place between people who have different sense-making systems.

From an empirical perspective, Oudenhoven (2001) affirms that because of cultural differences, people around the world feel, think and act in different ways. When it comes to international assignments, cultural differences cause confrontations between individuals, groups, and nations. Oudenhoven (2001) asserts that many failed international assignments point to culture as the cause of failure. Prior knowledge about culture is important in international assignments in terms of appropriate structures and ways of interacting. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2004) confirm that people may respond and react differently based on their cultures. Lin et al. (2012) state that people operating in new cultural environments are challenged with the differences between their original environments and the new ones. Individuals find that the cultural values, attitudes, behaviour patterns and emotional expressions that are acceptable in their own environments may not be acceptable in others. Similarly, what they might find applicable in their own environments may not be applicable in others. Therefore, people in new cultural environments may face difficulties in communication, language, politics, religion and beliefs. These difficulties form

a rich ground for misunderstanding and misinterpretation during interactions between locals and internationals.

In the field of management, increasing international demand for expertise has influenced management practices and increased their complexity around the world where the different cultural settings comprise different needs and demand different solutions. Therefore, researchers emphasize the significance of local culture and the importance of customising management practices to align with different national contexts (Crucini & Kipping, 2001). According to Pillia et al. (1999) management scholars and practitioners agree that management and leadership styles that are successful in one culture cannot be simply assumed to be successful in others. The results of research that includes 755 MBA students and professionals from various western and non-western countries (USA, Columbia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan) shows that there are crucial cultural differences between western and non-western countries that influence their practices (Pillia et al., 1999).

The cultural barrier in knowledge exchange forms rich ground for misunderstanding between groups and organisations, and this reflects on the ultimate expectations or objectives of the knowledge work at organisational and individual levels. With growing interaction between individuals from different cultures, the influence of culture on knowledge exchange projects will become more critical. Therefore, more investigation is required to enhance understanding of knowledge exchange in cross-cultural settings (Evaristo, 2007).

In the context of the consulting work, empirical studies highlighted that cultural differences may be reflected in clients' and consultants' behaviours and attitudes, and shape the consultant-client relationship (Kilburg, 2002; Hislop, 2002). Consultants need to understand the nature of their clients in order to navigate an effective knowledge exchange process. This is because when ways of thinking and behaving change, suitable knowledge exchange processes should be deployed in line with the ways the parties involved think and behave (Lahti & Beyerlein, 2000; Ko et al., 2005). In other words, knowing how the client thinks and behaves facilitates the process of deciding how to interact and what the most appropriate exchange methods are (Armbrüster and Kipping, 2002). Failure to recognise and adjust to the new cultural setting may result in failure to interpret the knowledge exchanged between clients and consultants (Hofstede, 1998), which may lead to the development of culturally-inappropriate advice.

Accordingly, the interpretive approach is thought to be suitable to study the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients. This is because culture is a slippery concept, because consulting knowledge is implicit, and because the client-consultant relationship itself is interpretive.

1.4.4 The Case of Saudi Arabia

An interpretive approach to business and management studies in Saudi Arabia seems to be the most suitable option because there are no quality sources for data, because the published research that deals with Saudi Arabia is limited, and because access to data is also problematic.

Since this study focuses on Saudi Arabia to answer the research question, it is important to offer a brief overview about of the country and its culture. This overview suggests that focusing on a country like Saudi Arabia adds complexity to the research question, and, therefore, it requires an interpretive approach.

According to the World FactBook published on the official website of the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a monarchy located in the Middle East, bordering the Arabian (Persian) Gulf from the east, The Red Sea from the West, Yemen and Oman from the South, and Jordan and Iraq from the North. Figure 1 shows the location of Saudi Arabia.



Figure 1: Location of Saudi Arabia In the Middle East

Source: CIA, 2018

The government of Saudi Arabia consists of three branches, namely the executive, the legislative, and the judicial (CIA, 2018). The King as a Prime Minister rules the executive branch. The executive cabinet is named the Council of Ministers, and members are appointed by the King (CIA, 2018). The legislative branch includes the Consultative Council, which has 150 members and a chairman who are appointed by the King (CIA, 2018). The

judicial branch includes the Supreme Court, the Supreme Judicial Council and the Islamic Courts of First Instance and Appeals (CIA, 2018). There are essentially two legal systems in Saudi Arabia: one based on Islamic teachings, and the other on secularized laws (non-religious) (Kwong & Levitt, 2009).

Economy

Saudi Arabia's economy is based on oil. The government has strong control over main economic activities. As of 2015, Saudi Arabia possesses around 16% of the proven reserves of the world's petroleum, ranks as the world's largest oil exporter, and plays a leading role in OPEC. The oil sector accounts for around 87% of government revenues, 42% of GDP, and 90% of export incomes (CIA, 2018).

The Saudi government is encouraging the development and growth of the private sector to diversify its economy and to increase the employment of more Saudi Nationals. There are more than 6 million foreign workers in Saudi Arabia who play a significant role in the Saudi economy (CIA, 2018).

The Saudi government continues to pursue economic reform, especially since its accession to the World Trade Organisation in 2005. In April 2016, the government of Saudi Arabia announced a broad set of social and economic reforms, known as Vision-2030 (CIA, 2018).

Demography

As of July 2017, the population of Saudi Arabia is 28,571,770. Historically, the population was mostly nomadic or semi-nomadic, and became more settled following the discovery of oil in the 1930s (CIA, 2018).

Saudi nationals mainly belong to two ethnic groups: the Arabs who constitute 90%, and Afro-Asians who constitute 10% (CIA, 2018).

Saudi nationals are 85-90% Sunni Muslim and 10-15% Shia Muslim. Other religions adopted by non-Saudis exist in the country such as Protestant, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh (CIA, 2018).

Culture

Before the unification of the country in the 1930s by King Abdulaziz, the region now known as Saudi Arabia was loosely governed by Bedouin tribes that inhabited the region before the unification (Nydell, 2012).

Nydell (2012) states that there are two significant elements that impact Saudi society: the fact that the Arab peninsula is the birthplace of Islam, and the discovery of oil in the 1930s,

which resulted in a sudden wealth. Conservatism, wealth, and foreign workers are present in Saudi Arabia and lead to ever-changing social policies and attitudes.

According to Lacey (2009), three waves contributed to significant cultural shifts in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s, the 1990s, and after September 11, 2001. In the 1980s, a religious atmosphere dominated following the 'Juhaiman' terrorist attack on the Grand Mosque in Makkah. This religious atmosphere led to the emergence of a culture that derives most of its values and norms from the interpretations of those who claim to have superior religious views and understandings. What made this religious culture dominant at that time was government support of conservative parties to help stabilize the country using religious dialogue.

This cultural atmosphere continued to play a significant role in Saudi society until Saddam Husain invaded Kuwait in the early 1990s. This invasion was rejected by the Saudi government who hosted the Kuwaiti royal family and over 400,000 Kuwaiti refugees. This invasion led the government of Saudi Arabia to use the help of its American ally to free Kuwait. The presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia was not welcomed by the conservative parties who felt they had the power to confront the government with their views against allowing non-Muslim troops into the Arab peninsula. As a result, the government empowered the liberal party to confront and exhaust the conservatives. The empowerment of the liberal party led to the second cultural shift, which resulted in a significant decline of the religious atmosphere and the rise of a liberal atmosphere (Lacey, 2009).

A review of research into Saudi culture reveals that in the 1990s, there were efforts to question the religious views in business relationships in Saudi Arabia (e.g. Ali, 1992; Nivo, 1998; Doumato, 1999).

The struggle between the conservatives and the liberals resulted in social questioning about the suitability of the values and norms promoted by each party. This struggle resulted in a balance in which the values and norms of both parties managed to co-exist in Saudi society (Lacey, 2009).

At the end of 2001, the Saudi people were subject to a third cultural change triggered by an outside event, namely the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York city. The fact that fourteen of the nineteen terrorists who carried out the attack had Saudi passports cast a shadow over Saudi Arabia. This was mainly because the international media put Saudi Arabia under the microscope. This international attention led the world to question every aspect of the country - its political system, educational system, social structures, religion, and culture. This led to a great national debate among Saudis of different religious, political, educational and financial backgrounds and generated blame, accusations, and the

questioning of the suitability of cultural and religious dialogue. The impact of this attention is still reforming the cultural and political state of the country, and most people try to develop more critical views about what they perceive to be good ways of thinking and behaving (Lacey, 2009).

However, all these cultural shifts and conflicts do not mean that the country has lost its culture. In fact, most of these shifts have happened within a broader fundamental cultural context, which is very different to western cultures in many respects. This can be seen in the cultural encounters that discuss fundamental cultural differences between Western and Arabian cultures. For instance, beliefs and values (Abu-Lughod, 1964; Al-Omari, 2008; Sabry, 2010; Patai, 2010; Nydell, 2012), friends and strangers (Nydell, 2012), emotion and logic (Al-Omari, 2008; Sabry, 2010; Patai, 2010; Nydell, 2012), getting personal (Patai, 2010; Nydell, 2012), men and women (Abu-Lughod, 1964; Al-Omari, 2008; Sabry, 2010; Patai, 2010; Nydell, 2012), social structure (Nydell, 2012), role of family (Sabry, 2010; Patai, 2010; Nydell, 2012), religion and society, communication, and anti-Americanism (Patai, 2010; Nydell, 2012).

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This section presents the main chapters that constitute the thesis. For each chapter, an overview of the main constructs, theories and arguments along with brief overviews of how they relate to each other and to the research question is provided. The research seeks to investigate *the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international consultants and local clients in Saudi Arabia*.

The thesis consists of four main parts: the literature review (three chapters), the conceptual framework (one chapter), the methodology (one chapter), the findings (three chapters), and the conclusion chapter. The following subsections offer an overview about the structure and content of each part.

1.5.1 Literature Review

As discussed in the research context, the young age and rapid development of consultancy have resulted in broad gaps in the research. Sturdy et al. (2009) have explicitly stated that clients have long been neglected in consultancy research, and Avakian and Clark (2012) have stated that it is still not clear how consultants operate in cross-cultural settings; these two gaps remain fairly broad for the research question. Since this research aims to investigate the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients, it is crucial to establish more specific gaps to which the research can contribute.

Although the research question seems to investigate the knowledge exchange activity that takes place at an interpersonal level, there are important organizational and cross-cultural

elements that need to be considered. From an organizational perspective, there are issues related to the organizations consultants work for and whose knowledge systems and networks they use (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Gardner et al., 2008; Reihlen and Nikolova, 2010, Werr, 2012). From a cross-cultural or an industrial level, there are issues related to how management concepts vary across cultures in their meanings and content (Hofstede, 1993; Sturdy et al., 2009; Nikolova and Devenney, 2009). Therefore, in order to make a rigorous contribution, it is crucial to identify specific gaps at different levels to which specific contributions can be made. Thus, the literature review has been conducted at three levels, namely the industrial, organizational, and interpersonal levels. For each of these levels, the main theories and conceptual arguments are presented to demonstrate and validate specific research gaps. The following sub-sections offer overviews about each of these three chapters.

1.5.1.1 Chapter 2: Industrial Level

At the industrial level, the gap in the research is outlined through a historical discussion about the origin, development, and internationalization of consultancy. This chapter outlines two specific gaps in the literature. Firstly, the first gap is identified through a detailed discussion about the cultural conditions that contributed to the appearance and development of consulting services in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century (Kipping, 1999, 2002; Clark and Fincham, 2002; McKenna, 2006; Faust, 2012). The outcome of this discussion is to establish that although the cultural, institutional and relational drivers that contributed to the appearance and development of the consulting industry have been discussed implicitly in the consultancy literature for decades (Wren and Greenwood, 1998; Kipping, 1999, 2002; Clark and Fincham, 2002; McKenna, 1995, 2006; Saint-Martin, 2011; Faust, 2012; Aitken, 2014), they are still insufficiently studied and need to be made explicit.

The second gap is identified by analysing the literature that discusses the early internationalisations of American consulting firms at the turn of the century and after the Second World War (Merkle, 1980; Hood, 1991; Kipping, 1999, 2002; Clark and Fincham, 2002; McKenna, 1995, 2006; Saint-Martin, 2011; Wright and Kipping, 2012; Aitken, 2014), and the literature that discusses the internationalisation of Western European consulting firms in Eastern Europe (Macdonald, 2006; Saint-Martin, 2011). The outcome of this discussion is to establish that although the literature acknowledges the influence of culture on the international expansions of consultancies, it does not offer clear and explicit insights about this influence.

In order to validate these gaps, literature outside the field of consultancy research has been studied. This literature (Fores and Glover, 1978; Child et al., 1983; Hofstede, 1993; Guillen, 1994; Perlitz and Seger, 2004; Macdonald, 2006; Chia and Holt, 2008; Hofstede et al., 2011; Saint-Martin, 2011; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2012; Purtilo & Haddad, 2015)

affirms that culture determines the validity of imported managerial knowledge. This literature asserts that managerial knowledge that has been developed in particular cultural settings is shaped by local culture, history, politics, and inimitable social conditions. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that these managerial products are transferable to different cultural settings.

1.5.1.2 Chapter 3: Organizational Level

At the organizational level, the gap in the research is outlined by discussing two main subjects, namely the use of management fashions to construct legitimacy for consulting firms within their external environments, and the suitability of their internal knowledge management systems to produce advice compatible with the culture of the external environments.

Firstly, the chapter discusses the need for organizations to construct legitimacy in the environments within which they operate by conforming to the norms, values and rules of those environments (Suchman, 1995; Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006; Deephouse and Suchmand, 2008; Gardner et al., 2008; Reihle et al., 2010; Powell and DiMaggio, 2012). It is suggested that consulting firms use management fashions as a symbolic representation of their superiority and popularity to construct legitimacy (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Jung and Keiser, 2012). The discussion concludes that although the consulting and symbolic management literature acknowledges that management fashions are culturally specific, the consulting literature does not offer insights about the transferability of management fashions into new cultural territories. In particular, it neglects how prominent ideas that were developed in their home environments can be used to construct legitimacy in new and culturally different environments. Also, it is not clear in the consulting literature how the different cultural contexts influence the dissemination, decline and rise of management fashions.

Secondly, the chapter discusses the importance of internal knowledge management systems for consulting firms. It is suggested that consulting firms develop their knowledge management systems to conform to the external environments from which they originate or emerge (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Gardner et al., 2008; Reihlen and Nikolova, 2010, Werr, 2012). The discussion concludes that although the consulting literature stresses the critical role that internal knowledge-management systems play for consulting organisations, it does not offer clear insights about how consulting organisations mobilise their knowledge-management systems to serve new environments. This gap is theoretically and empirically justified in the chapter.

1.5.1.3 Chapter 4: Interpersonal Level

This chapter focuses on the interpersonal level of consultancy where clients and consultants interact in the so-called client-consultant relationship (Fosstenlokken et al., 2003; Werr and

Stjernberg, 2003; Sturdy et al., 2009; Furusten, 2009; Alvesson et al., 2009; Fincham, 2012). This relationship is critical for understanding how knowledge exchange takes place (McGivern, 1983; Armbrüster and Kipping, 2002; Fosstenlokken et al., 2003; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Tomenendal, 2007; Furusten, 2009; Sturdy et al., 2009).

The discussion introduces the emergence of the view that clients and consultants exchange knowledge in order to produce the solutions needed, rather than the old view that assumes clients are gullible recipients of consulting knowledge (Fincham, 1999; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Sturdy et al., 2009; Furusten, 2009). Then, it analyses the available literature that discusses the new view about the client-consultant relationship (Fincham, 1999; Armbrüster and Kipping, 2002; Kitay and Wright, 2004; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Tomenendal, 2007; Furusten, 2009; Sturdy et al., 2009) and concludes that client-consultant relationships are *interpretive* (McGivern, 1983; Fincham, 1999; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Furusten, 2009) and *interactive* (Samson and Parker, 1994; McLachlin, 2000; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004).

At the interpersonal level, the gap in the research is outlined by discussing two main subjects. Firstly, the chapter considers the historical neglect of the client side in consultancy research, as highlighted by Sturdy et al. (2009). It concludes that this neglect has resulted in a poor understanding of the factors affecting knowledge exchange in the client-consultant relationship. For instance, according to authors like Sturdy et al. (2009) and Nikolova and Devenney (2009), there are cultural boundaries that influence knowledge exchange between clients and consultants.

The chapter advances on the recent study by Sturdy et al. (2009) by proposing two types of cultural boundaries that influence knowledge exchange between clients and consultants. Firstly, the cognitive boundary whereby culture influences people's ability to understand the knowledge they exchange with people from different cultures (Sturdy et al., 2009). Secondly, the boundary of power in which culture has a significant influence on the willingness or motivation of people to exchange knowledge (Fincham, 2002; Sturdy et al., 2009). Although recent work has not discussed the influence of culture on the international exchange of knowledge between clients and consultants, the acknowledgement of the influence of culture on a national level (UK) is a clear indication as to the criticality of this issue on an international level. This is a gap in the research, which should not be neglected any further.

1.5.2 Chapter 5: Conceptual Framework

Having established in the previous chapters that the client-consultant relationship is *interpretive* (Samson and Parker, 1994; McLachlin, 2000; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004) and *interactive* (McGivern, 1983; Fincham, 1999; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Furusten, 2009), and that the acquisition of knowledge is argued to constitute the

main objective of the client-consultant relationship (Fincham, 1999; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Sturdy et al., 2009; Furusten, 2009), this chapter aims to provide a systematic and conceptual framework that explains how the impact of culture on knowledge-exchange in the client-consultant relationship can be theorized.

The chapter proposes the conceptual framework itself, which consists of four dimensions, namely culture, language, power and knowledge. It discusses how the ambiguity of culture as one term that comprises many meanings can be operationalized by examining behaviours in different domains like knowledge, language and power through different stages of the interaction - before, during, and after. By operationalizing the relationships between the different constructs in the model, the researcher deploys a working model of culture that enables the study of impact in the context of knowledge-exchange between clients and consultants.

1.5.3 Chapter 6: Methodology

The methodology chapter consists of two main sections. The first focuses on justifying the adoption of the interpretive approach. Thus, it expands on the adoption and application of the interpretive approach as a research philosophy, the Grounded Theory as a research strategy, qualitative interviewing as a data collection method, sampling of Saudi clients and international consultants, and it discusses the arrangement and timing of access to Saudi clients and international consultants.

The second section of the chapter focuses on how data is analysed. It discusses how Grounded Theory has been deployed in data analysis. Then, it provides details about the three orders of analysis that led the researcher to conclude his findings. This section is supported with thematic trees and tables, interviewees' excerpts, themes and codes. Also, the chapter offers details about the ethical principles that have been considered in this study.

1.5.5 Findings

The findings are discussed in three chapters reflecting the three stages of interaction discussed in the conceptual framework chapter. These are: the hiring stage (before), the advice development stage (during), and the advice implementation stage (after).

1.5.5.1 Chapter 7: Before Consulting Interaction

This chapter demonstrates the influence of prior knowledge and power on the process of hiring international consultants in Saudi Arabia. Prior knowledge in this context refers to the existing knowledge of a culture; this determines how successful international consultants are in presenting themselves to new clients. Consultants possessing limited prior knowledge are less capable of delivering culturally-appropriate presentations, and, therefore, are less

likely to win a contract. Consultants possessing inaccurate prior knowledge also lack the ability to deliver culturally-appropriate presentations, particularly when the prior knowledge is negative as well as inaccurate. Finally, consultants with a considerable stock of accurate prior knowledge are highly capable of delivering culturally-appropriate presentations, giving a positive impression to clients, and winning a contract.

Power is another significant factor in the hiring process, which is highly centralized in Saudi Arabia. There are two typologies of clients with respect to their motivations towards the hiring of consultants. The first concerns powerful clients; these prioritize their personal interests over those of the organization. When dealing with such clients, international consultants must not only recognize the centralized approach, but also identify the personal interests driving the project. The second typology concerns clients who desire to construct legitimacy for their hiring decision. This group aims to avoid blame and the cultural shame associated with failure, and targets consultants who can act as a barrier to this. When dealing with this group, international consultants must both recognize the desire for legitimacy, and aid the client to construct it.

International consultants may not recognize the above typologies because of the overwhelming sense of power of their own experience, reputation and organizational resources. This failure may diminish their chances of winning a contract. As such, international consultants can be divided into two typologies. The first concerns those who feel they can work with any client from any culture on the basis of their prior international experience. This group is overwhelmed by the sense of power of experience and is no longer able to differentiate between cultures or understand the cultural factors that drive clients' decisions. The second group concerns international consultants who believe that reputation, fashionable methods and success stories allow them to attract any client from any culture. This group is overwhelmed by the sense of power of organizational resources, and is unlikely to recognize the cultural elements that drive clients' decisions, or to demonstrate the culturally-appropriate features that empower those consultants and attract international clients from particular cultures that recognize and appreciate those features. These two typologies may co-exist, resulting in consultants who are overwhelmed on both fronts.

1.5.5.2 Chapter 8: During Consulting Interaction

This chapter puts forward the claim that the more experience international consultants have the more capable they are of culturally conditioning interactions and advice. Also, they are more capable of playing the politics in order to accommodate the interests of powerful members. On the one hand, consultants with minimal experience base their cultural conditioning of interaction and advice solely on explicit cultural values and beliefs. On the other hand, those who are more experienced base their cultural conditioning of interaction and advice on both explicit and implicit values and beliefs.

In the context of accommodating the power dynamics at the client's side, this chapter identifies two types of client who interact with international consultants: powerless clients and powerful clients. On the one hand, experienced consultants can identify the limitations of powerless clients and deploy appropriate corrective actions. In addition, they can locate power sources, and are capable of culturally conditioning their interactions and advice to accommodate the interests of powerful clients and address their status. On the other hand, consultants with minimal experience are less capable of culturally conditioning their interactions, and of identifying the source of power. These consultants are exposed to the manipulation tactics of powerful clients since they are not familiar with the impact of the high power distance that exists in the Saudi environment.

1.5.5.3 Chapter 9: After the Consulting Interaction

This chapter discusses that, in Saudi Arabia, the implementation of consulting advice is subject to the Client Adverse Reactions. The first type of adverse reactions is the 'Clash of Implicit Perceptions'. In such a case, clients and consultants have differing perceptions about who is responsible for implementing consulting advice. This is due to fundamental cultural differences related to mode of the relationship between workers and employers, which can be either contractual or status-based. The contractual relationships suggest that both parties are bound by the scope of the contract which the status-based relationships expect workers to perform tasks that have not been specified in the contract. Accordingly, it is suggested that if both the client and the consultant are inexperienced, neither will recognise that the other holds a different view of their consulting relationship, and responsibility for implementation. Consequently, clashes are likely to take place. If at least one party is experienced the clashes over who is responsible for implementation is unlikely to take place. This is because the experienced party is likely to address the implementation task from the contracting stage to avoid future clashes that may result from different perceptions.

The second type of adverse reaction identified among clients is the 'Appropriation of Power Structures'. This reaction is displayed by powerful clients who may block, delay or interfere with the implementation of advice with the intention of protecting or increasing personal interests. This behaviour stems from a culture that allows the powerful to enjoy privileges and perks.

1.5.6 Chapter 10: Conclusion

The concluding chapter amalgamates the empirical findings of the findings chapters to present theoretical and practical implications for this thesis. The context of this research is outlined, then a brief summary of each chapter of the empirical findings is provided. The themes that link the previous studies with the findings are then explored. Finally, limitations and suggestions for future research are presented.

Chapter 2: Literature Review 1: Industrial Level

Literature Review I

2. The Study of Culture in the Consulting Industry

Abstract

This chapter argues that, although the consultancy literature acknowledges the significant influence of culture on the international work of consultancies, this influence has not been sufficiently studied in a systematic way. Therefore, greater attention must be given to the implicit and explicit impacts of culture on the internationalisation of consulting. It is suggested that the appearance and development of the consulting industry has resulted from cultural and institutional conditions that appeared in the United States in the early twentieth century. This can be traced either to the culture of manufacturing and efficiency that flourished in the US at the turn of the twentieth century, or to the capitalist culture that emerged there in the 1920s. Regardless of which cultural conditions contributed to the appearance and development of the consulting industry, scholars seem to agree on the fact that culture played a central role in its beginnings in the United States. Despite this acknowledgement, they do not seem to offer explicit insights into the influence of culture on the international expansions of consultancies. This chapter justifies the need to address this gap. It establishes that, because of cultural differences, management concepts vary across the world. Consequently, the dissemination of management knowledge by international consultants is likely to be challenged by those cultural differences. Accordingly, the influence of culture on international consultancies should no longer be neglected.

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline a gap in the research by providing a historical exposition of the origins and development of consultancy with a special focus on the impact of culture on the international expansions of consultancy. This chapter is organised into two sections.

The first section discusses the origins and development of consulting, presenting the historiography of the industry and examining the cultural conditions in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century (Kipping, 1999, 2002; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Faust, 2012) and in the 1920s (McKenna, 1995, 2006) that contributed to early developments in consultancy. This section argues that, although the cultural, institutional, and relational drivers that contributed to the appearance and development of the consulting industry have been discussed implicitly in the consultancy literature for decades (Wren and Greenwood, 1998; Kipping, 1999, 2002; Clark and Fincham, 2002; McKenna, 1995, 2006; Saint-Martin,

2011; Faust, 2012; Aitken, 2014), they are still insufficiently studied and need to be made explicit.

The second section highlights that there is a gap in the literature on the internationalisation of consulting organisations, which discusses the influence of culture on the international expansions of consultancies only implicitly (Merkle, 1980; Hood, 1991; Kipping, 1999, 2002; Clark and Fincham, 2002; McKenna, 1995, 2006; Saint-Martin, 2011; Wright and Kipping, 2012; Aitken, 2014). Such literature discusses the international expansions of American consultancies in Europe from the 1890s to the 1930s, and in the 1960s. It also discusses the international expansion of Western European consultancies to Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Macdonald, 2006; Saint-Martin, 2011). Although this literature acknowledges the influence of culture on the international expansions of consultancies, it does not offer clear and explicit insights about this influence. For instance, although the literature highlights that reaction to Early American consultancies in France was negative and on occasion led to strikes (Nelson, 1992; Kipping, 1999; Levant & Nikitin, 2009), there is no detailed explanation as to how French culture influenced this negative reaction.

To validate this gap in the consulting literature, the discussion then turns to the cross-cultural management literature to establish that management knowledge is deeply influenced by cultural differences. This literature (Fores and Glover, 1978; Child et al., 1983; Hofstede, 1993; Guillen, 1994; Perlitz and Seger, 2004; Macdonald, 2006; Chia and Holt, 2008; Hofstede et al., 2011; Saint-Martin, 2011; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2012; Purtilo & Haddad, 2015) shows that culture determines the perceived validity of managerial knowledge when applied to different cultural settings. In this context, the literature indicates that management knowledge that has been developed in particular cultural settings is shaped by local culture, history, and political and social conditions. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that these managerial products are transferable to different cultural settings.

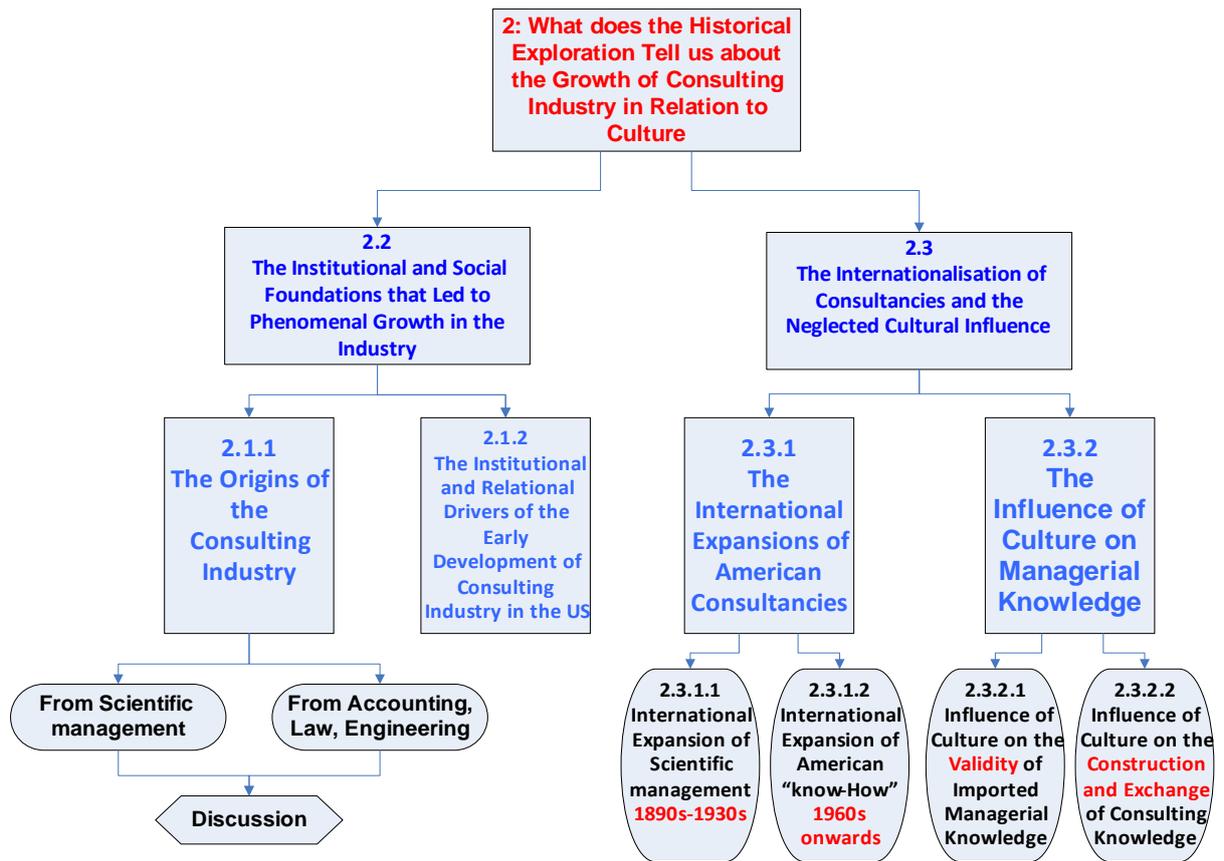


Figure 2: Structure of Chapter 2

2.2 The Institutional and Social Foundations that Led to the Appearance and Growth of the Consulting Industry in the United States

2.2.1 The Origins of the Consulting Industry

This sub-section suggests that the roots of the consulting industry lie in the distinctive cultural conditions in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century (Faust, 2012). The aim of this section is to highlight that, although the literature seems to implicitly acknowledge that culture contributed to the emergence of the consulting industry, its role and impact remain insufficiently discussed.

“The emergence of management consulting and its early expansion has been, to a large degree, a US story that, for a considerable time span, had no parallel elsewhere. It can be traced back to specific institutional and cultural conditions in the US” (Faust, 2012, p. 147).

According to Faust (2012), the growth of the management consulting industry is largely dependent on cultural conditions prevalent in the United States and does not have a parallel elsewhere. This statement underlines the American social context in which business ideas flourished over time and provided the early building blocks for the industry’s global growth. Despite the fact that consulting is associated with giving advice, it is evident that the design and distribution of such advice is situated within a national setting that exerts influence on its development into a business service (Faust, 2012).

Regardless of the fact that consulting as a business activity originated in the United States, the exact profession from which this industry originated is unclear. Saint-Martin (2011) illuminates this confusion, noting that management consulting is rooted in the fields of engineering and accounting in the United States. A historical tension has always existed between these two professions in their efforts to control the development of consultancy. However, my aim in discussing these two claims is not to add to the debate on the origins of consultancy but, rather, to show that both claims implicitly acknowledge that the consulting industry emerged from the cultural conditions that flourished during the period of each claim. Therefore, the following sub-section puts forward two theories about the origin of management consultancy. For each one, the sub-section presents the cultural and institutional conditions that have contributed to the appearance and development of the consulting industry. I argue that, although culture has evidently contributed to the origin and development of the consulting industry, the current research does not offer explicit insights into its critical role.

2.2.1.1 Proposition 1: Consulting Industry Originated from Scientific Management

Authors (Kipping, 2002; Saint-Martin, 2011) argue that early consulting services were established in the 1890s by American engineers who offered their services to companies seeking independent 'engineering advice'.

According to Saint-Martin (2011), the appearance of these individuals was associated with the need of manufacturing companies to solve issues related to factory productivity, machine efficiency, and employee output. Therefore, these engineers provided their advice on engineering and time-and-motion solutions.

However, none of these individuals labelled themselves management consultants. Rather, they were known as 'industrial engineers' (Saint-Martin, 2011) or 'efficiency experts' (Kipping, 1999) because their focus was on improvements to factory work and production methods (Saint-Martin, 2011).

Nevertheless, the appearance of these professionals was "linked to the emergence of 'scientific management' in the United States around the turn of the century" (Kipping, 2002, p.273). The concept of scientific management was promoted by Frederick Winslow Taylor (Kipping, 1999; Saint-Martin, 2011) who had developed a distinctive shop-floor management approach during his experiments at multiple companies (Kipping, 1999).

Taylor built his motion study and wage incentive system to solve problems related to the improvement of manufacturing. His system was focused on speeding up the productivity of shop-floor workers to be paced by the flow of assembly-line productivity (McKenna, 2006; Aitken, 2014) through "systematic observation and optimum organisations of workers' activities" (Kipping, 1999, p. 195). In other words, Taylor was concerned about the speed of both the machines and those who worked on them. This had led him to focus on innovative mechanical designs to increase the productivity of factories, and on the mechanical skills of workers. The distinctive nature of his work was consultation on labour productivity (McKenna, 2006; Aitken, 2014).

Taylor became much better known than his rivals, extending his consulting activities from research and development in emerging electrochemical industries to labour productivity in traditional industries such as steel and iron (McKenna, 2006). With the publication of his extended essay, *The Principles of Scientific Management* in September 1911, Scientific Management became broadly known in North America and, eventually, around the world (Kipping 1999; McKenna, 2006). Taylorism was soon followed by similar competing approaches (Kipping, 1999) and research on scientific management (McKenna, 2006). After his death in 1915, Taylor's followers and competitors advanced the development and application of scientific management (Wren and Greenwood, 1998; Kipping, 1999).

Due to the distinctive nature and popularity of scientific management approaches, Taylorist historians have assumed that these practitioners of ‘production engineering’, ‘industrial engineering,’ ‘efficiency engineering,’ and ‘consulting engineering’ who appeared at the turn of the twentieth century were the early management consultants (McKenna, 1995; Clark and Fincham, 2002).

It can be concluded that the concept of scientific management, or Taylorism, emerged due to the cultural conditions in the United States at the turn of the century. Had American industrialists not been culturally enthusiastic about maximising the production and efficiency of manufacturing, the concept of scientific management would most likely not have been conceived, and, consequently, the so-called ‘industrial engineers’ or ‘efficiency experts’, such as Taylor, would not have existed. Ultimately, then, the phenomenon of engineering advice would not have emerged.

2.2.1.2 Proposition 2: Consulting industry originated from professions in accounting, law and engineering

Conversely, McKenna (1995) argues that “professionally trained accountants and engineers, often with backgrounds in law or banking, founded the early ‘management engineering’ firms to offer advice to executives on the organisation of their boardrooms, not on the efficiency of their shop floors” (p.52). This implies that the origin of the consulting industry stemmed from a unification of different fields—namely, engineering, accounting, law, and banking—which came together to provide advice that benefited the entire business model, not just the production and efficiency aspects or the engineering side.

Therefore, these consultants also had to focus on issues related to bureaucratic organisation and control at the administrative levels, not only at the manufacturing level (McKenna, 1995).

The number and size of firms specialising in engineering, accounting, and law began to increase in the 1890s and enjoyed strong growth in the 1920s and 1930s, driven by cultural enthusiasm for developing efficient manufacturing business models. This growth was empowered by consultants with specialised skills in accounting, law, and engineering and resulted in the foundation of new firms, or in partnerships with older or larger firms. These young practitioners with backgrounds in engineering, accounting, and law often worked with bankers to organise a wide range of services, which were regarded, at the turn of the twentieth century, as being similar in nature to what is known now as management consulting (McKenna, 1995, 2006).

Despite disagreement over the origin of the consulting industry, there is no doubt that the cultural enthusiasm for maximising manufacturing production and efficiency that existed in

the United States at the turn of the twentieth century contributed greatly to the emergence of the consulting industry. Yet, the role and impact of culture in this process does not seem to be explicitly discussed.

The following subsection elaborates further on how cultural conditions contributed to the development of the consulting industry. It uses the same two theories of origin but focuses on their timing, since scientific management, or Taylorism, was popular at the turn of the twentieth century while multidisciplinary consulting was popular during the 1920s and 1930s.

2.2.2 The Cultural, Institutional and Relational Drivers that Influenced the early Development of the Consulting industry

This sub-section suggests that, in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, culture not only allowed for the emergence of the consulting industry but also contributed to its development and rapid growth. The sub-section will demonstrate that culture is not sufficiently discussed in the literature, and offers early insight into the neglected role of culture in consultancy research.

The role of culture in this context can be discussed in relation to the two previously introduced propositions on the origin of the consulting industry—namely, that it originated from the concept of scientific management (Kipping, 2002; Saint-Martin, 2011), and that it originated from the early ‘management engineering’ firms (McKenna, 1995, 2006). According to McKenna (2006), scientific management and early trained ‘management engineers’ or ‘professionals’ have different ideological and professional backgrounds. In this sub-section we discuss how these ideological differences resulted from the cultural and institutional conditions of the periods in which scientific management and modern management consultancy arose.

2.2.2.1 The Cultural and Relational Drivers that Influenced the Development of Scientific Management at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

The discussion in this sub-section focuses on the cultural and relational drivers that contributed to the rise of scientific management in the United States. The argument is developed over two main points. The first is that the ideology of scientific management resulted from early twentieth-century American cultural settings that focused on efficiency, productivity, and organisation (Merkle, 1980; Hood, 1991) with the primary emphasis on machine over man in solving industrial issues (McKenna, 1995, 2006; Saint-Martin, 2011). The second is that the focus on productivity led Taylorism to neglect vital financial and business administrative factors that contribute to the overall viability of the entire business model (Saint-Martin, 2011; Wright and Kipping, 2012; Aitken, 2014). The discussion aims to show that the same cultural conditions that allowed scientific management to emerge, also prioritised machine over man and neglected business viability, thus leading researchers like McKenna (1995, 2006) to doubt that scientific management is the origin of the consulting industry.

Firstly, Taylorism resulted from a national cultural condition related to the American romance with heavy industry at the turn of the twentieth century. Merkle (1980) states that, “scientific management was not drawn from the machine itself, but from cultural traditions about machinery and its use. Specific historical traditions that preceded the development of scientific management contributed much to its approach” (p.82). This implies that the cultural craving that existed in the United States at the turn of the century

emphasised maximising the output of machines. According to Merkle (1980), “the invention of, and tinkering with, every sort of practical device that might multiply the effect of human labour became something of a national pastime. The driving compulsion for machine control likewise became an important part of the American dream, which was built around exploitation of a vast frontier” (p.93). The fact that machines and enhanced practical advice were used to multiply the effect of human labour suggests that machines and humans were considered alike.

In fact, this positivist view that does not distinguish the human factor from machine productivity has a historical foundation. Merkle (1980) notes that the size of the North American continent and conflicts with Native Americans created a fearful chaos and an endless succession of tasks with a limited number of people to perform them. Machines were the solution to the shortage and reluctance of manpower that resulted from the chaos. Therefore, according to Merkle (1980), it was perceived that an invented machine would allow a man to do the work of ten. In this setting, a premium was put on innovations that dealt with technology and organisation to enlighten the dark environment, organise its chaos, and civilise onerous tasks by placing machine intervention between nature and man. For instance, the assembly line first appeared in midwestern slaughterhouses, where inventors developed a means of slaughtering and flaying animals with minimal human involvement. In this context, machine systems were used to avoid unpleasant tasks, while organisational systems were used to run the slaughterhouse more efficiently.

According to Merkle (1980) and Hood (1991), culture at this time was marked by the benefit of mass production and the burden of bureaucratization, depersonalisation, alienation, and excessive specialisation. Merkle (1980) affirms that this materialist, time-pressed, technocratic, and fragmented society was seen as an unavoidable by-product of modern life.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the rise of scientific management was driven primarily by the culture of that time. Merkle (1980) affirms that scientific management was found to be a unique amalgamation of all ideas related to the heritage of American industrialism. This heritage was driven by social and organisational patterns in North America at the turn of the twentieth century that contributed to the rise of scientific management. These patterns can be summarised in (1) the systematic application of scientific methods to solve industrial problems, such as the struggle between owners and workers over the fair returns for labour and capital; (2) the creation of a new role of the engineer in the design and maintenance of organisation; (3) the use of machines for social control, where there was a notion that machinery leads to a general social order and makes those who work on machines more intelligent and rational by introducing systematic and scientific mental habits (Merkle, 1980).

Scientific management emerged from this environment to offer, “a way to make the factory worker, via the work process itself, into a neat, industrious, individualistic, thrifty, and sober Anglo-Saxon ideal” (p. 94). In this sense, the ideology of scientific management was taught to children and practiced even by politicians, who sought reform by eliminating bossism as effective political leverage and circulation of largesse (Merkle, 1980).

Moreover, it can also be concluded that the positivistic view of the human factor in scientific management resulted from the cultural atmosphere at that time, which emphasised the role of machine over the role of human. This emphasis was excessive to the extent that machines were regarded as capable of changing human behaviour and increasing their intelligence and rationality. Therefore, this ideology focused on the systematic interaction between humans and machines to solve industrial productivity issues where the machine was considered the prime solution while the role of humans was secondary.

In other words, the aim was to fix management issues related to manufacturing, not management issues in their social sense. In this context, scientific management models were developed independent of the dynamicity of the human beings who constitute vital elements in these models. McKenna (1995) states, “Taylorists were largely concerned with industrial relations”, rather than human relations (McKenna, 1995, p. 52), where their advice was mostly, “related to work-method improvements in factories” (Saint-Martin, 2011, p.43).

This positivist view of human workers by Taylorists resulted in human workers being dealt with similarly to machines. The emphasis was on speeding up the pace of these workers, where, as mentioned by Saint-Martin (2011), speed is measured by stopwatches regardless of the status of the worker as a human being. The issue here is that scientific management ideology, which focused on efficiency, productivity, and organisation, did not seriously consider the physical, emotional, and psychological status of humans. The only consideration for workers’ psychology was to increase their efficiency. McKenna (2006) states that Taylor and his followers conducted “psychological tests to weed out less effective personnel” (p39). Even when Taylorism or scientific management considered the psychological aspect of a human worker, this was not to improve the well-being of the worker as a human, but to maximise his/her output as a machine.

In addition, scientific management did not pay attention to common relational issues that affect work environments. For instance, the incentive payment system in Taylor’s model did not consider, “the connection between increased pay and reduction of distrust”, which “was by no means inevitable” (Aitken, 2014, p. 211). From his study, *Scientific Management in Action, Taylorism at Watertown Arsenal, 1908-1915*, Aitken (2014) states:

“The general attitude of the men of the premium system was that there was a catch in it somewhere, that they were being bribed or fooled into doing something that was not in their interests, and that the higher rates of pay would prove only temporary” (p.211).

More interestingly, the main goal behind incentive pay, which was supposed to motivate human workers, does not seem to be achieved in Taylorist models:

“The Watertown men consider the premiums as nothing more than gifts, claiming that they receive them without doing any more work. A premium conceived of as a gift was not likely to serve as an effective incentive, nor would it lessen distrust”(p. 211-212).

With this positivist view, it is clear why some authors (Wright and Kipping, 2012; McKenna, 1995) do not agree that scientific management is the origin of modern management consulting. This writer’s criticism against Taylorism is not different. It is vital to consider the nature of humans as rational, emotional beings that feel pain and tire. This can result in variations in their efficiency. Machines, on the other hand, are senseless objects that can be efficiently operated as designed so long as long as fuel is supplied.

This positivist view leads to speculation as to the applicability of scientific management models in a different time or cultural setting. It might be understood that the general industrial and social climate in the United States at that time was focused on rapid development in science, innovation and manufacturing, which developed a culture of ‘efficiency’. This culture of ‘efficiency’ may have made the need to push workers to their maximum performance limits more acceptable at the time.

This view has been affirmed by McKenna (2006) who argues that Taylor maintained a lasting fame, but “Taylorism remains emblematic of the struggle between industrial efficiency and inhumane automation” (p.36). The question that could be asked here is whether Taylorism would receive the same fame currently, given the world’s new emphasis on human rights. Also, would Taylorism be accepted in different cultures that have not developed the same culture of ‘efficiency’ and do not tolerate humans being dealt with like machines? For instance, feminine cultures that, according to Hofstede (2011), give greater emphasis to emotions, relationships, quality of life and people, and view work only as providing the means to live. Therefore, the writer concludes that the positivism of the first claim can be regarded as the first instance of the neglect of the influence of culture in consulting work, at least by those who agree with this claim as to the origin of consultancy.

Secondly, Taylorist models seem to neglect vital issues related to finance and business administration. Aitken (2014) states that Taylor was far from thinking “seriously about

management problems”, where he “had nothing to say about finance or pricing or the higher levels of business administration” (p.17). Moreover, Taylorists seem to be confident about the universality of their models. Saint-Martin (2011) asserts that these practitioners believed that they could develop a universal set of rules, activities, and principles to manage industrial resources (Saint Martin, 2011).

The positivist view of the world from one financial and administrative angle, for which a universal set of rules can be developed and applied, simply neglects dissimilarities between financial and administrative systems. Management models cannot be assumed to be successful without serious consideration of related financial and administrative conditions. This is evident in cases that have applied Taylorist models. According to Aitken (2014), the balance between cutting costs and reducing material, along with paying incentives, has been difficult to the extent that managements that have applied Taylorist models have had to continuously make many “exceptions” to overcome the lack of critical consideration for management and financial issues. These exceptions and changes have resulted in unexpected reactions in the workplace (Aitken, 2014).

Therefore, Wright and Kipping (2012) argue that, because of the limitations of scientific management, consultants are “those advising top managers on strategy and organisation, not those who used stop-watches to speed up employees’ work in the shop floor” (p.30). McKenna (1995) argues that modern management consulting originated between the 1920s and 1930s, where “Taylorism was not the predominant influence on the development of consulting firms. Instead, early management engineers drew on the practice of accountants and engineers to offer CEO-level studies of organization, strategy, and operations” (p.56). However, although “none of the large modern American management consulting firms have Taylorist origins” (p.52), Wright and Kipping (2012) affirm that the growth of the consulting industry until the 1960s was based on work produced by scientific management.

2.2.2.2 The Cultural, Institutional and Relational Drivers of the Early Development of the Consulting Industry in the US in the 1920s and 1930s

This sub-section elaborates on the rapid development of the consulting industry in the United States since the turn of the twentieth century. It relies on the studies of Christopher McKenna (1995, 2006), one of the well-known authors who discussed the origins and growth of the consulting industry (David, 2012).

This sub-section aims to conclude that the rapid development of the consulting industry in the United States was fundamentally affected by rise of the capitalist culture and the relational and political conditions associated with this culture, which shaped this industry in the United States.

- **The Rise of the Corporate and Capitalist Culture**

According to Robbins (2008), after World War I, the United States emerged as the international leading economic power, when its national income doubled and the production levels of coal, steel, and oil soared.

However, although there was enormous growth in production and manufacturing, this growth was associated with a decline in the wages of labourers and the power of their unions. The new forms of organisation in factories led to greater fatigue and resulted in around 20,000 fatalities from industrial accidents every year in the 1920s. More critically, the courts stopped the formation of new labour unions and the “application of social laws such as those prohibiting child labour. It was an era of the rise of a new, great economic power – the corporation” (Robbins, 2008, p.86).

According to Robbins (2008), the most important and recognisable development from the early twentieth century until the 1990s in the United States was the merger frenzy. Companies such as General Motors, Ford, General Electric, Chrysler, Standard Oil, and Dupont Chemical dominated the market to the extent that, in 1929, the two hundred largest companies possessed half of America’s non-banking wealth. Ultimately, corporations have become one of the main governance units in the United States, and the setters of a new capitalist culture. Robbins (2008) states:

“Gradually corporations gained control of state legislatures, such as those in Delaware and New Jersey, lobbying for (and buying) legislation that granted charters in perpetuity, limited liabilities of corporate owners and managers, and gained the right of corporations to operate in any way not specifically prohibited by the law. For example, courts limited corporate liability for accidents to workers ... prohibited the state from setting minimum wage laws, limiting the number of hours a person could work, or setting minimum age requirements. A Supreme Court ruling in 1881, however, arguably set the stage for the full-scale development of the culture of capitalism” (Robbins, 2008, p. 89)

Robbins (2008) explains that the power of corporations has grown to the extent that the Supreme Court ruled that corporations are allowed to use their economic power in a way they had not previously. Based on the Fourteenth Amendment, the court ruled that the private corporation can be regarded as a *natural person* and therefore has the same rights and protections given to persons by the Bill of Rights, including free speech. Therefore, “corporations were given the same ‘rights’ to influence the government in their own interest as were extended to individual citizens, paving the way for corporations to use their wealth to dominate public thought and discourse” (p. 89). Thus, Robbins (2008) describes

that corporations had become free to use the mass media, lobby legislatures, establish educational institutions, such as several business schools established by corporate leaders in the early periods of the twentieth century, and establish charitable organisations to convince people of their lofty plans. Generally, corporations were keen to construct a public image that they believed would serve their best interests.

The main argument here is that corporations used their power to construct conditions in which they would make more money. But “in a larger sense they used this power to define the ideology or ethos of the emerging culture of capitalism” (Robbins, 2008, p. 89).

For consultants, these capitalist settings offered a rich ground for consultancies to develop and even thrive. This development can be seen in two dimensions. Firstly, the enormous growth and the increasing complexity of the large manufacturing organisations in the United States at that time created a rich market for professionally trained individuals in the fields of engineering, accounting, and law to offer independent counselling (McKenna, 1995).

Secondly, the rise of corporations along with the increasing demand motivated these professionals to gain more power and influence by merging their practices within larger and older corporations. Consequently, corporations in these three professions enjoyed strong growth offering specialised services from their larger partnerships to their expanding corporate clientele (McKenna, 1995).

Until the 1930s, the services of these specialised corporations and individuals were demanded by banks where “merchant bankers provided both commercial and investment banking services, bankers acted both as internal advisors to help their client companies and as external regulators to safeguard investors’ interests” (McKenna, 1995, P.53).

However, although management consulting services were accessible from the turn of the twentieth century, the rapid growth in number and size of these firms did not start until the Great Depression. The institutional changes in the United States, which were mainly driven by political developments and new commercial regulations, resulted in the rapid growth in the management consulting industry (McKenna, 1995).

- **The Institutional Influence on the Development of Consultancy in the 1930s**

With the dominance of capitalist culture and the rise of corporate power during the 1920s and 1930s, business and political leaders were aware of the fact that corporations could not smoothly run the economy (Robbins, 2008). This was confirmed by the crash in the stock market in 1929 and by failures of the banks in the early 1930s. Therefore, Congress passed a new act prohibiting commercial banks from engaging in any non-banking activities, which

meant that commercial banks “could no longer act as management consultants”, insurers or property developers (McKenna, 1995, p. 55).

Since 1934, these federal regulations have forced commercial banks to hire external consultants to render their views on the organisation or bankruptcy of an existing company or on the formation of a new public one. Commercial banks concurrently encouraged executives to hire management consultants, since the banks could no longer assign internal officers to provide organisational studies for clients. These new regulations in banking “opened up the vacuum into which firms of management consultants rushed” (McKenna, 1995, p. 55). This political development in the United States resulted in the emergence of what is known now as management consulting. Since the 1930s, the field of management consulting has experienced phenomenal growth in the United States (McKenna, 1995).

- **The Relational Influence on the Development of Consultancy in the 1930s**

The development of consultancies in the United States was driven not only by the demand created by the new political developments and commercial regulations. In fact, securing new clients was one of the major challenges that consultancies faced at that time, despite the increasing demand on their services. Therefore, known consultants used social networking which had been effective at securing clients in the early developments of consultancy in the United States. McKenna (2006) states that some consultancies “were particularly successful because of their strong connections with faculty at M.I.T. and Harvard and the pre-eminence of the Boston banks” (p.30). Also, some firms “used their personal connections—Louis Brandies was Arthur D. Little’s lawyer, and Edwin Webster’s father ran Kidder Peabody’s Boston office—to secure important clients” (p.30). Moreover, McKenna (1995) states, “In order to secure clients, McKinsey methodically cultivated contacts throughout the financial community. He claimed to have taken every important banker in Chicago or New York to lunch and, in return” (p. 56). McKinsey claimed that nearly everyone had given him some work at one time or another.

The importance of this social networking was not only for consultants to secure new clients; it was also important for the growth and continuity of their business. In this context, Kipping (1999) affirms that this was not only crucial for carrying out of the assignment but also for building contacts amongst local businesses.

2.3 The Internationalisation of Consultancies and the Cultural Influence on Their Management Knowledge

The aim of this section is to outline that, although the appearance and development of the consulting industry seems to have been driven by the cultural conditions that existed in the United States in the first few decades of the twentieth century, the international expansion of the industry beyond the United States seems to have been influenced by the cultures of those countries into which the American consultancies expanded. Although this cultural influence can be identified in the literature, only implicit insights about its role and influence on the internationalisation of American consultancies are offered. In other words, it is not yet sufficiently discussed in the literature.

2.3.1 The International Expansions of American Consultancies

The international expansion of consulting organisations can be linked either to the first claim, which suggests that the initial attempt of American consultancies to internationalise their services took place at the turn of the twentieth century, and stemmed from the reputation of scientific management to solve production issues. Alternatively, it can be linked to the second claim, that suggests management consulting originated in the United States between the 1920s and the 1930s and expanded into Western Europe in the 1960s, and resulted from American 'know-how' and professionalism. This section will demonstrate the international expansion of American consultancies in both phases and will present the influence of culture that has been only implicitly discussed in both periods.

For the period of scientific management, this section presents how it was accepted only as a concept that sought to increase production and efficiency, while American scientific management models, such as the Taylorist models, did not enjoy the same level of acceptance. This is because the content of these models was challenged by cultural obstacles that limited their application. For instance, although the incentive payment, which was part of Taylor's model, was claimed as successful in the United States, it was rejected in France because it was perceived as a bribe by the French workers. The acceptance of the concept of scientific management and the failure of its American models resulted in the appearance of new European models of scientific management that had been developed to accommodate the cultural differences.

For the period of the 1960s, the consulting industry in the United States experienced massive growth, resulting from the increasing demand for consulting services, believed to be a fashionable source of knowledge required for businesses to grow and survive (Clark and Fincham, 2002). Consequently, as a result of their activities, consultancies tapped into new knowledge jurisdictions that allowed them to grow and expand internationally

(McKenna, 2006). But, although American management consultancies expanded to Western Europe, driven by the fame of their professionalism and know-how, these expansions took place at different times and at varying speeds because of cultural challenges associated with each country (Kipping and Armbrüster, 1999). Consultancy research literature does not offer a sufficient understanding of the influence of culture on the international dissemination of management knowledge by consultants. This might be because of the relatively young age of the industry, which has been growing rapidly at a pace that cannot be matched by the academic field. Also, it might be because of the fact that, until 2009, most consultancy research was written by or for consultants, as suggested by Sturdy et al. (2009). This means the focus was on the consultants' side while the side of the client, which would constitute the cultural difference, was not present in the research. In fact, Sturdy et al. (2009) affirm that the client's side has long been neglected in consultancy research.

2.3.1.1 The Influence of Culture on the First Wave of International expansion of American Consultancies: The International Expansion of Scientific Management to Western Europe

This section demonstrates the 'initial' attempts by consulting firms to internationalise their services into Western Europe at the turn of the twentieth century. It elaborates on two main factors that drove this international expansion of scientific management. Firstly, the reputation of scientific management in the United States attracted Western European clients who needed to increase their productivity after World War I. Secondly, the social networking skills of American consultants allowed them to use their multinational clients to expand to their home countries in Western Europe. Ultimately, this section argues that, although American consultancies managed to expand into Western Europe, using their reputed scientific management models and social networking skills, their expansion was affected by serious cultural obstacles that are only implicitly discussed in the literature. This sub-section elaborates on how these cultural obstacles affected the international expansion of the American scientific management models in Western Europe.

- **The Acceptance of the Concept of Scientific Management and the Reaction to its American Models in Western Europe**

Scientific management at the turn of the twentieth century enjoyed a broadening reputation in the United States because of the domination of the culture of efficiency and productivity. Its reputation, along with the need of European companies to increase their productivity, facilitated its dissemination in Western Europe at the turn of the twentieth century (Merkle, 1980; Kipping, 1999; Levant & Nikitin, 2009), and especially after World War I, when the need to enhance productivity was much higher because of the post-war shortage of manpower (Nelson, 1992).

Scientific management was brought to Western Europe by followers and competitors of Taylor, who were known as 'efficiency experts' or 'industrial engineers'. They developed a reputation in the United States and abroad by publishing articles, charging for advice, and delivering lectures. For instance, the pioneer of motion study, Frank Gilbreth, worked as a consultant for companies in Britain and Germany before the First World War (Merkle, 1980; Nelson, 1992; Kipping, 1999). A. Morinni, the Italian engineer who examined the Emerson system in American companies, applied this system to automobile and metal-working firms in France in 1914. Bertrand Thompson, who studied Taylor's methods extensively and taught them to his students at Harvard Business School, went to France and opened an office in Paris in 1918 (Kipping, 1999). Le Chaterlier was an influential European pioneer who was considered, after 1904, to be the driving force of dissemination of scientific management in Europe, and especially in France. Le Chaterlier used his prestige as a professor at the College De France and the Ecole des Mines, to ensure that, "Taylor's ideas received a respectful hearing in the highest circles of French Society" (Nelson, 1992, p. 18).

According to Nelson (1992), although scientific management was popular in Western Europe after World War I, the Western European reaction to Taylorist models was not positive (Nelson, 1992). This was because of cultural differences between the United States and those countries to which Taylorist models had expanded, and because those countries had not accepted some of the vital content of those models.

For instance, in France, most employers remained unconvinced, mainly because of the strikes that were associated with the early application of Taylorism (Nelson, 1992; Kipping, 1999; Levant & Nikitin, 2009). To French workers, despite the fame and system of the incentive payments, they perceived such positivist time studies as 'malign' or harmful (Nelson, 1992).

In Britain, there were no advocates of Taylorism before World War I. The main engineering publications had either disregarded or criticized Taylor's work. Influential industrialists such as B. Seebom Rowntree and Edwards Cadbury, who had been identified with managerial reform, published aggressive analyses of Taylor's work. Socialist critics were also unfriendly (Nelson, 1992). Moreover, "employers were even more reluctant to embrace the new methods of shop floor management, focusing on industrial psychology and human relations instead" (Kipping, 1999, p. 196). This gives a clear indication of the critical role of humans in the way that British industrialists and executives thought and worked. Consequently, such American models that looked at humans as similar to machines were unlikely to be accepted. Moreover, the British workers seemed to have enforced care for their well-being as human-beings on the decision makers. According to Nelson (1992: 19), "the consensus of economic historians is that Taylor's work had no immediate impact in Britain due to the hidebound conservatism of British executives", who were preoccupied by "industrial relations and labour unrest" resulting from "a sharp increase in labour militancy and union

activity” (p. 19). This power and influence of labour unions and continuous unrest may explain why British employers were reluctant to embrace Taylor’s methods.

It appears to be the case that these negative Western European reactions to Taylorism can be linked to the positivist ideology behind the models, which clearly neglect the influence of the human factor, and the treatment of humans as similar to machines. This may be because the culture of maximising production and efficiency was overwhelming in the United States at the turn of the century to the extent that such positivism would not lead to severe reactions. On the contrary, although Western Europe needed to increase its production capacity, the culture of manufacturing was not overwhelming to the point that it could deny the distinctive nature of humans as workers.

These reactions confirm the criticality of ignoring the human factor and answer the questions raised earlier about the validity and applicability of these positivist models in other cultures. This could be an indication that models that are successful or popular in one country may not be guaranteed the same success in others, simply because of the differences between cultures which govern people, in their ways of working, thinking, and feeling. Cultures have different priorities stemming from their social, political and even historical conditions, whereby they do not all place similar value on money, production, comfort, and prestige. Therefore, methods that rely on incentive payments are not guaranteed to work effectively among people who are not necessarily driven by money. In other words, treating people as machines cannot be considered to be effective if people (from different countries) are not driven by the same level of motivation towards increasing productivity and efficiency. Similarly, people who prioritise comfort over money may not be motivated by money to work harder. In the same way, people who feel satisfied with their level of production cannot be expected to work harder to increase and organise their production as they would if they were in a state of war or chaos.

Therefore, because of these cultural differences, the level of dissemination of Taylorism to Western Europe appears to be low (Kipping, 1999). According to Nelson (1992), despite considerable efforts to spread Taylorism in Western Europe, only a handful of European managers and engineers spent significant periods at Taylor’s practice in Philadelphia, and his associates worked entirely in the United States. However, the reaction to scientific management in Western Europe was, interestingly, different from one country to another.

It is important to highlight that, although Western Europe had not showed strong support for Taylorist models, it had adopted scientific management as a concept. In other words, Taylorist models were not accepted in Western Europe, although the concept of scientific management that these models offered was strongly welcomed. This was evident in the new European models developed upon the concept of scientific management in Western Europe, especially after World War I (Nelson, 1992).

For instance, in France, one of the best -known and most successful scientific management firms in Western Europe at the time in terms of scale, speed, and geographical scope was established by Frenchman Charles Eugene Bedaux. His company offered a new measurement system, known as the Bedaux System, which became very popular in France (Kipping, 1999; Kipping & Clark, 2012).

In Germany, “‘systematic management’ seemed to grow naturally out of ‘bureaucratic traditions’. As a result, German industrialists introduced various scientific management techniques” (Nelson, 1992, p. 17). According to Kipping (1999), the Germans developed their own system of “performance measurement and reward”, which was widely used and promoted by the “National Committee of Work Time Determination” (p. 196).

In Britain, where Taylor received aggressive and unfriendly reactions from industrialists such as Edward Cadbury, as well as socialists and executives, new scientific management models were produced using many Taylorist methods, despite previous disclaimers. Historians indicated that, although Edward Cadbury and Hans Renold had published a hostile analysis of Taylor’s methods, they later endorsed scientific management. Scientific management became well established in Britain to the extent that “an American engineer who surveyed European industry in 1920 found England, “the most complete installation of scientific management I have ever seen” (Nelson, 1992, p.19).

This is a clear indication that although management models may offer successful ideas and concepts, the environment in which they are applied requires culturally appropriate models that accommodate the local cultural conditions.

The fact that models were modified indicates that they could not be applied in the same way that they were by American consultants in the United States. A model would not be modified unless it was not fully compatible with the new cultural setting. Since these American models focused on the interaction between machines and humans, modifying machines to accommodate a new model design was viable, and it was more viable to modify models than to modify humans. Therefore, it is rational to assume that the main driver of these modifications to scientific management models was the difference between American and Western European workers (the humans) for whom the models were modified.

Consequently, the fact that European consultancies developed their own scientific management models for their local markets led to a loss for American consultancies that promoted Taylorism in Western Europe (Kipping, 1999). However, although the literature acknowledges the influence of culture on this stage of expansion in Western Europe, it does not offer deep insights into this cultural influence. It is not clear in the literature whether these models received these negative reactions because of their designs or because of the

ways in which the models were delivered to these new international clients. These early signs of the influence of culture on the international dissemination of consulting knowledge demonstrate how critical this influence is and stress the need for the research to concentrate more on this area.

• **Secondly, the Relational Influence on the Dissemination of Scientific Management into Western Europe**

It is understood that the international expansion of scientific management consultancies enjoyed two elements that constituted a suitable social context in which reputation and scientific management ideas spread. Those two elements were, firstly, the use of multinational clients to expand to their home countries (Kipping, 1999; Schakett et al., 2011). Secondly, the social networking skills of the American consultants (Kipping, 1999; Glücker & Armbrüster, 2003) that stemmed from their immigrant culture. This made them more open to other cultures (Chand and Ghorbani, 2011; Hirschman, 2013) and may have made them more motivated to expand internationally.

Firstly, in the context of using multinational clients as bridges to expand internationally, Kipping (1998) suggests that the expansion of American consultants into Western Europe was particularly motivated by interpersonal relationships that allowed American consultants to use their American multinational clients in the United States as 'bridges' to those clients' countries (Kipping, 1999).

According to Schakett et al. (2011), these relationships with multinational clients were effective for marketing in the service industry. They created social bonding between clients and service providers, which ultimately resulted in the buyer's trust, loyalty, and higher satisfaction with the service provider, as well as the perception of quality service. In other words, it can be assumed that these relationships developed a social context through which cultural misunderstanding and behavioural inappropriateness were significantly reduced. Therefore, people from different cultures became more willing to interact and exchange ideas.

Secondly, the social networking skills that American consultants showed in the United States seem to have allowed them to secure more clients (Kipping, 1999). This feature also seems to stem from their American culture, which encourages networking and openness to others from different cultures, especially in the context of trade (Stulz & Williamson, 2003).

If social networks worked well for American consultants securing clients inside the United States, it is no wonder that they used the same method to bridge to overseas clients through existing ones. Kipping, (1999) and Glücker & Armbrüster (2003) affirm that during the early expansion into Western Europe, American consultants considered the importance

of social networking for international expansion. Accordingly, they established relationships with influential social, and possibly political, individuals who introduced them to more potential clients (Kipping, 1999; Glücker & Armbrüster, 2003).

However, the role of social relations seems to be critical for the expansion and sustainability of consultancy even within Europe and by European consultants. For instance, although the Bedaux model was effective and successful in Europe, it is suggested that it was Bedaux's personal social-business skills that were behind his success, keeping him well connected with local elites in various European countries, (Kipping, 1999), such as King Edward VIII (Kipping & Clark, 2012). Bedaux succeeded in establishing close relationships with influential individuals through lavish social activities, such as parties he used to host in his castle in the French Loire Valley (Kipping, 1999). These social activities attracted the business press, which had been more interested in his social activities than his consulting activities. At that time, the press considered individuals like Bedaux to be celebrities rather than consultants (Kipping & Clark, 2012), where the "attention to their public profile was driven by their personality and their personal skills rather than their role as knowledge entrepreneurs" (Avakian & Clark, 2012, p.4). Bedaux might have believed in the role of social networking in the development of consulting, based on his experience in the United States before he returned to Europe in the 1920s (Avakian, 2004). This would mean the American culture of networking had been transferred to Europe and helped early scientific management consultants like Bedaux succeed.

The fame, reputation, and relationship with powerful politicians that Bedaux enjoyed at that time gave him enough power to expand his business. In this context, Quinn and Shapiro (1991) affirm that the phenomenon of businesses gaining power through establishing relationships with politicians was apparent to the extent that there were long-lived social science controversies about whether or not businesses and business people dominated politics in capitalist democratic countries. In fact, the power is well balanced between politicians and business people, where the essence of that balance comes from the fact that "voters hold politicians accountable for the performance of the economy and that politicians be dependent on the voluntary market transactions of business firms to provide investment, employment, and economic growth" (p. 853). In these relationships, businesses create jobs and investments that contribute to the economic growth supported by government policies. Economic growth increases public satisfaction and healthy economic policies sustain businesses and help them to develop (Quinn & Shapiro, 1991).

However, although social networking with influential politicians gives more power to businesses, they are critical and powerful to the extent that they may destroy other relationships. For instance, the influential relationships that helped Bedaux grow and expand in Europe were also the main reason behind the decline in his business and damage

to his reputation “which suffered due to his association with high-ranking Nazi officials” (Kipping, 1999, p. 201).

- **Discussion**

From the previous discussion, we can conclude that networking and social relations are important for introductions to new clients. However, social networks can only be beneficial if clients are satisfied, and the service results in loyalty and trust that motivates them to recommend the service provider to new potential clients. Therefore, satisfaction with the service provided is the main reason for success in securing new clients, and in maintaining business with existing ones.

If the above conclusion is applied to the movement of the Taylorists from the United States to Western Europe, it can be seen that the satisfaction of their multinational clients in the United States was the bridge by which these American consultants were introduced to new clients in Western Europe. However, because the solutions provided were often not appropriate for the new market, they lost the satisfaction, trust and loyalty of the new clients. This was evident when, according to Kipping (1999), the American Marshall Plan administration decided to use managers and executives instead of consultants for its mission in Europe. American consultancies lost their ‘social bridges’ and only a few American consultancies were successful during this period because of their ‘distinctive services’ (Kipping, 1999).

If the role of social bridges was to secure entry and clients for American consultants, their distinctive knowledge products should have helped them stay and grow in the market. But the literature suggests that American consultancies shrank in Western Europe as soon as they lost their social bridges. This supports the first argument that indicates that the services were challenged by culture, and opens up further questions about the quality of the interactions through which these knowledge products were delivered.

This vital issue seems to be missing from the literature, which does not offer any insights about relational conditions and factors, such as language, that influenced the survival of American consultancies in Western Europe at this stage. As we shall see in the Conceptual Framework chapter, language is the medium of communication between clients and consultants (Searle, 1995). If language was a barrier to interactions between clients and consultants, then it is rational to assume that the quality of the interaction, through which knowledge is exchanged by means of language (Searle, 1995), was not sufficient to deliver the new knowledge effectively. Consequently, this could reflect on the overall satisfaction with the consulting experience. According to Kipping (1999), this satisfaction is critical for consultants to grow and secure more clients.

2.3.1.2 The Influence of Culture on the Second Wave of International Expansion of American Consultancies from the 1960s Onwards

In addition to the literature affirm the dissaminsation of Taylorist models in Western Europe was minimal, there is literature that supposes that the international expansion of American consulting firms started in the 1960s, when well-recognised professional service firms from the United States established branch offices in Western Europe (Kipping, 1999; Kipping and Armbrüster, 1999, Saint-Martin, 2011).

By the 1960s, management consulting in the United States reached new heights with the appearance of the so-called "big three" (McKenna, 2006) or "big five" (Clark and Fincham, 2002) leading consultancies. This was a result of a massive growth in the industry, which was accounted for by the clients' high level of demand for consulting services. The client organisations approached consultancies in response to the "radical discontinuities in their environment" that resulted from technological change, international competition, changing management requirements (Clark and Fincham, 2002, p.4) and recessionary forces (Clark and Fincham, 2002; McKenna, 1995). In these settings, according to Clark and Fincham (2002), management consultancies were seen as "being primarily linked to knowledge deficiencies on the part of client" who "came to believe that new skills, values and qualities lacking in their own organisations were needed" (p.4). Managers were described as being convinced that traditional organisational systems, structures and cultures needed to change fundamentally and quickly.

This crucial development in management consulting was reflected in the significant economic power exerted by these firms (Kipping, 1999; McKenna, 2006). As a result of this rapid development, consultancies quickly and successfully expanded to Western Europe in the early 1960s, where they developed an important presence, in what was called "their golden sixties" or the "golden age". This new expansion of American consulting firms into Western Europe was facilitated by the high demand for their new services, which they developed in the United States from their entrance into new managerial knowledge (Kipping, 1999; McKenna, 2006). This high demand for the new American services was also facilitated by the need for European companies to solve "problems resulting from the expansion and diversification of their activities in the first post-war decade" (Kipping, 1999, p. 209).

During this period, American firms were distinguished by their "know-how" and the 'professionalism' of the American industry (McKenna, 1995; Kipping, 1999, McKenna, 2006). According to Kipping (1999), in *The American Challenges*, Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber

linked the rapid expansion of Booz Allen & Hamilton, Arthur D. Little, and McKinsey to the fact that they were spreading “American style management” (p.209).

In fact, American consultancies were not able to achieve their missions effectively in the European market because of cultural differences between European countries (Kipping, 1999; Kipping and Armbrüster, 1999). For instance, in France, the French were concerned about their cultural values and what distinguished them as French. Yet, for the French after World War II, “post-war America appeared as both a model and menace. The issue for the French was to find a way to possess American prosperity and economic power and yet to avoid what appeared to be the accompanying social and cultural costs ... cast in its grandest terms the issue was, how could France follow the American lead and yet preserve a French way of life” (Kuisel, 1993, p.3). However, despite this cultural sensitivity, the culture of class in France allowed American consulting firms to use their relationships with French elites to gain access and positive introductions to the market (Kuisel, 1993; Kipping and Armbrüster, 1999). As discussed earlier, the role of such social relations was limited to the introduction of new clients, while the applicability and cultural-appropriateness of the new solution determined the continuity of business and developed healthier networks.

In Italy, the Italians were late developers of management consulting (Kipping & Armbrüster, 1999; Crucini, 1999). This was because “Italy lacked a developed and diffused managerial culture because of well-rooted patriarchal traditions based on hierarchies and on the absence of division between ownership and control” (Crucini, 1999, p. 9). The absence of division between ownership and control was reflected in a very low tendency by Italians to “delegate their decisional power to outsiders” (Kipping & Armbrüster, 1999, p. 134).

Sweden was more open to other cultures than other Western European cultures were (Kipping & Armbrüster, 1999). This is a cultural feature that the Swedes share with the Americans, who are recognised for their openness to other cultures, as asserted by Stulz and Williamson (2003). This common cultural feature resulted in the Swedish markets being among the first to welcome American consultancies since the period of scientific management brought by Taylorists. Also, the open-minded mentality regarding similar businesses in other cultures drove Swedish organisations to accomplish successful international expansions (Kipping & Armbrüster, 1999).

Due to such cultural differences, Kipping and Armbrüster (1999) acknowledge that, although American consultancies enjoyed high demand for their services both in the United States and in Western Europe, their expansion into Western European countries affected each country differently.

Following the international expansion of American consultancies, the literature on consultancy continued to produce substantial input about the development of consultancy in industrial and emerging economies. Among the available English literature are the works of Kipping (1999) and Kipping and Engwall (2002), who produced an overview of the development of the consulting business in Australia, France, and Netherlands. Also, other studies provide insights about the development of the consulting industry in different Western European countries; for instance, the United Kingdom (Tisdall and Huggins, 1982; Ferguson, 2002); Italy (Crucini, 1999, 2004), and Spain and Portugal (Amorim and Kipping, 1999; Faust and Kordon, 2008). Also, there is a growing body of literature on the development of consultancies in emerging economies—for instance, work by Wright and Kwon (2006) on Korea, Wang et al., (2009) on China, Donadone (2009) on Brazil, and transition economies in Eastern and Central Europe by Kostera (1995), Macdonald (2006), and Faust (2012).

Although the available literature reveals a great interest in the development of consultancies in the international markets influenced by the American origin of the industry (Sturdy et al., 2009), the influence of the different cultural and political settings of the studied countries does not seem to be sufficiently examined. This conclusion is shared by recent studies. For instance, Kipping and Wright (2012), in their study “Consultancy in Context: Global Dominance, Societal Effect, and the Capitalist System”, argue the historical development of consultancy and the literature published on this subject over the past decade. They acknowledge that, “there is now a substantial literature on the development of the consulting business in most of the core industrial and, increasingly emerging economies” (p. 173). But, Kipping and Wright affirm that although these studies have provided rich insights, they still have important limitations. “These studies neither situate the development of consulting in each country within the broader context of society, political economy, and culture nor do they compare and explain different national trajectories” (p. 174). This has been affirmed earlier by McKenna (2006), who states “many academics have been too quick to dismiss the lasting influence, both structural and cultural, on consultants in widely disseminating the American corporate model in Europe during 1960s” (p.166).

In the available literature, the influence of culture does not go beyond acknowledgement. This acknowledged influence does not seem to be addressed adequately. The next section will elaborate on how culture has a critical influence on managerial knowledge, on its validity in different cultural settings, and on the ways in which consultants construct it and exchange it with their clients.

2.3.1.3 The Influence of Culture on the International Expansion of European Consultancies to Eastern Europe after the Collapse of the Soviet Union

The critical influence of culture on the international expansion of consultancies seems to be only implicitly acknowledged, even in the more recent literature on the international expansions of European consultancies. In his discussion about the use of consultants in trade unions in the UK and Poland, Macdonald (2006) highlights some critical cultural influences on the expansion of European consulting firms into Poland after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Macdonald (2006) states that, after the collapse of the communist government, enterprises in the region of the Soviet Union were more exposed to Western capitalism. Western governments argued that the conversion of these communist enterprises to capitalism would be accomplished more thoroughly by Western consultants. Due to assumptions made by Western European consultants at the time about the simplicity of the Eastern European environment, the job of Western consultants was expected to be relatively smooth, and the conversion was expected to be speedily accomplished. Unfortunately, this was not the case because of cultural differences that challenged the implementation. Projects conducted by Western European consultants in Poland were less successful than promised; transforming different cultural and economic systems was more difficult than Western consultants predicted.

According to Macdonald (2006), Polish clients and consultants were critical of the influence of Western European consultants operating in Eastern Europe. The main criticism was the lack of cultural awareness demonstrated. The cultural challenges identified by Macdonald (2006) are related to the maturity of the consulting industry in Poland, which was greatly affected by the cultural setting in Poland at that time. Ultimately, the less advanced nature of the consulting industry in Poland was behind the unexpected difficulty in transforming the economy. This can be demonstrated in three facets presented by Macdonald.

Firstly, there was a large difference in the conception of management consulting between Western and Eastern Europe. It has been highlighted that one of the major cultural differences facing consultants in Poland was the existence of notions that no longer existed in Western Europe. In Poland, hiring management consultants was seen as meaning that the organisation was in trouble, but this did not have the same association in Western Europe. According to Saint-Martin (2011), this same view had existed in North America and Western Europe during the 1930s, when competitors, clients and shareholders tended to view hiring consultants as a sign of weakness, sickness or failure.

Secondly, hiring consultants was seen as a threat by employees, who tended to believe that their organisation was going through difficulties. According to Macdonald, (2006), this was

because of the extent of consultants' sphere of influence, which was different between Poland and Western Europe. In the West, consultants worked with managers who hired them and, therefore, the influence of these consultants was not necessarily important for the organisation. In Poland, consultants had relationships with the organisation and influenced the organisation as a whole, rather than the manager as an individual. However, according to Kipping and Armbrüster (1999), the feeling that consultants were threatening also existed in Germany at the time of the early emergence of consulting in Germany.

Thirdly, although the consulting firms' names and reputations were important to Polish clients, they were not as important and influential as they were in Western Europe (Macdonald, 2006). The pride of reputation associated with Western consultants and the fact that Poland had just emerged from a communist economy may have resulted in Western consultants getting the impression that their Polish clients were gullible or motivated to adapt to the 'latest knowledge' that they were assumed to offer.

This was evident in the behaviour of Western European consultants in Poland. According to Macdonald (2006), Western European consultants were not always willing to satisfy the needs of their clients, which were considered as naïve expectations. However, this behaviour by Western consultants created a competitive advantage for the local Polish consultants, familiar with the cultural setting, to interact effectively and deliver what their clients expected. More importantly, in Polish organisations, there was an expectation that consultants should have knowledge of the local environment, along with practical experience, not just the latest knowledge from the best business schools. In other words, Western European consultants did not make enough effort to adapt their knowledge and tools to be compatible to the Polish cultural setting (Macdonald, 2006).

As a result of these cultural challenges, the activities of Western consultants in Poland did not transform communist enterprises to capitalism as smoothly and speedily as expected. The long experience of Western European consultants working in the developing world demonstrated that this was not the correct way to operate overseas in less developed industries. In fact, Western European methods and tools, which had been described as "culturally inappropriate", failed to be imposed on other societies, (Macdonald, 2006, P. 414). Unfortunately, the literature does not offer any deeper insights into the influence of culture on consulting knowledge brought by international consultants to other parts of the world, such as Saudi Arabia, which, according to Bianchi et al., (2016), has been one of the biggest employers of international consultancies over the past ten years.

2.4 The Influence of Culture on International Dissemination and Application of Management Knowledge

Kipping and Armbrüster (1999) discuss the reasons behind the differences in the dissemination of management knowledge by American consultants in Western Europe:

“The major reason for these differences is the country - and culture - specific contexts in which management practices evolve, which are largely shaped by the cultural and institutional framework of each country as a result of different historical legacies. At the same time, the availability and development of different carriers, and the kind of knowledge they disseminate, are likely to have considerable effect on management practices and behaviour” (Kipping and Armbrüster, 1999, p.1).

The above statement indicates two major issues related to the influence of culture on the dissemination of management knowledge. Firstly, cultural and institutional frameworks that are different from one country to another shape management practices in each country. This means that one country’s practices might not be applicable in a different country with different cultural and institutional frameworks. Secondly, the availability and development of consultancy, as a carrier of management knowledge and the knowledge it disseminates, are affected by cultural and institutional frameworks. Therefore, it can be concluded that the influence of culture, which influences forms of knowledge, on consulting services can be discussed in two dimensions. First, culture has a determining influence on the applicability of consulting knowledge when applied in a cultural setting different from the one where it originated. Second, the influence of culture is not limited to determining the applicability of consulting knowledge but also extends to governing the ways in which knowledge is constructed and exchanged by consultants.

2.4.1 The Influence of Culture on the Applicability of Imported Management Knowledge

This sub-section elaborates on the influence of culture on the dissemination of American management knowledge in Western Europe. The aim is to make it clear that, although this influence has been established in the cross-cultural management literature, the consultancy literature does not provide explicit or deep insights into the influence of culture on the dissemination of management knowledge by consultants. This is probably because of the reasons related to the age of the industry and the focus on the consultant side Sturdy et al. (2009), which have been discussed in the first chapter.

Adler (1983) notes that, in a review of more than 11000 articles published in twenty-four management journals in the period between 1971-1980, around 80% of them were focused on the United States and conducted by American researchers. Adler (1983) attributes the lack of focus on management outside the United States to the fact that the United States

had an extensive local market at that time and many organisations did not feel the need to expand internationally. Bhagat and McQuaid (1982), however, attribute it to the fact that, until the beginning of the 1980s, the concept of 'culture' was not adequately specified. This might have delayed the focus on the role of culture on the international dissemination and application of management knowledge.

In 1980, the same year that Adler published his article, Hofstede published a paper on organisational dynamics in the 1980s which he entitled "Do American theories apply abroad?" This article created more controversy than expected, despite the fact that it had empirical support. The article simply argued that generally accepted American theories, such as those from Hazelberg, Vroom, Maslow, Likert, McClelland, Blake and Mouton, "may not or only very partly apply outside the borders of their country of origin – assuming they do apply within those borders" (Hofstede, 1993, p. 82). This also might justify why the impact of culture on the international expansion of consultancy has not been sufficiently discussed in the literature.

Although the diversity of management practices has been common knowledge in the United States since the 1960s (Hofstede, 1993), it has taken much longer for the American academics to accept that management practices and even theories may stop being applicable at the national border (Bhagat and McQuaid, 1982; Adler, 1983; Hofstede, 1993). Put simply, this is because managers and employees are human, as described by the Human Relations School in the 1930s. In this context, Hofstede states his main argument that, "management scientists, theorists, and writers are human too, they grew up in a particular period, and their ideas cannot help but reflect the constraints of their environment" (Hofstede, 1993, p.82). Similarly, Hofstede (1993) states:

"management as the word is presently used is an American invention. In other parts of the world not only the practices but the entire concept of management may differ, and the theories needed to understand it, may deviate considerably from what is considered normal and desirable in the USA" (p. 81).

Therefore, it is not a surprise that the academic community has not paid a great attention to this issue. According to Chia and Holt (2008), there are now two main views on management knowledge in management studies. The first is the "rational tendency to sublimate knowledge as something more exact, definitive and logical" and the second is the "practical tendency to subjugate knowledge to social conventions" (p. 141). The second view supports Hofstede's early beliefs about the relationship between management knowledge and the environment it emerges from.

Regardless of political unions, religious backgrounds and ethnicities, countries have different cultural settings and their management practices evolve from these. Perlitz and

Seger (2004) argue that there was an assumption among international companies after the formation of the European Union that they could simply assign a European manager who would be able to run their European businesses effectively. What seems to have been missed by these companies is the fact that a European management model has never existed. “As far as management is concerned, Europe is not a monolithic bloc of countries. Its strength and weakness at the same time is its variety of management styles and cultures. European managers still face very different business environments, cultures and corporate governance issues. Being successful in Europe, therefore, depends very much on knowledge of these differences” (p. 2). Management styles that are successful in Germany may not be successful in France, Italy, or the Nordic countries—not to mention that management styles in Central and Eastern European countries are difficult to recognise because their styles have not been studied for a long time (Perlitz and Seger, 2004).

The explicit insights from cross-cultural management studies published from the 1980s onwards, suggest that there are fundamental cultural differences that may render American management knowledge obsolete in some countries or, at least, less applicable in others. Interestingly, although the cross-cultural management research uses examples related to international consultancies to discuss this issue, consultancy research does not describe such critical incidents. Table (1) offers an overview of those cultural differences that govern and determine the applicability of management knowledge across cultures.

Table 1: Cultural Differences that Determine Suitability and Applicability of Management Knowledge Across Cultures (Hofstede, 1993)

Country	Common Knowledge about Management	In Comparison to the United States
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American type of manager is missing. Occupation (Specialised Knowledge). Manager is not a cultural hero. Engineers fill the hero role. Focus is on apprenticeship. Managers should be experts in solving technical problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Profession (Skills + Knowledge + Appearance + Habits) Motivating workers is among the main duties of American managers.
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American type of manager is missing. Superiority and social class Relationship between (Cadres versus non-cadres). Supports unity of command. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear contractual relationship between managers and employees. Supports distribution of command.
Holland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management is similar to managing a (household). Management principle rotates around the need for consensus. Attach more importance to freedom to choose ways of working, utilising personal skills and abilities, being consulted and guided by managers, training opportunities, helping others and contributing to their organisational achievement and success. Leadership is about modesty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management is similar to managing a (horse drill). Attach more importance to advancement, earnings, benefits, job security and good relationships with managers. Leadership is about assertiveness.
Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American type of manager is missing. The core of the enterprise is the permanent worker group. Payment according to seniority. Employees are controlled by peer groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The core of an American enterprise is the managerial class. Payment according to position. Employees are controlled by managers.

In France, management differences can be seen from two angles. Firstly, the manager in the American sense does not exist in France. The relationship between the manager and the

employee in the US is contractual, which limits considerable prerogatives to the manager. In France, however, the relationship between the employee and the employer is reliant on honour and class (Hofstede, 1993; Lewis, 2005), where “superiors behave as superior beings and subordinates accept and expect this, conscious of their own lower level in the national hierarchy but also of the honour of their own class” (Hofstede, 1993, P. 84). The French way of thinking does not look at this relationship in terms of managers and non-managers. Rather, they look at these relationships in terms of cadres and non-cadres. In France, one becomes a cadre by graduating from certain schools and thus gaining a higher social class regardless of the actual task performed (Maurice et al., 1980; Hofstede, 1993; Lewis, 2005). Secondly, unlike the American style of issuing commands, the French put great emphasis on the unity of command. For instance, in a survey, French managers strongly rejected a suggestion that an employee could report to two managers. Therefore, so-called ‘Matrix organisation’ has never become known in France in the same way as it is in the United States (Hofstede, 1993).

In Holland, the concept of management is neither determined by a contract nor by a class distinction, but via consensus among involved parties, which is achieved by an open-ended exchange of opinions and balancing of interests. From a management theory perspective, both leadership and motivation are different in Holland and the United States. “Leadership in Holland presupposes modesty, as opposed to assertiveness in the United States. No US leadership theory has room for that. Working in Holland is not a constant feast, however. There is a built-in premium on mediocrity and jealousy, as well as time-consuming ritual consultation to maintain the appearance of consensus and pretence of modesty” (Hofstede, 1993, P.85).

In Germany, “the manager is not a cultural hero”; it is the engineer who has the hero status (Hofstede, 1993, P. 83). This is because Germans strive for maximum efficiency in all respects, which gives the engineer a higher status than the manager. Moreover, it forces the manager to behave in a more systematic or technical manner, following specific processes and procedures that assure maximum efficiency. Therefore, the German manager does not have the autocratic status of a French or American manager. Rather, German managers are those who have a deep faith in the system and strive to maximise efficiency. In other words, the autocratic status of German managers can only be acquired by achievement, and maximising efficiency is the most highly-regarded achievement in the German setting. Therefore, the main role of the German manager is to issue systematic instructions to employees to ensure maximum efficiency. This means that they are willing to repeat their instructions several times, and that their employees appreciate this. Accordingly, German managers and employees feel comfortable working in highly regulated environments with specific instructions. This type of environment may ‘irritate’ American and British managers and employees (Lewis, 2005, P.111). Therefore, it is not surprising to learn that “the inapplicability of American concepts of management was quite apparent in 1973, when U.S.

consulting firm, Booz Allen and Hamilton, commissioned by the German Ministry of Economic Affairs, wrote a study of German management from an American view point. The report is highly critical and writes among other things that, "Germans simply do not have a very strong concept of management"" (p.83). This might stem from the fact that German managers operate on the basis of maximising efficiency and micro-managing instructions that assure maximum efficiency. This is a mode of management that Americans are not used to. Lewis (2005) affirms that Anglo-Saxon managers may not feel comfortable working in German environments because of the tight internal management procedures they are required to follow.

In Italy, the manager is like a father. For instance, "an Italian computer company received an advice from a prominent international management consulting firm to restructure to a matrix organisation. It did and it failed; the task-oriented approach of the matrix structure challenged loyalty to the functional boss. In Italy, bosses are like fathers, and you cannot have two fathers" (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2012, p.7).

To elaborate further on the influence of culture on management knowledge, major cultural differences between Britain and Germany in relation to the concept of professionalism will be demonstrated in order to explain why this concept was popular in Britain, but not accepted in Germany.

According to Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 10th Edition (1993), the definition of professionalism is "the conduct, aims or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or professional person" (p. 930). According to Purtilo & Haddad (2015), "Professionalism refers to your total package, how you think, look and act on the job. It includes everything from your technical skills to your appearance to your work habits". It is about soft skills associated with the personality of the practitioner, such as work ethic, adaptability, optimism, attitude and self-confidence. (Purtilo & Haddad; 2015, p. 202). The added value of 'professionalism' emphasises that specialists are in charge and apply the 'best practice' in their occupation (Child et al., 1983).

In Britain, the concept of 'professionalism' is associated with the 'know-how' that had promoted the work of American consultancies during the 1960s (McKenna, 1995; Kipping, 1999, McKenna, 2006). More importantly, the concept of 'professionalism' has an Anglo-Saxon background, as suggested by Johnson (1972), since it was employed by English occupational spokespeople in Britain and the US (Fores and Glover, 1978).

In contrast, in German, there is no distinctive word for 'profession'. Instead, the word 'Beruf' is used, which means an occupation that requires a specific kind of prior training. Therefore, the principle of management competence in Germany is simpler than in Britain. It is grounded on the qualification that one holds in the basic core divisions of

manufacturing and production, such as engineering and chemistry, or administration and economics from a commercial perspective. Therefore, “it is reasonable to argue that a society which has not bothered to label a phenomenon probably does not attach much importance to it” (Child et al., 1983, p. 67). In other words, if the Germans do not recognise a word that defines a certain management concept, then it is plausible to assume that their culture does not attribute much importance to it.

The differences between the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic cultures of management and management practices are fundamental, as discussed by Perlitz and Seger (2004). These fundamental differences explain the variation between the two countries in their perceptions of the concept of professionalism

On the one hand, Perlitz and Seger (2004) state that, in Anglo-Saxon cultures, there is a clear separation between managers and workers, and between the different types of professional training undertaken by workers. In Anglo-Saxon culture, “the closer you come to engineering and production the lower is your status” (p.10). The ideal manager in Anglo-Saxon culture is seen as a cultured generalist, classically educated and capable of coping with contingencies. Moreover, the Anglo-Saxon cultures are suspicious toward specialists.

On the other hand, Perlitz and Seger (2004) state that, in Germanic cultures, there is a high level of respect for technology and production. Therefore, engineers are highly valued. The class system in Germanic cultures is based on specialised education. The more highly educated a person is, the higher is his/her social class. Therefore, the Germanic dual education system, whereby a person learns from on-the-job training and attends a specialised school to gain an apprenticeship certificate, is unique in the world. Management in Germanic cultures is seen as a function rather than a profession. Even top managers regard themselves as engineers, chemists or administrators, rather than managers. Management in Germanic cultures is “‘hands-on’, rather than ‘arm’s length’: weak in delegation, marketing, and strategy, but strong on personal responsibility and the organisation of production and operational details. Above all, a manager is often seen more as a specialist than a generalist. People are selected, placed and advanced on the grounds of their specialist knowledge, experience, and skills. The emphasis on technology frequently leads to neglect of thinking in market opportunities” (Perlitz and Seger, 2004, p. 15).

These distinctive differences between Anglo-Saxon and Germanic cultures offer additional explanation as to why Britain embraced American consultancies earlier than other Western European countries, as affirmed by Kipping and Wright (2012). Moreover, they explain the argument made by Kipping & Armbrüster (1999) about Britain being the preferred location for American Multinational Enterprises, which increased the intensity of the British consulting market. They also explain why the German market was a late starter in management consulting (Kipping & Armbrüster, 1999).

Clearly, because of cultural differences, the acceptability and applicability of American management knowledge in Western Europe can be questioned. However, this critical issue has not been explicitly investigated in consultancy research from an academic perspective. From a professional perspective, the issue does not seem to concern modern international consulting firms. For instance, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) state, “International management consulting firms of Anglo-Saxon origin are still using similar methods to the neglect of the cultural differences” (p. 7). The next section will address this gap from an organisational perspective, focusing specifically on the ways in which international organisations construct legitimacy for their presence in foreign countries.

Moreover, even if practices were copied and adapted to fit within specific cultural settings, the ways in which they are implemented by consultants may vary from one country to another. The emphasis should not only be on assuring the compliance of a certain knowledge product with a specific culture; it should extend to the interpretation of this knowledge by those who receive it (Saint-Martin, 2011; Guillen, 1994). Therefore, in his study of the different implementations of managerialism, Saint-Martin (2011) stresses the importance of considering the influence of cultural values that differentiate people from each other, and consequently differentiate their interpretation of the received knowledge.

The issue of interpretation leads us to highlight the fact that the role of language is still missing from the literature. This question about whether language was one of the obstacles that prevented Taylorism from expanding in Western Europe was raised earlier. Now, even with recent studies, such as those by Saint-Martin (2011) and Macdonald (2006) discussed earlier, the role of language in the work of international consultants is discussed. Therefore, the role of language will be expanded on in the second literature review chapter. Moreover, the Conceptual Framework Chapter will expand on the role of language in the construction and exchange of consulting knowledge, which seems to be crucial. According to Elder-Vass (2012), knowledge is socially constructed through language. In other words, language is a major component in the construction and exchange of consulting knowledge and, therefore, should not be neglected further.

Chapter 3: Literature Review 2: Organisational Level

Literature Review II

3. The Study of The Influence of Culture on Consulting Organisations

Abstract

This chapter focuses on the influence of culture on consulting organisations. It begins by elaborating on the nature of consulting organisations as professional service firms, and then provides an interpretive theoretical framework for examining the influence of the external environment on the organisations' internal environment and outputs. This influence centres on the need for organisations to construct legitimacy by conforming to the rules and requirements of the external environment within which the organisation exists, and with which it interacts. The second half of the chapter is developed in two sections. Firstly, it discusses how and why consulting organisations seek to construct legitimacy using management fashion as a symbolic representation of their superiority and popularity. Here, it is established that although the consulting and symbolic management literature acknowledge that management fashions are culturally specific, the consulting literature does not offer insights about the transferability of management fashions into new cultural territories. In particular, it neglects how prominent ideas that were developed in their home environments can be used to construct legitimacy in new environments. Also, it is not clear in the consulting literature how the different cultural contexts influence the dissemination, decline, and rise of management fashions. Secondly, the chapter discusses the regulating role of the external environment on the way consultancies develop their internal knowledge-management systems, which are thought to be aligned with their intended environment. Hence, it is not yet clear how international consulting organisations mobilise their internal knowledge-management systems to serve new environments.

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter proposed that culture is a significant influential factor on the international expansion of consultancies. It has been established that, although the influence of culture has long been implicitly acknowledged in the literature, extant research does not offer clear insights about what constitutes that influence. To tackle this research gap, it is necessary to investigate the relationship between organizations and their external environments. This relationship allows us to understand challenges that clients and consulting firms might face when they operate in familiar and unfamiliar environments (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2013; Scott, 2013).

Culture is an important intermediary for understanding the distribution of knowledge within local and foreign environments. This chapter, first, sets the scene by reviewing how culture's

influence on consulting organizations is currently discussed. Secondly, it identifies the main gaps that need to be addressed to understand the nature of the impact. The chapter, finally, suggests how this impact can be conceptualized through institutional and legitimacy theory (Scott, 1995; Suchman, 2002).

*** Structure of the Chapter**

The first section identifies that, in the literature, consulting organizations are increasingly viewed as professional service firms (PSFs) that specialize in providing problem-solving services for their clients (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Morris, 2001; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Alvesson, 2004).

The second section deploys an interpretive theoretical framework for conceptualizing the dynamic interaction between organizations and the external and internal environments. As widely argued by Suchman (1995), Hatch and Cunliffe (2006), Deephouse and Suchman (2008), Gardner et al. (2008), Reihle et al. (2010) and Powell and DiMaggio (2012), in order for organizations to exist and survive they need to construct legitimacy by conforming to the social rules and requirements of external environments. This process of constructing legitimacy requires the development of common references of meaning shared by the organization's members and its stakeholders, which govern the internal decision-making mechanisms and how outputs are produced (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2013; Scott, 2013). The neo-institutionalist framework is useful for understanding this process. It explains how organizations need to achieve some form of equilibrium, demonstrated by their perceived conformance to rules and norms. Hence, as Scott (2013) notes, possible cultural challenges can generate obstacles to organizations when they expand internationally.

The third section focuses on how the consulting literature addresses the above issue; namely, the impact of culture on knowledge distribution by consulting organizations within an international context. The first sub-section proposes that consultancies can seek to construct legitimacy by capitalizing on management fashions. As Abrahamson (1996), Benders and Veen (2001), Clark and Fincham (2002), Jung and Keiser (2012) suggest, management fashions constitute an important means of legitimacy because they are associated with already accepted popularity. Such popularity remains crucial for how legitimacy is socially constructed in an international context, where the consulting firms do not have prior activities in that geographical setting (Deephouse and Suchman, 2008; Westphal, and Graebner, 2010; Markóczy et al., 2013). However, the limitation of this approach is that fashionable methods and techniques are unique to the environment in which they are developed, and to the managers for whom they are constructed and rhetorically described. In other words, methods and techniques are developed to fit managerial needs within an existing socio-cultural environment. Hence, Abrahamson (1996) and Abrahamson and Fairchild (1999) described management fashions as 'cultural

commodities' because of their uniqueness to the environments for which they are developed. Although the consulting literature (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Jung and Keiser, 2012) and symbolic management literature (Morgan et al., 1983; Zott and Huy, 2007) acknowledge that management fashions are bounded by their original environment, the consultancy literature does not offer clear insights about using management fashions to construct legitimacy in new environments. Also, not clear is how different cultural contexts, for example, the Western and Arabic contexts, influence the dissemination, decline, and rise of management fashions. These two gaps are theoretically and empirically justified.

The second sub-section proposes that consulting organisations develop internal knowledge-management systems that serve their original environments. Yet, although the consulting literature stresses the critical role that internal knowledge-management systems play for consulting organisations (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Gardner et al., 2008; Reihlen and Nikolova, 2010, Werr, 2012), the literature does not offer clear insights into how consulting organisations mobilise their knowledge-management systems to serve new environments. This gap is theoretically and empirically justified.

From the discussions in both sub-sections, it can be concluded that because of the subjective nature of consulting knowledge, and the different interpretations of the rhetoric and content of management methods and techniques, the interpretive approach is more suitable for the study of the influence of the external environment on consulting organisations.

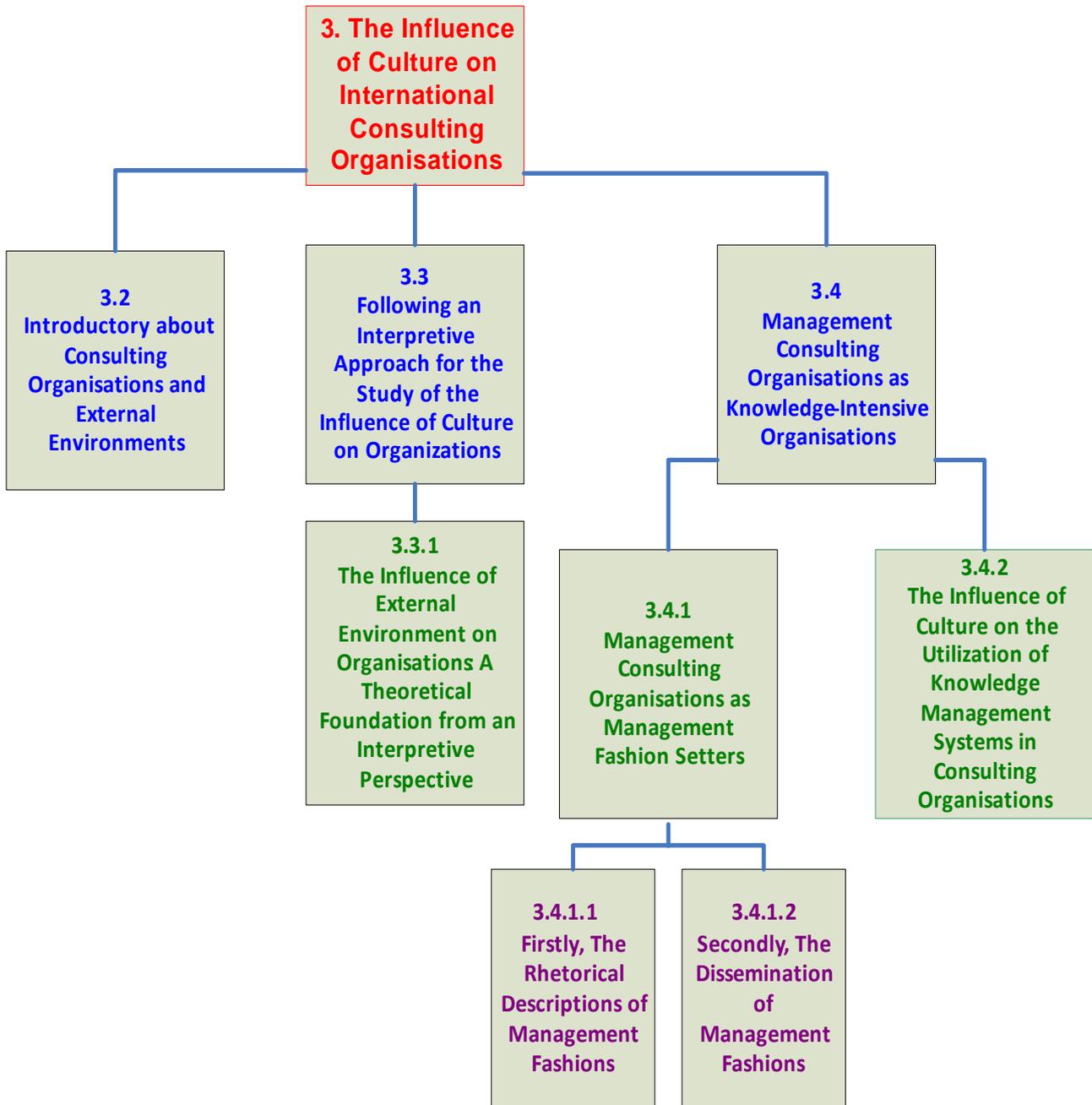


Figure 3: Structure of Chapter 3

3.2 Organisations and their Environments

Hatch and Cunliffe (2013) propose a general conceptual model of organisations. The model proposes that the organisation consists of four components that interact with each other and respond to the external and internal environment. The four components are physical structure, social structure, culture and technology. What makes this model widely used among authors is the fact that these four components represent a summary of the theories

and concepts discussed from modernist, interpretivist, and post-modernist perspectives. As Table) demonstrates, various theories are associated with the four components.

Table 2: Theories Associated with the Four Components of an Organisation.

Component	Theories
Social Structure	Contingency, structuration (Modernist), Improvisation (Interpretivist), de-differentiation (Postmodernist)
Culture	National and Organisation Cultures by Schein and Hofstede (Modernist), Symbols, Symbolism, Symbolic Behaviour (Interpretivist), Culture as Fragmentation (Postmodernist)
Technology	Typologies of Technology (Modernist), The Social Construction of Technology (Interpretivist), Cyborganization (Postmodernist)
Physical Structure	Cultural Geography and architecture theories (Influenced by the three Perspectives)

According to Hatch and Cunliffe (2013), as represented in Figure 4, each of these components provides an angle from which the organisation can be viewed. Firstly, from the perspective of culture, an organisation can be viewed from the norms, values, artefacts, beliefs, assumptions, and behavioural and linguistic symbols that organisational members share. Secondly, from the perspective of the physical structure, organisations can be viewed from the ways in which they have been designed and decorated, their geographical location, and the layout of the workplace. Thirdly, from the perspective of social structure, organisations can be viewed from the internal social order that governs interpersonal relationships between people, their positions and roles within the organisation, and the units and groups they belong to. Fourthly, from the perspective of technology, organisations can be viewed from the products and services they offer to the external environment or from the tools and methods used in the production of their products and services (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2013). Accordingly, this section puts more emphasis on the component of technology to elaborate on the main difference between the services offered by consulting organisations and the services or products offered by other organisations. The next sections will elaborate more on the interaction between this component and the organisational culture and social structure.

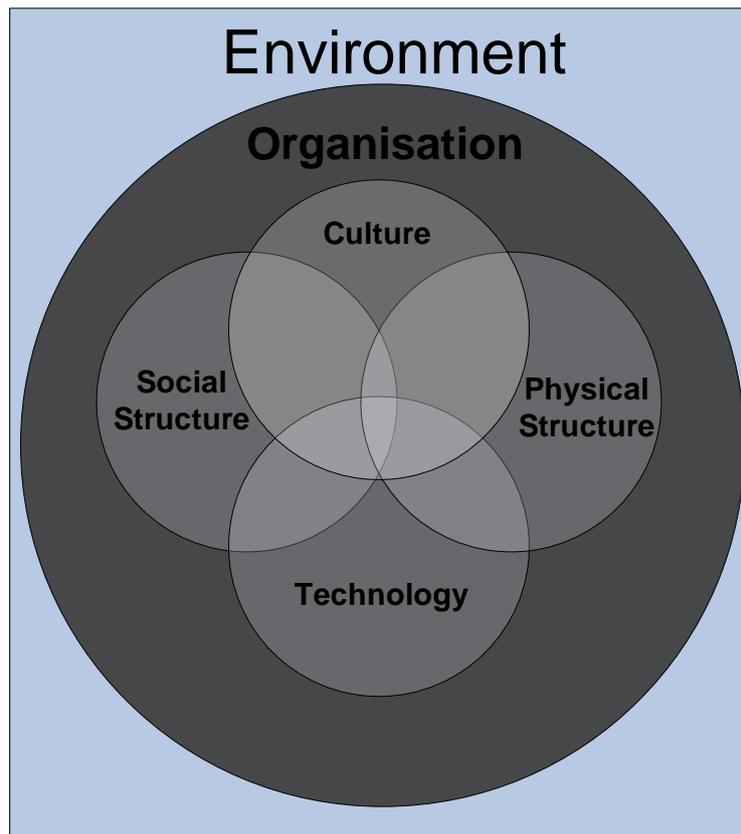


Figure 4: Conceptual model of an Organisation
(Hatch and Cunliffe, 1997)

Essentially, the distinguishing feature of consulting organisations is that they are knowledge-intensive (Gibbons and Wright, 1999; Hansen et al., 1999; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Morris, 2001; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Fosstenlokken et al., 2003; Werr, 2012). Apostolou and Mentzas (1999, p. 130) state that, “management consulting firms are considered typical examples of highly knowledge-intensive companies”. Werr and Stjernberg (2003, p. 881) state that “management consulting companies are commonly discussed as archetypes of knowledge-intensive firms” where studies point to “the role of management consultants as knowledge brokers between their client organisations”.

Starbuck (1992, p. 715) explains the difference between knowledge-intensive firms and other firms:

“The term knowledge-intensive imitates economists' labelling of firms as capital-intensive or labour-intensive. These labels describe the relative importance of capital and labour as production inputs. In a capital-intensive firm, capital has more importance than labour; in a labour-intensive firm, labour has the greater importance. By analogy, labelling a firm as knowledge-intensive implies that knowledge has more importance than other inputs. Although the terms capital-

intensive, labour-intensive, and knowledge-intensive refer to inputs, capital, labour, and knowledge also may be outputs”

It can be derived from Starbuck’s (1992) input that knowledge is the most important component for consulting organisations. This component is the input that the organisation seeks to acquire and the output that it seeks to compete with.

According to Alvesson (2004), organisations that have been described as knowledge-intensive are divided into two main groups: (a) Professional Service Firms (PSFs) and (b) Research and Development firms (R&D). Typical examples of professional service firms are accounting, law, and consulting firms, while firms such as pharmaceutical, biotech, and high-tech firms that rely on engineering knowledge are examples of the R&D firms. The main difference between Professional Service Firms and Research and Development firms is that “the former deal very much in intangibles and most of its professionals interact with the market (client), while the R&D companies typically produce a (tangible) product and the interface between employees and customers is often narrower as contacts go through marketing units” (Alvesson, 2004, p. 19).

According to Morris (2001), consulting organisations are known as professional service firms because the way they do business is through direct interaction with clients to whom they supply intangible knowledge-based advice to solve complex problems. A similar argument is made by Apostolou and Mentzas (1999) who argue that products that consulting organisations offer are not goods or tangible items but complex problem-solving services that are created, formed, or customised for clients’ needs. Therefore, in order to provide these services, consulting organisations develop cumulative knowledge from external resources such as academics and their experience with clients (Friedson, 1988; Sarvary, 1999; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001). Then, the accumulated knowledge is processed through internal knowledge-management systems to produce articulated methods, tools, and cases that consultants use to solve clients’ issues (Friedson, 1988; Gibbons and Wright, 1999; Hansen et al., 1999; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Morris, 2001; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Fosstenlokken et al., 2003; Werr, 2012).

Morris (2001), Ambos and Schlegelmilch (2009) argue that the ability of consultants to formulate clients’ issues and generate knowledge that is perceived to add value distinguishes consultants as vital contributors to the body of knowledge.

Morris (2001, p. 820) states that consultants exploit “structural holes between clients and knowledge”. The reference to structural holes suggests that a relationship of roles and responsibilities exists between the two parties. A similar argument is developed by Suddaby and Greenwood (2001, p. 941), who suggest that management consulting is among the five communities that constitute “the cycle of knowledge production and consumption”. Consultancies are viewed as key players in this cycle because of the generation and

consumption of claims about 'added value'. Those key players in the cycle of knowledge production and management are Big Five professional service firms (Pricewater House Coopers, Ernst and Young, Deloitte, Arthur Anderson - *License surrendered in 2002* and KPMG), business schools, consultants, gurus and consumers (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001).

In the knowledge production and consumption cycle, the added value of consulting knowledge comprises new management methods and techniques resulting from the interaction between consultants and clients (Barley et al., 1988; Strang, 1997; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001). Suddaby and Greenwood (2001) suggest that, since the emergence of these new management methods and techniques results from the interaction between clients and consultants, then this interaction constitutes an appropriate starting point from which the cycle of knowledge production and management begins.

New methods, techniques, practices or ideas are disseminated through the widespread business press, where *gurus* abstract and translate them into a language that can be understood by the audience of management. This stage of converting new practices into understandable language has been termed the 'legitimation stage' (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001). Responsively, the consulting firms commodify the gurus' abstracted and translated output into saleable products that they supply to the consumer (Hansen et al., 1999; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001). This commodification of knowledge provides an economic advantage that consulting organisations seek to establish from the 'mass-customisation' of knowledge-intensive products, reducing the cost of hiring experienced professionals (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001, p. 942). Also, codifying knowledge into saleable products makes new management practices more transferable; they can be readily moved and applied to the client organisation (Devenport and Prusak, 1997), rather than depending on the skills and experience of joiner consultants (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001).

Nevertheless, the big five professional service firms (Pricewater House Coopers, Ernst and Young, Deloitte, Arthur Anderson - *License surrendered in 2002* and KPMG) extend the application of commodified knowledge into new professional jurisdictions, which results in intensifying the cycle of knowledge production and consumption. The intensification results from the increasing opportunity to tap into new methods, techniques or practices that emerge from continuous adaptation and application of commodified knowledge in new domains or industries. For instance, a strategic audit resulted from the adaptation of audit practices to strategic planning (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001).

Moreover, the eagerness of consulting organisations to develop and produce knowledge is vital because it provides them with the power to exert control over the market. This is supported by Suddaby and Greenwood (2001, p.935), who suggest that the big five professional service firms are eager to develop "new knowledge products that lead to

'jurisdictional migration' or colonisation of knowledge". Colonisation of knowledge is the "migration of big five professional service firms into adjacent professional jurisdictions. Colonization is the result of intensification of commodification which has produced intense conflict and change in the organizational field of management knowledge production" (p. 933).

Lastly, business schools conduct analysis and refinement of the existing knowledge products (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001), where management knowledge and new practices are studied and researched (Rovik, 1996; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001).

In conclusion, consulting organisations engage with clients to solve complex issues, regardless of the nature of the proposed solutions, which can be technical or non-technical management solutions. In other words, using the concept of knowledge to refer to the component of technology of organisations does not imply that we exclude management consulting organisations that specialise in IT-related management solutions. Rather, our view is about problem-solving that requires knowledge-intensive interaction between clients and consultants, regardless of the nature of the final solution.

3.3 The Study of the Influence of Culture on Organizations through the Interpretive Approach

In the previous section, it was argued that organisations consist of social structures, physical structures, culture and technology that interact with each other and respond to the environment within which the organisation exists. Identifying the different factors is only the first step.

Differences in epistemological and ontological assumptions have led authors to identify patterns in the way these components are to interact with the organization. In particular, there are three paradigms that carry different assumptions and explain how the different components interact. As Table 3 illustrates, the modernist perspective views the organisation as an independent objective unit and takes a positivist position on its relationship with the external environment. The application of modernist theories is more related to organisational structure, control, and efficiency. Secondly, the symbolic-interpretive perspective “focuses on the organisation as a community sustained by human relations and uses predominantly subjective ontology and interpretive epistemology” (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006, p.19). Symbolic-interpretive theories treat organisations as nets of meanings that are jointly constructed and communicated among those who are related to the organisation (organisational members) and those who are related to its external environment. Lastly, the postmodern perspective provides healthy doubts on dominant theories.

For this research project, the interpretive approach is chosen as the most suitable for two reasons. Firstly, the modernist perspective views organizations as independent objective units, and focuses more on positivist subjects, such as organisational structure, control, and efficiency (Dacin et al., 2002, Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006; Suddaby et al., 2013). Barley and Tolbert (1997) and Bruton et al. (2010) are critical of this perspective because it downplays external social forces, such as norms, values and beliefs, which are influential motives of organizational actions. For this research, culture seems to be a distinguished social force, and its influence on organizations can be better addressed through an interpretive approach that offers a suitable platform for understanding how beliefs, perceptions, values and assumptions influence actions.

Secondly, the interpretive approach seems to provide a more suitable platform for this study on account of its acknowledgement of the influence of the external environment on organisations, and the intangibility of knowledge-based services which distinguish consulting organisations (Alvesson, 2004). As Berger and Luckmann (1991) demonstrate, knowledge is subjectively and socially constructed. Hence, if we are to understand how the external and internal environments interact to affect the process of knowledge production, distribution and consumption, there is a need to deploy an interpretive perspective. The study of culture requires an investigation into the constitution of values, beliefs and

assumptions, which drive behaviour and perceptions of the organisational stakeholders (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006; Scott, 2013).

Table 3: Epistemological and Ontological Assumptions Associated with the Different Paradigms of Organisations

(Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006, P. 14)

	Modernism	Symbolic-Interpretivism	Postmodernism
Ontology	Objectivism, external reality exists independent of knowledge about it.	Subjectivism, our knowledge about objective or external existence of a certain reality is limited to our shared and subjective interpretation of its existence.	Postmodernism, the world is situated in discourse and appears through language, what exists is what is spoken of, the existence of anything can be known through text.
Epistemology	Positivism, the truth is discovered through reliable measurement and valid conceptualization that allow researcher to test knowledge against the objective world. Knowledge is accumulated.	Interpretivism, knowledge is related to the persons who know it and it is understood only from the viewpoints of the same involved persons. Knowledge is socially constricted through multiple interpretations. Therefore, it continuously shifts, re-adjusts and changes over time.	Postmodernism, meanings are not fixed and therefore knowledge is not a precise account of truth. No facts, no independent reality, interpretations only and knowledge is considered as a power play.
Organisations are:	Objectively real units operating within a real world. Systems of actions and decisions driven by norms efficiency, effectiveness and rationality for certain purposes	Continuously constructed and reconstructed by org members through symbolic interactions. Organisations are realities that are socially constructed where meanings are derived from understanding of self and other within the organisational context.	Places for enacting power relations, irrationality, oppression, and communicative distortion. They are text produced by language. They can be re-written to free members from human irrationality and degradation.
Focus of Org Theory	Discovery of universal laws, techniques and methods of control and organisation. It favours rules, rational structures, routine practices and standardised procedures.	Describing how people present order and meaning to their experience within certain contexts through symbolic and interpretive forms, acts and processes.	Deconstruction of organisational texts, disrupting modernist modes and managerial ideologies, revealing oppressed and marginalised viewpoints, boosting inclusive and reflexive forms of organising and theorising.

3.3.1 The Influence of the External Environment on Organisations from an Interpretive Perspective

The Need of Organisations for Legitimacy

Researchers (Suchman, 1995; Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006; Deephouse and Suchmand, 2008; Gardner et al., 2008; Reihle et al., 2010; Powell and DiMaggio, 2012) argue that organizations need *legitimacy* to exist and survive in the environments within which they operate.

The meaning of survival is not only about the reliance on resources and materials, as seems to be the main focus of modernists (Dacin et al., 2002; Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006; Suddaby et al., 2013). Rather, it is about the acceptance of the external social environment within which the organization operates (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006; Scott, 2013). Hatch and Cunliffe (2006, p.87) state, “not only do organisations require raw materials, capital, labour, knowledge, and equipment, they also depend upon the acceptance of the society in which they operate. Organisations whose environments question their right to survive can be driven out of business”.

This social acceptance of the organisations in an institutional environment is what the researchers regard as legitimacy (Suchman, 1995; Scott, 1995; Deephouse and Suchmand, 2008). Suchman (1995, p. 574) defines legitimacy as “the generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed systems of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions”.

In fact, legitimacy is a central component in the definition of institutional environment. Scott (1995, p. 132) states that institutional environments are “characterized by the elaboration of rules and requirements to which individual organizations must conform in order to receive legitimacy and support”.

The notion here is that, in order for organisations to be legitimate, they have to conform to their institutional environment by perceiving the consonance between relevant rules, laws, values and alignment with cultural frameworks (Scott, 1995, 2013). This implies that the outputs of the organisations cannot be considered as options determined through internal arrangements from an array of possibilities that the organisation develops independently. Instead, choices are determined by narrowly defined sets of legitimate options constructed and demanded by the institutional environment of the organisations (Scott, 1991; Hoffman, 1999). Therefore, organisations need to recognise and adapt to the institutional frameworks imposed by the institutional environment in order to produce legitimate responses (Scott, 2013).

The neo-institutional theory offered by the interpretive perspective seems to move beyond the acknowledgement of the need for organisations to recognise and adapt to their institutional environment to explain the processes by which organisations institutionalise to conform to their institutional environments and gain legitimacy (Scott, 1987; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006; Burton et al., 2010). The neo-institutional theory looks into the processes by which structures, such as rules, schemes, routines, norms and values become rule-like social realities that are reflected in the institutionalization of organizations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991).

The result of appropriate institutionalization is the development of a legitimate presence for the organization in its environment (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006; Scott, 2013), which can be seen in the development of “shared conceptions of reality” (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006, p. 86). The term has been defined as “the process by which actions are repeated and given similar meaning by self and others” (Scott, 1987, p. 117). That is, how employees and management identify to their recipients, and vice versa. Institutionalization results in the development of homogeneity between organizations and their stakeholders (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006) to the extent that the conceptions and frames of meanings become recognized and can be negotiated (Scott, 1987; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). Consequently, the actions and outputs of the organization are constructed and delivered in ways that the actors find desirable, proper and acceptable.

Scott (1995, 2013) provides a widely used framework that explains the process through which organisations institutionalise to gain legitimacy.

The following sub-section discusses the three elements (‘pillars’ as described by Scott) that constitute the building blocks of organizational structure and behaviour. According to Scott (2013, p. 74), “each of the three pillars provides a basis of legitimacy”.

3.3.1.1. The Three Pillars of Institutionalisation

The Regulative Pillar

According to Scott (2013), scholars who are more concerned with by the regulatory pillar are known by the importance they give to explicit regulatory rule setting, processes, sanctioning and monitoring activities to influence behaviour. Therefore, the regulative pillar emphasizes the need for organizations to “constrain and regularize behaviour” (p. 59). This involves the capacity of the organization to establish rules, and assures the conformity of others to them. Also, it involves manipulating sanctions, punishments or rewards to influence future behaviour (Scott, 2013).

Legitimate organizations are thought to be the ones that operate in compliance with the legal or quasi-legal requirements enforced by the environment (Scott, 2013). Hoffman (1999) argues that the regulative pillar can be seen as the legal aspect of the organization,

which focuses on monitoring rules that govern actions and behaviours to assure compliance with the external rules and laws. For instance, oil-producing organizations implement certain regulations to avoid oil leaks which may result in penalties.

Although the external rules and laws can be clearly offered in forms of texts, international organizations are still challenged by the correctness of their interpretations of these rules and laws. The misinterpretation of these rules and laws can result in setting new organizational rules that are not compatible with the actual rules of the external environment. Or, even if the organization manages to set the correct rules, organizational actors might misinterpret these rules, which would result in faulty compliance with the external environment.

The Normative Pillar

The emphasis of this pillar is on the normative rules that provide an evaluative, obligatory and prescriptive extent to social life (Bruton et al., 2010; Scott, 2013). The cultural systems of this pillar include values and norms. According to Scott (2013, p. 64), *values* “are conceptions of the preferred or the desirable together with the construction of standards to which existing structures or behaviours can be compared and assessed”, while norms “specify how things should be done; they define legitimate means to pursue valued ends”. Normative systems define objectives or goals, such as making a profit or winning a game, but also, they define appropriate ways to achieve them, such as concepts of fair-trading and moral/ethical rules governing how the game should be played.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that the normative aspect of organisation is a collective struggle between organisational members to form the conditions and methods of their work and procedures. In this context, organisational members from all levels and backgrounds interact to develop the conditions, methods and procedures that they find work best for them while conforming to the social values and norms.

Hoffman (1999) argues that the normative pillar can be seen as the social aspect of the organization, which focuses on broad principles or guides to practice. It gives great emphasis to matters such as educational curricula, occupational standards, and standard operating procedures. Here, the legitimacy of actions, behaviours and even beliefs is reflected in social obligations to maintain moral and ethical compliance with the norms and values.

According to Suchman (1995) and Bruton et al. (2010), the normative assessment of legitimacy concerns whether the activities of the organisation are appropriate and consistent with the societal norms and values. Therefore, according to Scott (2013), the normative pillar places more emphasis on the logic of “appropriateness” than on the logic of “instrumentality”, where the central incentive of an actor is not, “what serves as ‘my’ best

interest?” but rather, “given the current situation, and my role within this situation, what is the suitable behaviour that I should carry out?” In other words, theorists under this pillar place more emphasis on the role of internalised social norms, values and beliefs (Scott, 2013) or the “informal constraints” (Peng, 2003, p. 276) that stabilize the institution in a certain social order.

The Cultural-Cognitive Pillar

Institutionalists pay serious attention to the cognitive element of human beings: mediating between stimuli of the external environment and the response of the human being is a compilation of internalized symbolic representation of the environment (Scott, 2013). The symbolic representation of the environment is well established in the cognitive paradigm, which suggests that “what a creature does is, in large part, a function of the creature’s internal representation of its environment” (D’Andrade, 1984, p. 198). Therefore, “the hyphenated label cognitive-cultural emphasizes that internal interpretive processes are shaped by external cultural frameworks” (Scott, 2013, p. 67).

According to Scott (2013, p. 67), “attention to the cultural-cognitive dimension of institutions is the major distinguishing feature of neo-institutionalism within sociology and organizational studies”. Neo-institutionalists such as Meyer and Rowan (1977), DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Scott (1987, 2008, 2013) stress the centrality of the cultural-cognitive dimension of institutions by focusing on the development of the shared conceptions of social reality frames and how they contribute to meaning-making.

This reflection of the external-internal environment is important for the creation of regulative and normative processes that sustain behaviour. This is because, when organizational members develop a deep representation of their environments, they become more capable of performing the necessary normative actions that the organization needs to construct its legitimacy. Hence, organizations recognize and adapt to the institutional environment from the perspectives of those who belong to them. Scott (2013, p. 65) states that, “to understand or explain an action, the analyst must take into account not only the objective conditions but the actor’s subjective interpretation of them”. This is because actors from certain cultures associate meanings with particular symbols, artefacts, gestures, signs etc. from their own references of meaning, which they collectively and socially construct within their environments (Berger and Luckmann, 1991).

Therefore, Hoffman (1999) argues that the cognitive pillar can be seen as the cultural aspect of an organisation, by which it expresses compliance with the external environment. This aspect embodies symbols, signs and gestures in addition to the cultural rules and frameworks that govern what is regarded as reality, and the frames that govern the development of meanings.

Legitimacy in the cultural cognitive pillar comes “from conforming to a common definition of the situation, frame of reference, or a recognisable role (for individuals) or structural template (for organisations)” (Scott, 2013, p. 74). According to Meyer and Scott (1983), and Bruton et al. (2010), the cognitive assessment of legitimacy concerns the compatibility between the organizational structure and outcome, and the culture of its external environment.

In summary, the essence of constructing cultural legitimacy stems from the ability of the members to interpret the external environment. In this context, it is rational to assume that effective interpretation of the external environment can be achieved when the organisational members are also members of the institutional environment where similar definitions and frames of reference are already shared. However, when organisations expand internationally to new environments, this vital assumption is challenged because organisational members do not immediately become members of the institutional environment they enter. Consequently, effective interpretation of the socio-cultural demands presented requires interpretive coping mechanisms, of which little is known. Hence, this research seeks to investigate the underlying forces that contribute to consultancies seeking to construct legitimacy on entering a new environment.

3.3.1.2 The Suitability of Scott’s Model for the Study of the Influence of Culture on International Consulting Organisations

Scott (2013) proposes a definition that encompasses the common arguments and identifies three key elements of organizations. He states that “*Institutions comprise regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life*” (Scott, 2013, p. 56). These elements are “the central building blocks of institutional structures, providing elastic fibres that guide behaviour and resist change” (p. 57). This definition outlines that the legitimacy of firms that operate within familiar and unfamiliar environments needs to be studied in light of complementary factors that operate simultaneously within and outside the organizations.

Regulative elements are constituted of those practices that offer order and stability through policies and procedures. Regulation of the organization is understood through rules and norms that identify ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ practices.

Normative elements comprise moral aspirations of what the organization should strive to achieve or become. Compliance with legislation, for example, requires that the management identifies how the organization should behave to identify in such a way that corresponds to the desired standards. Normative principles seek to reinforce what is collectively accepted and legitimized through powerful external regulative systems like the government institutions.

Cultural-cognitive elements comprise mental schemata that self-regulate behaviour at the individual and collective level. The constitution of meaning is deeply embedded in the historicity of an organization's norms that have been accepted over time. Culture is the term that corresponds to those socially accepted practices that self-reinforce common behaviour patterns.

The research assumes that the adoption of this theoretical model remains appropriate for this research project. This is for three reasons. Firstly, this model provides a clear view of the complexity of institutionalization that requires a careful interpretation of the external environment and a proper reflection of the internal environment of the organization. By establishing this complexity, it can be seen more obviously that international organizations face serious challenges related to their ability to institutionalize and, consequently, legitimize their presence in new environments. Secondly, it provides an understanding of how the institutionalization of organizations can be reflected at different organizational levels, from written regulations to the common ways of thinking and shared conceptions of reality which cannot be explicitly written or measured.

Conclusions

Organizations seek to conform to the external environment, construct legitimacy and survive. Two conclusions can be derived from the previous discussion in relation to the cultural challenges that organizations might face when they expand internationally. Firstly, in the process of institutionalization, organizations recognize their institutional environment through their cultural-cognitive pillars, which researchers like Meyer and Rowan (1977), DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Scott (1987, 2008, 2013) found to be central to the process of institutionalization. The centrality of this pillar indicates that sharing similar conceptions of reality and frames of meaning-making are essential for effective cultural cognition and, consequently, for the fulfilment of the institutionalization process. This means that international organizations are expected to be challenged when they seek to construct legitimacy in a new environment because of differences in the conceptions of reality and frames of meaning-making between their original and new environments. The next section develops on this claim to elaborate how consulting organisations construct legitimacy, and the challenges that international consulting organisations may face in this regard.

Secondly, when organizations institutionalize to conform to their external environment, the cultural-cognitive, normative and regulative pillars interact to develop internal systems that effectively and compatibly serve that environment. This implies that a serious challenge may face organizations when they expand internationally to a new environment as their internal systems might not be capable of serving the new environment with responses or services that are seen as desirable, proper or acceptable. The next section also develops this claim to elaborate on the usability of the internal knowledge-management systems of consulting organizations in new international environments.

3.4 Management Consulting Organisations as Knowledge-Intensive Organisations

In the first section of this chapter, it was argued that consulting organisations are considered to be knowledge-intensive organisations (Gibbons and Wright, 1999; Apostolou and Mentzas, 1999; Hansen et al., 1999; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Morris, 2001; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Fosstenlokken et al., 2003; Werr, 2012) and that they play a significant role in the cycle of knowledge production and consumption (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001). In the second section, it has been established that, from an interpretive theoretical perspective, consultancies need to institutionalise according to their cultural cognition of their external environment in order to construct legitimacy. Two theoretical propositions are made upon which this section is built. Firstly, international consulting organizations are expected to be challenged when they seek to construct legitimacy in new international environments because of differences in their members' conceptions of reality and different frames of meaning-making between the home and foreign environments. Secondly, international consulting organisations seek to utilize their internal knowledge-management systems in the new international environment into which they seek to expand. This is because these systems have already been used to serve the organization's original environment.

Structure of the Section

This section builds on these two propositions and suggests that international consulting organisations might be culturally challenged when they expand to a new environment. This challenge can be discussed from two angles: firstly, the transferability of management fashions that legitimise consulting organisations in their original environment to construct legitimacy in the new environment, and secondly, the malleability of knowledge-management systems that consulting organisations use to serve new environments. Therefore, this section has been divided into two sub-sections that discuss these two challenges.

The first sub-section argues why and how consulting organizations might choose to construct legitimacy by adopting the concept of management fashion as a symbolic representation of their superiority and popularity (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Jung and Keiser, 2012). This sub-section claims two cultural challenges related to different interpretations of rhetorical descriptions and the contents of management fashions that may make the use of management fashion to construct legitimacy in new environments less effective or even obsolete.

Firstly, although management fashion (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Jung and Keiser, 2012) and symbolic management (Morgan et al., 1983; Zott and Huy, 2007; Westphal and Graebner, 2010; Markóczy et al., 2013) literature asserts that rhetorical descriptions are important for the development of needed impressions of superiority, the symbolic management theory asserts that the meanings of symbolic

representations are bound by the environments for which they were originally developed (Morgan et al., 1983; Zott and Huy, 2007). However, it is not known in the consulting literature how consulting organization can construct legitimacy using management fashions that have been rhetorically described to be understood by clients in the original environment. This claim will be theoretically and empirically justified.

Secondly, although the consulting literature acknowledges that different contexts and interpretations have an influence on the life cycle of management fashion (Rovik, 1998; Benders and Veen, 2001; David and Strang, 2006; Jung and Keiser, 2012; Madsen and Johnson, 2016), the literature does not offer any insights about the influence of culture either on the dissemination of management fashions into other cultural contexts, or on the decline and rise of management fashions when applied in other cultural contexts. This claim will be theoretically and empirically justified.

The second sub-section discusses the complexity that implicitly adds to the management of consulting knowledge (Apostolou and Mentzas, 1999; Lahti and Beyerlein, 2000; Werr, 2012) and the influence of the external environment on the institutionalisation of the internal knowledge-management systems (Scott, 2013). It claims, although the consulting literature stresses the critical role of knowledge-management systems for consulting organisations (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Gardner et al., 2008; Reihlen and Nikolova, 2010; Werr, 2012), the literature does not offer clear insights into the influence of culture on the ability to use these systems to serve new environments, despite the frequent concerns raised by consultants which have been implicitly cited in the literature. This claim will be further justified theoretically and empirically.

3.4.1 The Use of Management Fashion to Construct Legitimacy

This section investigates the literature on management fashion. Following an exploration of the nature of this literature, the reasons are identified that allow management consulting firms to use management fads as a corporate strategy to enter into an international business environment in order to expand their businesses.

According to Jung and Keiser (2012, p.328), there is a strong association between management fashion and the consulting industry. Such an association is sustained by the professionalization of management and the western business models with which services are applied to client organizations.

“To speak about management without speaking about fashions seems to be as impossible as it is to speak about fashions without speaking about the consulting industry” (p. 328).

It is widely agreed among authors like Hatch and Cunliffe (2006), Deephouse and Suchman (2008) and Scott (2013) that organisations need to develop legitimacy to sustain their business in the environment within which they operate. This means that the actions and products of the organisations should be desirable, and seen as proper and appropriate within socially constructed systems of values, beliefs, and definitions (Suchman, 1995). The desirability and appropriateness of products can be defined and measured for object-like products such as computers and trucks (Donnelly, 2008). However, the task of defining and measuring intangible knowledge-based products has proven to be difficult (Alvesson, 2004).

In fact, one of the most distinguished challenges that knowledge-intensive organisations face is the ambiguity of their intangible activities and products (Alvesson, 2004). In client-consultant engagement, ambiguity contributes to the development of uncertainty. Ambiguity can derive from the lack of solid, known standards and measures for what mutual expectations need to be met (Samson and Parker, 1994; Clark, 1995; McLachlin, 2000; Soriano, 2001; Glücker and Armbrüster, 2003). The absence of mutually agreed quality indicators (Clark, 1995; Simon and Kumar, 2001) and clear boundaries and differences between knowledge specialities (Glücker and Armbrüster, 2003) also contribute to uncertainty.

Alvesson (2004, p.70) argues that knowledge workers “must devote attention, energy, and skills to dealing with how to present their knowledge, work, and organisations and produce positive expectations and assessments of themselves and their work results”. Alvesson affirms that this is a matter of symbolic management, where image and rhetoric become significant.

“The ambiguity of knowledge and the work of KIFs means that ‘knowledge’, ‘expertise’, ‘solving problems’ to a large degree becomes a matter of belief, impression and negotiations of meaning. Institutionalized assumptions, expectations, recognitions, reputations, images, etc. matter strongly for how products of knowledge-intensive organisations and workers are perceived” (Alvesson, 2004, P. 72).

To minimise uncertainty, consulting organisations need to develop a professional image of superiority (Abrahamson, 1996; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Jung and Keiser, 2012) and popularity (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Jung and Keiser, 2012) that reduces ambiguity in clients before the beginning of the consulting engagement (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Jung and Keiser, 2012). The main objective of this professional image is to create impressions about the quality of the service (Abrahamson, 1996; Westphal and Graebner, 2010; Markóczy et al., 2013). The literature on impression and symbolic management affirms that the use of fashion is one way of constructing legitimacy, similar to the development of status or

reputation (Deephouse and Suchman, 2008). Researchers such as Westphal and Graebner (2010) and Markóczy et al. (2013) argue that organizations use such symbolic representations to construct external legitimacy that *appears* to meet expectations.

The following lines elaborate on the definition of management fashions, their value to consulting organizations, their influence on the clients of consultancy, and how they are developed and maintained.

Defining management fashions, their value to consultant and client firms, and their development

Abrahamson (1996, p. 257) defines management fashion as “a relatively transitory collective belief, disseminated by management fashion setters, that a management technique leads to rational management progress”. Jung and Keiser (2012, p. 328) explain that “this definition suggests that a management fashion is triggered by an increasing number of people being convinced that a specific management technique increases performance” and that the providers of these techniques are pioneers of knowledge and problem-solving expertise (Alvesson, 2004).

For consulting organizations, such an image creates an impression among management audiences about the superiority of the organisation and its position as a lead provider of services. It is possible that consultants manipulate these impressions in order to win assignments with clients (Abrahamson, 1996; Clark and Fincham, 2002). Benders and Veen (2001) describe the use of images of fashion as ‘sales vehicles’ (Benders and Veen, 2001, p. 39) whereby terminologies influence audiences that are depicted as naïve and unreflective management fashion followers.

Clients can use this image of superiority to convince stakeholders that their decision to hire consultants is rational, progressive and based on the expectation that they will deliver the latest and most advanced solutions to their problems (Abrahamson, 1996).

However, developing and maintaining this image is not a straightforward process. Abrahamson (1996, p.254) explains the process as a race through which fashion setting takes place:

“To sustain their image as fashion setters, they must lead in a race (a) to sense the emergent collective preferences of managers for new management techniques, (b) to develop rhetorics that describe these techniques as the forefront of management progress, and (c) to disseminate these rhetorics back to managers and organizational stakeholders before other fashion setters. Fashion setters who fall behind in this race (e.g., business schools or certain scholarly professional societies) are condemned to be perceived as

lagging rather than leading management progress, as peripheral to the business community, and as undeserving of societal support”

Researchers such as Clark and Fincham (2002), Benders and Veen (2001), Alvesson, (2004), Gardner et al. (2008) and Jung and Keiser (2012) have elaborated on the second and third steps—namely, the rhetorical descriptions and dissemination of newly developed methods and techniques.

In the context of the role of the rhetorical descriptions of newly developed methods and techniques in the process of fashion-setting, Jung and Keiser (2012) affirm that a primary key in setting management fashion is the rhetoric that the consulting organization applies in propagating it. The audience sees the buzzword or a label that stimulates attention as the first effect of the rhetoric. Good buzzwords are symbols for positive expectations. For instance, *re-engineering* implies more than repairing; it implies going beyond repairing to a total re-design, while at the same time giving the impression that the organization is being managed in an engineering-like style (Jung and Keiser, 2012). Also, the concept of a *Balanced Scorecard* gives the impression of fitness and championship (Jung and Keiser, 2012).

In the context of the role of dissemination of newly developed methods and techniques in the process of fashion setting, researchers like Clark and Fincham (2002) and Gardner et al. (2008) argue that this dissemination takes place in the form of a race. Clark and Fincham, (2002, p. 2) state that what drives this race is the notion that, “if the ideas developed and disseminated by one group of fashion setters are perceived to be less valid than those of another group then the former will become increasingly viewed as peripheral”. In other words, Gardner et al. (2008) argue that quick and broad dissemination is a popularization tactic to develop an impression that the ‘new’ knowledge has already been broadly accepted (Gardner et al., 2008, p. 1111).

Jung and Keiser (2012) explain that belief and imagination about an idea being broadly accepted drives people to follow the crowd rather than decide independently what suits them. In this context, people are driven by an embedded belief that there is more added value in popular products. Czarniakwska (2008) argues that the popularity of certain products makes them more easily chosen, especially in cases where there seems to be an overwhelming variety of options.

Although the literature places great emphasis on the role of rhetorical descriptions and dissemination of newly developed methods and techniques, there are serious implications of the first step which revolve around the fact that these methods and techniques emerge from actual situations (preferences of managers) in certain environments which are still missing from the literature.

According to Abrahamson (1996), fashion setters compete to sense the preference of managers for new techniques. The envisioning of management fashions is triggered by actual situations that managers experience in their environments. Consequently, fashion setters race to develop and offer new and unique solutions that “have little to do with science and validated practice” (Alvesson, 2004, p. 21). To fit the preferences of these managers, content and rhetorical descriptions are developed in ways that they understand and appreciate. However, the literature does not offer any insights about how these newly developed and rhetorically described methods and techniques would be perceived by clients in environments with different socially constructed systems of values, beliefs and definitions. This has serious implications for the international expansions of consulting organisations that seek to construct legitimacy using their management fashions in new environment.

This sub-section claims that there are two main challenges not yet been addressed in the literature that make the use of management fashions by consulting organizations less effective when they expand internationally into a new environment. Firstly, although the management fashion and symbolic management literature assert that rhetorical descriptions are important for the development of the needed impression of superiority, symbolic management theory asserts that the meanings of symbolic representations are bound by the environments for which they were originally developed (Morgan et al., 1983; Zott and Huy, 2007). Accordingly, it can be claimed that the impressions that consultancies seek to develop through these rhetorical descriptions may differ from one environment to another based on the clients’ interpretations in each environment. Consequently, international consulting organizations might struggle to construct legitimacy using their management fashions in new environments. However, this issue is still missing from the consultancy research.

Secondly, the vague content of fashionable techniques and methods (Jung and Keiser, 2012) and vast dissemination of management fashions into *different contexts* may result in the process of dissemination becoming more difficult, or it may cause a decline for some broadly accepted management fashions and the rise of new ones. This is because clients may have different interpretations and appreciations of these contents. The literature does not provide any insights about the influence of different interpretations and applications of management fashions in the dissemination, decline and rise of management fashions.

3.4.1.1 The Different Interpretations of Rhetorical Descriptions of Management Fashions in New Environments

This sub-section justifies the claim that, although the management fashion literature stresses the criticality of rhetorical descriptions for setting fashionable methods and

techniques for consulting organizations, the literature does not seem to consider that rhetorical descriptions are symbolic representations that have different meanings from one culture to another. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that methods and techniques that are perceived as management fashions in one culture would be perceived as such in others. In this way, consulting organisations may face serious legitimacy challenges when they expand internationally by assuming that their management fashions will grant them legitimacy in the new environments. This claim can be theoretically and empirically justified.

Symbolic management researchers Morgan et al. (1983) and Zott and Huy (2007) affirm that the meanings of symbols such as fashions and their rhetorics are socially constructed and, therefore, their meanings are understood by those who belong to the environment from which they emerged (Morgan et al., 1983; Zott and Huy, 2007). According to Zott and Huy, (2007, p. 73), “symbolic meaning is culturally specific and has to be subjectively interpreted as such by actors who are familiar with the cultural norms”.

From a theoretical perspective, this claim can be further supported by the literature that affirms that management concepts are perceived differently across cultures (Child et al., 1983; Hofstede, 1993; Perlitz and Seger, 2004; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2012; Purtilo and Haddad, 2015).

From an empirical perspective, the discussion in the previous chapter about American management concepts in Western Europe clearly indicates that some management concepts that are perceived as management fashions in the United States are unlikely to be fashionable in Western Europe. For instance, in Germany, where there is no strong concept of management (Hofstede, 1993), management fashions that emphasise the role of managers in their rhetorical descriptions are unlikely to be accepted, which also implies that they are unlikely to be fashionable. Moreover, management fashions that use indications of the concept of professionalism are unlikely to be understood in the same way that Anglo-Saxon cultures understand them. Also, in French culture, because of the emphasis placed on the unity of command (Hofstede, 1993), rhetorical descriptions that suggest distribution of command, such as matrix management, are unlikely to be accepted.

In conclusion, the literature on consultancy and management fashion affirm that the main purpose of rhetorical descriptions of fashionable methods and techniques is to reflect rationality and deliver symbolic meanings about their quality and efficacy. However, the literature on symbolic management and management theories across cultures affirms that the symbolic meanings of management concepts are bound by the environments from which they emerge. This indicates that rhetorical descriptions of management fashions may not serve their purpose in different environments because of the different interpretations of their meanings. However, the consulting literature does not give any insights about the

influence of culture on the interpretation of the rhetorical descriptions of management fashions brought by international consulting organizations to new environments.

3.4.1.2 The Influence of Different Interpretations and Applications of the Content of Management Fashions on their Dissemination, Decline and Rise

The second step in the process of setting management fashion is that newly developed methods and techniques should be rapidly disseminated before other competitors in the race disseminate their own methods and techniques (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and van Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002).

Because fashion setters are engaged in a critical race to disseminate and popularize their newly developed methods and techniques, Abrahamson (1996, p. 254) argues that consulting organizations 'deliberately' impose their products on their gullible clients. The image of a gullible client and the notion of deliberate application of methods and techniques suggest that this dissemination is assumed to take place without resistance, or at least, without the need for those methods and techniques to be adapted or customized to fit clients' contexts or special needs. The literature following Abrahamson (1996) sheds light on the need for serious attention to the application of management fashions in different contexts with different clients.

Kieser (1997) argues that those involved with management fashion are not simply fashion setters and followers. Rather, they are actors who apply their own judgments and follow their own interests to choose how to endorse fashionable rhetoric. Managers are not expected to blindly apply new concepts in their environments. On the contrary, they are expected to apply their own interpretations and evaluations of the applicability of the content, and to adapt or develop new content to fit the concepts. This indicates that some fashion setters and followers may, in fact, believe in a concept while remaining critical about some of its ideas (Benders and van Veen, 2001). Actually, numerous followers will critically consider how to use a certain concept (Watson, 1994) or how to use only the parts that fit their situations (Benders and van Veen, 2001).

Therefore, Benders and van Veen (2001) propose a new definition of management fashion that binds it to the organizational environment and the management discourse from which it emerges. They propose that "management fashions are best conceptualized as the production and consumption of temporarily intensive management discourse, and organizational changes introduced by and associated with this discourse" (2001, p.33). Accordingly, they suggest that the coupling between labels of concepts and their contents should be loosened to facilitate the application of different management concepts in different contexts and settings.

In fact, these different interpretations and applications of management fashions play a significant role in both the decline and rise of new fashions. The conceptualization of management fashions proposed by Benders and van Veen explains how this takes place:

“Fashions ‘wear out through use’. This explanation holds that concepts’ initial appeal makes them a suitable label to start organizational change programs. Once fashionable, the concept becomes a vehicle for a gamut of organizational changes within companies. Organizational change is almost by definition problematic, and difficulties and unexpected problems are usually encountered (van Bijsterveld, 1997; Watts and van Veen, 1999). Because of such problematic changes, but also because of opportunistic uses, over time, a growing differentiation in interpretations and uses occurs, including perceived failures. Varying and negative stories about fashion falls into disrepute. Ironically, the seeds of concepts’ decline lie buried in a root of its success: the interpretation viability that allows for different interpretations and is a prerequisite for a concept to ‘flow’” (Benders and van Veen, 2001, p. 44).

Rovik (1998) argues that as soon as a label spreads extensively, it becomes a symbol for every failure that happens under its title. For instance, the concept of Total Quality Management spread in the mid-eighties with titles such as ‘Beyond Quality’ as a symbol of its state-of-the-art knowledge on quality management (Rovik, 1998; David and Strang, 2006). In the early nineties, the conference board of the Total Quality Management Center was considering changing its name because top management had come to understand that it had become a liability (Rovik, 1998).

However, the influence of the different contexts and interpretations on management fashions seems to be broadly addressed in recent literature. Jung and Keiser (2012) argue that management concepts are vague, and that they usually become vaguer as other consultancies develop modified concepts and other actors offer different interpretations.

However, although the literature acknowledges that different contexts and interpretations have an influence on the life cycle of management fashion (Rovik, 1998; Benders and Veen, 2001; David and Strang, 2006; Jung and Keiser, 2012; Madsen and Johnson, 2016), it does not offer any insights about the influence of culture on the dissemination of management fashions into other cultural contexts or on the decline and rise of management fashions when applied in other cultural contexts. This claim can be theoretically and empirically justified.

From the theoretical perspective, the development of content that conforms to the rules and requirements of the external environment is aligned with the input of neo-institutional theory, as discussed by Scott (2013). It has been made clear that, in order for consulting organizations to gain legitimacy for their presence and for their services, they must provide

what the external environment finds desirable and appropriate both politically and culturally (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008; Scott, 2013).

Also, from the perspective of management fashion theory, it has been explicitly acknowledged that management fashions are cultural commodities (Abrahamson, 1996; Abrahamson and Fairchild, 1999), which are subject to social contagion (Carson et al., 2000).

Empirically, as discussed in the previous chapter, although Taylorism enjoyed a high level of popularity in the United States that mediated the international expansion of Taylorists into Western Europe, the application of Taylorist models failed rapidly to the extent that they caused a number of strikes in Western Europe (Kipping, 1999). However, although the number of Taylorist expansions into Western Europe was low because of the inapplicability of its content, mainly the incentive payment method, Taylorism triggered other European consultancies to re-construct new scientific management methods and techniques that suit every culture. For instance, the British embraced methods that emphasize industrial psychology and human relations, while the Germans developed their own system of “performance measurement and reward”, which was widely used and promoted by the “National Committee of Work Time Determination” (Kipping, 1999, p. 196). Apparently, although the reputation of Taylorism mediated the expansion of some American consultancies into Western Europe, the inapplicability of the content resulted in the fast disruption of these consultancies and in the rise of local replacements that adopted the concept of scientific management and developed new methods that were desired and seen as culturally appropriate.

The appropriateness of the interpretive approach for the study

Because of the demonstrated complexity of spreading meanings, beliefs or impressions about certain products, and of disseminating certain ideas and techniques, the process of fashion setting is uncertain. This can be better understood through an interpretive approach and has been explicitly discussed by Benders and van Veen (2001), where this issue seems to be among their main criticisms of Abrahamson’s study.

Although Benders and van Veen (2001, p.34) acknowledge the influence and importance of the work of Abrahamson (1996) in management fashion and the management fashion setting process, they argue that his conceptualization does not address the critical feature of ‘interpretive viability’. Benders and van Veen (2001) argue that this is significant for the understanding of the core component in his definition, namely ‘beliefs’. According to them, beliefs about management concepts are ambiguous and hard to put into defined and explicit sets of interpretations.

3.4.2 The Influence of Culture on the Utilization Knowledge-management systems in Consulting Organisations

This sub-section develops the second claim derived from the theoretical foundation that organisations institutionalise their internal systems according to their cultural cognition of the external environment. In other words, it argues how knowledge-management systems in consulting organisations are constructed according to the cultural settings of the environments from which they originate.

This sub-section begins by further elaborating on the nature of consulting knowledge (Apostolou and Mentzas, 1999; Lahti and Beyerlein, 2000; Werr, 2012), which has critical implications for the development of solid knowledge-management systems in consulting organisations (Friedson, 1988; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Reihlen and Nikolova, 2010). Accordingly, this sub-section discusses the literature that sets out the variety of the knowledge-management systems constructed by consulting organizations to serve their original environments. Although the literature emphasises the importance, criticality and variety of knowledge-management systems for consulting organizations, it does not provide any insights about the contextuality of these systems and their usability in different environments. This gap is theoretically and empirically justified.

The Added Complexity of Implicit Knowledge in the Management of Consulting Knowledge

In the first section of this chapter, it was established that the distinguishing feature of consulting organisations is the fact that they are knowledge-intensive (Gibbons and Wright, 1999; Hansen et al., 1999; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Morris, 2001; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Fosstenlokken et al., 2003; Werr, 2012). It has been highlighted that knowledge-intensive works are categorised as ambiguous (Alvesson, 2004) and intangible (Apostolou and Mentzas, 1999; Morris, 2001), which makes them harder to define, measure and manage (Donnelly, 2008). To elaborate more on the criticality and difficulty of managing consulting knowledge, it is important to explain how implicit knowledge is a vital component of consulting knowledge that contributes to its ambiguity and, consequently, to its management.

Several authors (Apostolou and Mentzas, 1999; Lahti and Beyerlein, 2000; Werr, 2012) argue that consulting knowledge is a composite of explicit and implicit knowledge.

On the one hand, from the standpoint of explicit knowledge, knowledge is seen as a commodity that is objectively definable and easily transferrable (Werr, 2012). Researchers (Ko et al., 2005; Richter and Niewiem, 2009) argue that this type of knowledge can be easily encoded and decoded (Ko et al., 2005; Richter and Niewiem, 2009), and stored in knowledge databases for future use (Empson, 2001; Newell, 2005; Werr, 2012). From an

epistemological perspective, explicit knowledge is considered to be easier to deal with, since its values are understandable and can be conveyed through a formal language. It is disconnected and can be archived in books, libraries and databases (Lahti and Beyerlein, 2000). This view drives many initiatives in the field of knowledge management that focus on developing computer-based knowledge-management systems (Werr, 2012). Moreover, this view locates the competence of organisations in the organizational methods, tools, models, manuals and other documents appropriate for organizations that operate within standardized and repetitive tasks (Hansen et al., 1999; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003).

On the other hand, from the perspective of implicit knowledge, implicit or tacit knowledge is more related to individuals, which makes it harder to articulate, formalize and transfer. It can be seen as a continuous development of understanding in a specific context as a result of continuous interactions and involvements. It absorbs opinions, values and perceptions that individuals build through experience (Lahti and Beyerlein, 2000) such as know-how (Richter and Niewiem, 2009; Ko et al., 2005). Moreover, tacit knowledge is seen as “socially embedded” in the context from which it emerges and within which it is applied (Werr, 2012, p. 250). This means that it does not exist separately from the context of its use (Werr and Stjernberg, 2003).

Therefore, implicit knowledge has been described as situation-specific knowledge, which is about “acting knowingly in the specific situation” rather than applying basic methods and approaches from knowledge-management systems (Werr, 2012, p. 250). Moreover, it implies that “central challenges from socially embedded perspectives of knowledge include understanding the social and interactive formation and application of knowledge in practice and in a specific social context” (Werr, 2012, p. 250).

Furthermore, what makes managing consulting knowledge, which is a composite of both types, even harder is the fact there are no clear boundaries between the two types where some forms of explicit knowledge are very close to tacit knowledge and vice-versa (Lahti and Beyerlein, 2000; Werr, 2012).

In conclusion, if consulting knowledge is a composite of these two types of knowledge, then it is rational to assume that it cannot be regarded as a simple product that can be re-used in any context. Researchers (Hansen et al., 1999; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003) affirm that this composite of knowledge is associated with organizations that aim to provide original and creative problems solving services, where the focus is not on the reusability of knowledge, but rather on the construction of new knowledge for specific situations, which requires interactions between knowledgeable actors. According to Werr and Stjernberg (2003), knowledge in consulting organizations should be dealt with from this perspective since these organizations specialize in problem-solving services.

The Need for Solid Knowledge-Management Systems in Consulting Organisations

Regardless of the literature that focuses on knowledge management and production from the perspective of management fashions, there is a vast body of research on the internal systems with which knowledge is managed and produced by consulting organisations to serve their clients (Werr, 2012)

Consulting organizations are known as cognitive organizations that generate knowledge from external as well as internal resources (Gardner et al., 2008). External resources include academic theory, management gurus and experience with clients (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001), while internal resources are related to the development of organisations' frameworks, methods and expertise (Gardner et al., 2008). Thus, consulting organisations increasingly seek to build internalised processes for knowledge production and management (Friedson, 1988). Reihlen and Nikolova (2010, p. 279) state "mastering knowledge production and management is therefore particularly important for consultancy firms". Werr and Stjernberg (2003) argue that consulting organizations construct their competitive advantage mainly from their ability to manage these knowledge resources (Werr and Stjernberg, 2003).

The variety of Knowledge-management systems in Consulting Organisations

Werr (2012) argues that the current understanding of knowledge management in consulting organisations ranges from the view of knowledge as *primarily* explicit and, therefore, easily archived and transferred, to more advanced conceptualisations that view knowledge as tacit and embedded in social contexts.

One model that deals with the management of consulting knowledge with an emphasis on explicit knowledge is proposed by Suddaby and Greenwood (2001) about the commodification of consulting knowledge. Commodification of management knowledge is the "tendency to reduce knowledge to routinized and codified products" (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001, p.933). This involves "the conversion of localized, experiential and highly contingent managerial knowledge into refined, commercially valuable forms presented as objective, ahistorical and having universal principles" (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001, p.938).

Hansen et al. (1999) refer to commodification as codification and argue that codification demands converting individual experience (tacit knowledge) into outputs that can be saved, moved and reused. Codification has been explained as a 'people-to-document approach' where experience is extracted from the individual who developed it, to the extent that it becomes independent of that individual, so it can be reused for different purposes by different individuals (Hansen et al., 1999). The fundamental goal of codification is to convert

consultants' experiences into forms that can assist other consultants (Gibbons and Wright, 1999).

On the other hand, Werr (2012) suggests another conceptualization of knowledge management, which puts more emphasis on implicit knowledge. This model was proposed by Werr and Stjernberg (2003). What distinguishes this model is the fact that it acknowledges the tacitness of experience and the importance of explicit knowledge, where there is an interplay between these two types of knowledge that could result in organizational competence. According to Werr and Stjernberg (2003, p.889), "the simultaneous existence and complementary use of the two knowledge types represent the core of organizational competence in management consulting". The following lines explain this interplay.

Werr and Stjernberg (2003) propose that knowledge in consulting organisations is modelled into three interacting components: methods and tools, cases, and the experience of individuals. In these knowledge systems, methods and tools are abstracted and articulated knowledge that provide a common ground and knowledge structures, while cases are specific knowledge that carry knowledge in a descriptive form. The experience of consultants is a tacit multi-levelled knowledge that is fundamental to adjust the methods, tools and cases to design and carry out a particular consulting project.

To increase the extracted value of tacit knowledge, Fosstenlokken et al. (2003) extended the components of knowledge systems in consulting firms to include cooperatively developed procedures, routines, ways of doing business together, and the individuals' experiences and skills, which they termed "*contextual components*". However, Werr and Stjernberg (2003) claim that the more articulated forms of knowledge (particularly methods and tools) a firm develops, the more facilitating factors that a firm offers to its consultants to increase the development of its joint knowledge, which reflects on its overall competence (Werr and Stjernberg, 2003).

3.4.2.1 The Research Gap: The Usability of Knowledge-management systems in Different Cultural Settings

Although there is a vast body of literature that focuses on the internal systems by which knowledge is managed and produced in consulting organisations (Werr, 2012), this literature seems to assume that these internal knowledge-management systems are used in similar cultural contexts. Therefore, the current literature does not offer any insights into the applicability of these systems in different cultural contexts, despite the frequent concerns and doubts expressed by consultants about their applicability and the transferability of their tools, methods and cases into different contexts (Morris, 2001;

Greenwood and Empson, 2003). This gap in the literature, which suggests that internal knowledge-management systems are contextual and bound by their original environments, can be theoretically and empirically justified.

3.4.2.1.1 A Theoretical Justification of the Research Gap

From a theoretical perspective, neo-institutionalism suggests that, in order for organizations to gain legitimacy in the environments within which they operate, the internal systems of organizations should be institutionalized to serve the environments with services that are desirable and seen as appropriate (Scott, 1987; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006; Burton et al., 2010).

Scott (2013) argues that extensive research in psychology has shown that cognitive frameworks that actors share are vital parts of the information processing activities. These range from deciding what information deserves attention, to how that information will be coded, retained, retrieved and organized into internal systems, to how it will be interpreted. This ultimately influences the judgement, evaluation, inference and predictions. This is because the “internal interpretive processes are shaped by external cultural frameworks” (Scott, 2013, p. 67). The essence of this neo-institutional view is that organisations may construct different internal knowledge-management systems according to their cultural cognition of the external environment (Scott, 2013). Thus, organizational members construct and enact their internal systems in ways that they find appropriate according to their interpretation of their internal and external environments (Hatch and Cunliff, 2006, p.64).

This means that the articulated knowledge that consulting organizations make available for their consultants are processed according to the interpretations of actors who belong to the original environment from which the international consulting organization emerged. Also, it means that important information for the new international environment might be ignored, missed, interpreted differently, or archived in a way that makes it impossible to access using key-words that happen to be common in the new environment but not common in the original environment.

3.4.2.1.2 An Empirical Justification of the Research Gap

Implicit Highlights about the Applicability of Knowledge-management Systems and the Transferability of their Methods, Tools and Cases into New Environments (from the Consultancy Research)

There have been some concerns and doubts raised by consultants about the applicability and efficiency of internal management systems and their ability to utilize their outputs in

different settings. These doubts and concerns are only implicitly highlighted in the consultancy research and have not yet been explicitly addressed. For instance, Morris (2001) argues that consultants do not believe that all knowledge can be codified because a fundamental concern in their work underlies the different interpretations and approaches these consultants follow in their activities with clients. In these activities, knowledge is “socially constructed, context-specific and ambiguous, rather than composed of objects, generalizable rules that can be codified in any form” (p. 822). Consequently, Morris (2001, p. 835) states “in reality, firms ignore the socially constructed and ambiguous nature of much of what they seek to possess” through commodification of knowledge. Therefore, it can be assumed that articulated knowledge from consultants’ experiences might lose a lot of its value during the process of articulation because it will be taken out of context. This implies that the available articulated knowledge might not be as valuable as it is assumed to be when applied in different contexts.

Moreover, according to Greenwood and Empson (2003, p.924), although consulting organizations claim to customize their knowledge products to fit the needs of their clients, they “vary in the emphasis upon how far services are customized rather than being moderately adapted versions of an essentially commodified product”. This tendency of consulting organizations to undermine the crucial role of contextual knowledge might influence their ability to offer applicable, desirable and proper services. This issue becomes more critical in an international context where the differences between environments is much greater.

Explicit Highlights about the Contextuality of Knowledge-Management Systems (from Outside the Consultancy Research)

The issue of the contextuality of knowledge-management systems is explicitly discussed in the literature that states that they are not specific to consultancy. Werr (2012) argues that, although the conceptualization model of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) was not developed specifically in the context of management consulting, it is frequently cited in knowledge-management literature. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) propose that knowledge creation takes place through frequent transformations between explicit and tacit knowledge. This transformation takes place in four phases. First is the socialization phase where tacit knowledge is exchanged between members acting and collaborating together. Second is the externalization phase where tacit knowledge is extracted into explicit knowledge through processes that combine experience with formulating tools and methods. Third is the combination phase where knowledge is transformed from one explicit form to another by merging insights and inputs from different documents. Fourth is the internalization phase where knowledge is transformed from one explicit form to another through ongoing

applications of the latest form. For instance, the transformation of explicit methods in specific situations.

Interestingly, these knowledge-management models have been explicitly criticized for being contextual. Bibsy and Holden (2003, p.35) argue that the conceptual model proposed by Nonaka and Takeuchi is one of the most famous and influential theoretical models. It appears to be widely accepted by the community of knowledge management "as universally valid in conception and in application" and "indiscriminately applied across contexts and cultures". Bibsy and Holden argue that this model must be considered primarily as a product of the environment from which it emerged, namely Japan. From their perspective, each of the above modes "can only be understood with reference to their embeddedness in Japanese social and organizational culture and related value systems" (2003, p. 35).

This critique not only supports the claim that knowledge-management systems are contextual and bound by their original environments, but also confirms that there is an assumption among knowledge management researchers that the knowledge-management systems they study are applied in similar cultural contexts, namely, the Western cultures. This is evident in the previous critique made on the model proposed by Bibsy and Holden (2003) being suitable for the Japanese culture.

Summary

In conclusion, knowledge-management systems in consulting organizations are contextual and bound by their original environments. This implies that knowledge is processed according to the cultural cognition of the external environment and, therefore, the produced methods, tools and cases are configured in ways that effectively serve the original environment. In this way, these knowledge-management systems and their produced methods, tools, and cases might not be utilizable when in different cultural contexts. However, despite the critical role that knowledge-management systems play for the competence of consulting organizations, and despite the concerns raised by consultants about the applicability of the outputs of these systems in different cultural settings, this issue is still neglected in consultancy research.

Because of the above complexities related to the subjective nature of consulting knowledge and the variety of knowledge-management systems, consulting knowledge cannot be objectively dealt with (Alvesson, 2004; Werr, 2012). Alvesson (2004, p.47) argues that it requires an empirical enquiry that includes people's views and a serious consideration of its slippery nature. Since we cannot observe and measure knowledge, "we cannot expect people to produce highly precise accounts of their knowledge and knowledge use. Studying knowledge issues involves a fair amount of uncertain judgment; thus, claims about knowledge are typically debatable". Therefore, the interpretive approach is thought to be

suitable for studying the influence of culture on knowledge exchange in an international context.

Chapter 4: Literature Review 3: Interpersonal Level

Chapter 4

Literature Review III

4. The Influence of Culture on Client-Consultant Relationship

This chapter discusses extant theoretical frameworks through which the influence of culture on the knowledge exchange between clients and consultants is conceptualised in the literature. The chapter begins by highlighting the existence of the literature gap concerning the role and involvement of the client as an individual but also as an institution in the consulting activities. Secondly, it establishes that knowledge exchange takes place through complex interpretive interactions between clients and consultants. Thirdly, it advances on the work by Sturdy et al. (2009) concerning the role of power and cognitive boundaries and how they can influence the knowledge exchange in the client-consultant relationship. In the context of the cognitive boundary, it argues that people from different cultures have different references of meanings, which influence their ability to understand knowledge offered by people who come from different cultures. It discusses power as a key cultural boundary that correlates with existing power norms established within society and organisations. Hence, power can influence the willingness and motivation of individuals to exchange knowledge. Ultimately, it makes clear that, although the recent work has not discussed the influence of culture on the international exchange of knowledge between clients and consultants, the acknowledgement of the influence of culture on a national level (UK) is a clear indication as to the criticality of this issue on an international level. Therefore, it should not be neglected any further.

4.1 Introduction

The second chapter demonstrated that the influence of culture has been only implicitly discussed in the international consultancy research (McKenna, 1995, 2006; Kipping, 1999, 2002; Saint-Martin, 2011). The third chapter argued that, although management fashion is one of the ways by which consulting organizations seek to gain legitimacy (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Jung and Keiser, 2012), the symbolic and impression management literature suggests that interpretations of the symbolic representations vary from one culture to another (Morgan et al., 1983; Zott and Huy, 2007). Also, it argued that clients are not gullible recipients of management fashions; rather, clients have different interpretations of the contents of fashionable products, which reflect the extent to which these products are applied and adapted (Abrahamson, 1996; Kieser, 1997; Rovik, 1998; Benders and van Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002; David and Strang, 2006). However, the influence of these various interpretations of symbolic representations of management fashions on the legitimacy of international consulting organizations in new environments, and on the dissemination, decline and rise of management fashions, is not clear in the consultancy research. Also, it has been discussed

that the internal knowledge-management systems of consulting organizations are influenced by the culture of the environment from which they originate (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006, 2013; Scott, 2013). Therefore, knowledge-management systems in consulting organizations are contextual to the original environment they were constructed to serve (Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Bibsy and Holden, 2003; Werr, 2012). Accordingly, it has been concluded that international consulting organizations might not be able to utilize the tools, methods and cases offered by these knowledge-management systems to serve their international clients. However, the influence of culture on the utilisability and re-contextualisability of the outputs of these systems in new environments is still missing from the consultancy research.

This chapter focuses on the interpersonal level of consultancy, where clients and consultants interact in the so-called client-consultant relationship (Fosstenlokken et al., 2003; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Sturdy et al., 2009; Furusten, 2009; Alvesson et al., 2009; Fincham, 2012). This relationship is critical for understanding how the knowledge exchange takes place (McGivern, 1983; Armbrüster and Kipping, 2002; Fosstenlokken et al., 2003; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Tomenendal, 2007; Furusten, 2009; Sturdy et al., 2009).

The first section argues the neglect of the client side in consultancy research, which results in a poor understanding of the factors affecting knowledge exchange in the client-consultant relationship. For instance, according to authors like Sturdy et al. (2009) and Nikolova and Devenney (2009), there are cultural boundaries that influence knowledge exchange between clients and consultants.

The second section argues the development of the client position in consultancy research, where the literature begins to acknowledge the clients' role in consulting activities. The discussion introduces the emergence of the view that clients and consultants exchange knowledge in order to produce the needed solutions, rather than the old view that assumes clients are gullible recipients of consulting knowledge (Fincham, 1999; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Sturdy et al., 2009; Furusten, 2009). Then, it analyses the available literature that discusses the new view of the client consultant relationship (Fincham, 1999; Armbrüster and Kipping, 2002; Kitay and Wright, 2004; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Tomenendal, 2007; Furusten, 2009; Sturdy et al., 2009) and concludes that client-consultant relationships are *interpretive* (McGivern, 1983; Fincham, 1999; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Furusten, 2009) and *interactive* (Samson and Parker, 1994; McLachlin, 2000; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004). Therefore, the interpretive approach is thought to be suitable to address their complexity.

In light of the conclusion that client-consultant relationships are interpretive and interactive, the chapter advances on the recent study by Sturdy et al. (2009) proposing two types of

cultural boundaries that influence knowledge exchange between clients and consultants; firstly, the cognitive boundary where culture influences people's ability to understand the knowledge they exchange with people who come from different cultures (Sturdy et al., 2009); secondly, the boundary of power in which culture has a significant influence on the willingness or motivation of people to exchange knowledge (Fincham 2002; Sturdy et al., 2009).

The influence of power as a cultural boundary is also discussed from the perspective of agency theory, which focuses on the agent as a subordinate figure (Donaldson and Davis, 1991; Fincham, 2002; Saam, 2007), rather than a carrier of new knowledge, as portrayed by most theories used in consultancy research (Fincham, 2002). The discussion in the context of agency theory proposes four aspects of the influence of power on knowledge exchange between clients and consultants, which have not been addressed yet from a cultural perspective (Bloomfield and Best, 1992; Jang and Lee, 1998; Glückler and Armbrüster, 2003; Fincham, 2002; Nikolova and Devenney, 2009; Davenport and Early, 2010; Pozzebon and Pinsonneault, 2012).

This chapter concludes that understanding the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between clients and consultants who come from different countries is critical and still missing from the consultancy research. Therefore, this research intends to contribute to this gap.

Figure 5 offers a graphical demonstration of the structure of this chapter.

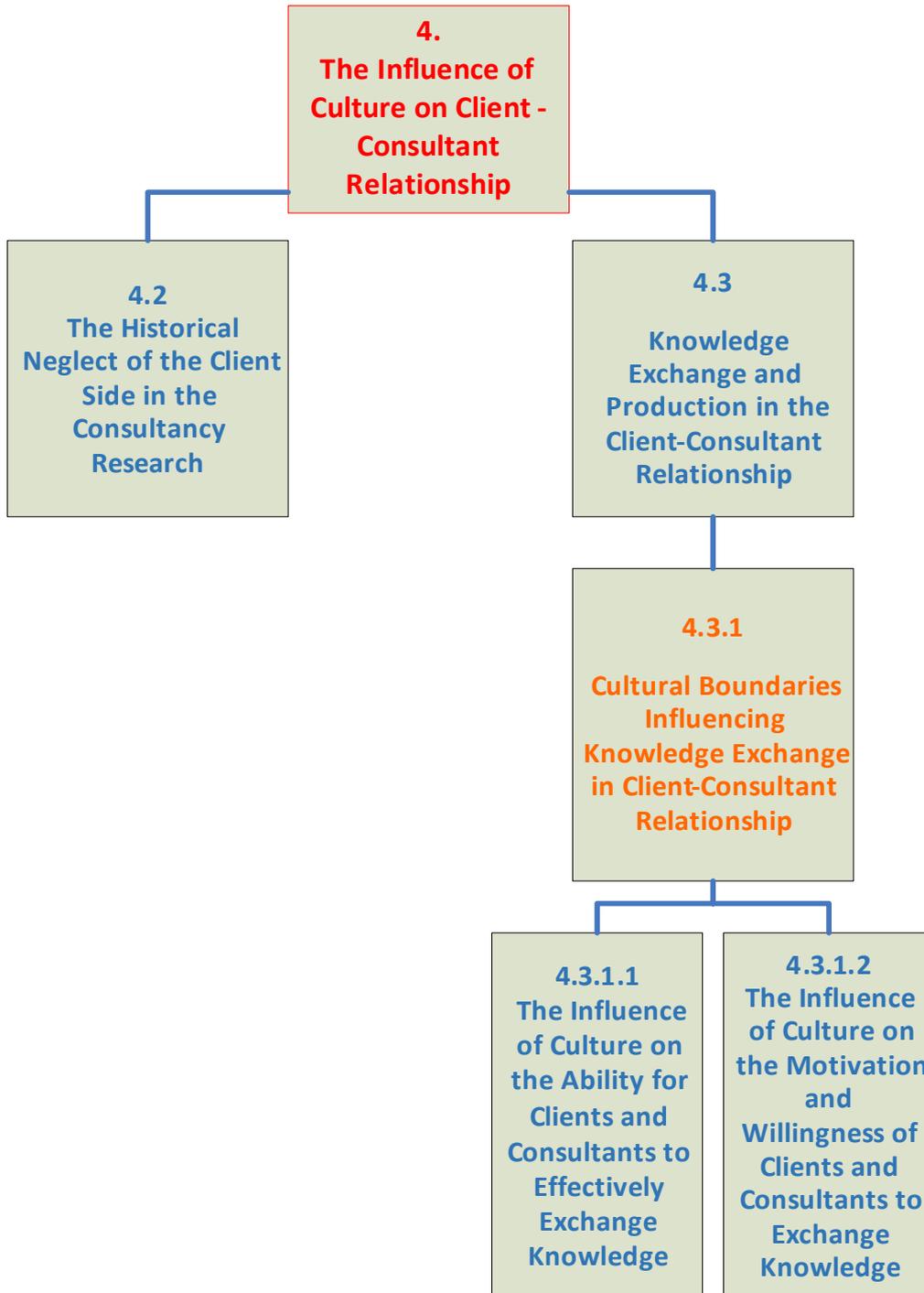


Figure 5: Structure of Chapter 4

4.2 The Historical Neglect of the Client Side in the Consultancy Research

Other than some exceptions, such as McGivern (1983), management consultancy research before the mid-1990s (Sturdy et al., 2009) has long neglected the role of the client in consulting activities (Sturdy et al., 1997, 2009; Hislop, 2002). This literature portrayed the client-consultant relationship as a client-expert relationship, where consultants seemed to

be always managing and playing the major role. In other words, the emphasis in this literature was on the consultants' side (Schwartz and Clark, 2009; Sturdy et al., 2009). The tendency not to investigate both sides was because the relationship had been seen as an issue of 'chemistry' (McGivern, 1983; Bruce et al., 1993; Mitchell, 1994; McLachlin, 1999; Sturdy et al., 2009), which is a metaphorical description of bonding or common positive feelings between those engaged in the relationship. This view discouraged others from attempting to change the way that consultants or clients behaved (McGivern, 1983; Sturdy et al., 2009).

Even with the development of consultancy in the United States and Europe, it was assumed that the client took the 'back seat' (see, for example, Abrahamson, 1996; Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 1996). This perspective led to an interpretation where the consultants were perceived as a powerful party (Fincham, 1999; Kam, 2004; Sturdy et al., 2009). Consequently, many studies focused on consultants' fashionable ideas and services (Abrahamson, 1996; Sturdy, 1997; Clark, 2004), and their change and intervention techniques (Beer and Walton, 1987).

The rapid growth of the industry enhanced the belief that consultants played the main role in introducing changes in the client. Thus, consultants were viewed as powerful and influential change agents (Fincham 1999; Kam, 2004), with answers to complex problems and challenges (Bäcklund and Werr, 2004; Kam, 2004). This view left clients looking like vulnerable victims. Clients were seen to be in need of consultants' expertise, ability, creativity and skills to translate insights to workable and successful solutions (Bäcklund and Werr, 2004). Moreover, clients were seen as a single organizational entity representing explicit interests (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004).

However, clients were important and influential elements in the success of consultancy projects (Schein, 1969, cited in Sturdy et al., 2009). The important role of client was firstly acknowledged in practitioner-oriented research and organizational development literature (Fincham, 1999; Sturdy et al., 2009), which gave early recognition to the client role in problem solving (Fincham, 1999; Sturdy et al., 2009). As a result, the consulting literature began to emphasize the need to pay attention to the differences between clients, which included personal interests, perceptions, needs and expectations (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004).

Sturdy and Wright (2008) argue that the image of clients has been developing and becoming more complicated in light of the increasing complexity with which clients use and interact with consultants. Sturdy and Wright (2008) and Sturdy et al., (2009) note that clients have become more experienced and knowledgeable in the ways they use consultancy. They have become more knowledgeable in change management as many clients have worked as former consultants. They have become more familiar with the consultancy processes and

the consultancy business in general. Consequently, clients have become more critical with their purchasing schemes, and more confident about their needs and expectations.

As an outcome of this development, Czerniawaska (2007) notes that consulting jobs have become more challenging because of the more specific demands of clients (e.g. Alvesson et al., 2004). In response to such a development, consulting firms have started to develop different types of client-consultant relationships, particularly interacting with clients as 'partners' in ways that maintain the partnership in these relationships (Werr and Styhre, 2003). Hence, consultants found they needed to distinguish between their clients to develop a suitable relationship depending on the client's nature, interests, ways of thinking, and issues. Consequently, consultants need to have wider rational models that allow them to adopt "social systems, networks, lines of influence, power relations and other socio-psychological concepts" (Schein, 1997, p.2). Researchers (Kilburg, 2002; Hislop, 2002; Sturdy et al., 2009) affirm that differences between clients have a significant impact on their relationship with consultants.

This research contributes to counteracting the neglect of the client side in consultancy research, and addresses differences between clients in an international landscape. Furthermore, this research examines culture as the main angle to investigate client differences. Authors like Geva et al. (2000), Hislop (2002) and Kubr (2002) argue that client differences can be traced to their cultures. According to Alvesson and Sveningsson (2004), clients may respond and interact differently with their consultants because of their cultural differences. Authors like Kilburg (2002) and Hislop (2002) argue that cultural differences might be reflected in behaviours and attitudes, which influence the construction of the relationship between clients and consultants.

4.3 Knowledge Exchange in the Client-Consultant Relationship

This section argues that clients and consultants work together in a knowledge exchange interaction through which client issues are resolved. Clients and consultants exchange knowledge through an interpretive interaction because they have to rely on their already existing cultural schemata to decipher the information communicated (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Bhagat et al., 2002; Sturdy et al., 2009). Hence, cultural boundaries influence knowledge exchange, in which the nature of the interpretation and interaction constitute fundamental elements for understanding how knowledge is interpreted.

This section advances on the work by Sturdy et al. (2009), presenting the cognitive and power boundaries that influence knowledge exchange between clients and consultants. This sub-section aims to explain these two cultural boundaries and discuss how they constitute a gap in the literature that should be addressed.

Regardless of the old view that depicted the client-consultant relationship as an expert-client relationship (Sturdy et al., 2009) where knowledge is treated as a transferable resource, the intangibility of knowledge and challenges related to its transferability need to be further examined (e.g. Fincham, 2002; Handley et al., 2007; Nikolova et al., 2009; Taminiau and Lange, 2009).

Because of the emerging view that acknowledges the role of the client in consulting activity, authors began to describe these relationships in ways that emphasised both ends of the relationship. For instance, the client-consultant relationship has been described as interdependent (McGivern, 1983), collaborative (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Furusten, 2009), co-operative (Fincham, 1999), and critically interpretive (Devinney and Nikolova, 2004). These broad descriptions did not provide deep insights about how interdependency, collaboration, or interpretation should take place. Consequently, these relationships have been described as misunderstanding and complicated (Armbrüster and Kipping, 2002; Tomenendal, 2007) and uncertain (Fincham, 2003; Furusten, 2009).

The uncertainty in these relationships appears from three main conceptual angles. Firstly, consulting services rely on knowledge (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Grolic et al., 2003, Ambos and Schlegelmilch, 2009; Werr, 2012) which is intangible (Alvesson, 2004; Sturdy et al., 2009), ambiguous (Alvesson, 2004; Donnelly, 2008, P.60.), subjective (Empson, 2003; Alvesson, 2004; Donnelly, 2008; Werr, 2012), contextual, implicit and hard to articulate (Lahti and Beyerlein, 2000; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Ko et al., 2005; Richter and Niewiem, 2009; Werr, 2012). Therefore, it is hard for clients to assess the suitability and quality of the offered solutions. Secondly, the clients' issues which consultants are hired to resolve are unclear, which makes assessing suitability and quality even harder (Clark, 1995; Glücker and Armbrüster, 2003; Furusten, 2009). Thirdly, the lack of solid and known standards and measures in the consulting industry (Samson and Parker, 1994; Clark, 1995; McLachlin, 2000; Soriano, 2001; Glücker and Armbrüster, 2003), such as quality indicators of the offered services (Clark, 1995; Simon and Kumar, 2001), and clear boundaries and differences between specialities (Glücker and Armbrüster, 2003) make uncertainty even higher.

However, in consultancy research, it is acknowledged that client-consultant relationships are **interactive** (McGivern, 1983; Fincham, 1999; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Furusten, 2009) and **interpretive** (Samson and Parker, 1994; McLachlin, 2000; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004). Thus, clients and consultants are rational actors who seek to reduce uncertainty through continuous interactions and interpretations. This view is also complemented by the social constructionist perspective, which acknowledges that interpretation is the main means by which both parties construct their perceived reality (Goffman, 1959; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1989).

According to Devinney and Nikolova (2004), reality finding in this interpretive interaction takes place in dramatic increase of exchange of information between clients and consultants. At the beginning of the relationship, clients receive and interpret information about consultants' capabilities and quality of service while consultants do the same about the clients' situations. Then, as the relationship evolves, a new form of interpretive interaction takes place to solve the clients' issues.

More importantly, this interactive interpretation not only allows clients to reduce uncertainty about the suitability and quality of the offered solutions and the capability of the consultants, but also allows clients to be part of the construction of new ideas, methods and techniques. Although this notion was introduced earlier by Mills and Morris (1983), who affirm that clients are key participants in the development of knowledge-based products by professional service firms, the recent literature in consulting has begun to stress the same notion. For instance, Sturdy et al. (2009, p.15) suggest that the knowledge that consultants offer to their clients is "significantly derived from the practices of others, especially 'leading', clients rather than fellow consultants or research institutes".

Sturdy et al. (2009), explain that, although consulting products are offered to new clients in a form of outside knowledge, the process of translating or re-contextualising these products can be considered as co-production of knowledge between clients and consultants. Moreover, Sturdy et al. (2009, p. 16) state, "in many situations and, arguably, increasingly, clients and consultants may share a wide range of other forms of knowledge". The exchange of these different forms of knowledge allows clients and consultants to explore and exploit what is new to them. Consequently, new methods and techniques are constructed out of these exploitations. According to Carmeli et al. (2010), exchanging knowledge may lead to the construction of new concepts and ideas. Ambos et al. (2009) argue that this type of integrated knowledge is valuable (Ambos et al., 2006) because integrating knowledge through interpretive interaction results in the production of creative solutions.

4.3.1 Cultural Boundaries Influencing Knowledge Exchange in Client-Consultant Relationships

What seems to be "rarely the focus of the research" is the phenomenon that "consultants and clients sometimes inhabit different social and occupational worlds" (Sturdy et al., 2009, p. 12). The consultancy literature prior to 2009 only implicitly highlighted the influence of culture on client-consultant relationships. For instance, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2004) argue that clients and consultants may respond and react differently in knowledge exchange activities based on their cultures, positions and experiences. Kilburg (2002) and Hislop (2002) argue that empirical studies demonstrated that cultural differences could be reflected in the clients' behaviours and attitudes, which shape the consultant-client relationship. Yet, this issue has not been sufficiently addressed in consultancy research.

Recently, a study by Sturdy et al. (2009) provided a more explicit view of the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between clients and consultants.

According to Sturdy et al. (2009, p.30), the client-consultant relationship is a social interaction, within which there is “an apparent movement of knowledge across boundaries”, where boundaries can be related to departments, organisations, industries or *cultures*.

Sturdy et al. (2009) argue that there are two key interrelated cultural boundaries influencing knowledge exchange between clients and consultants: cognitive and emotional/political boundaries. The first boundary draws on the ability of individuals to learn or understand, while the second draws on their motivation to learn. These boundaries have also been introduced in the literature under different themes. For example, Carlile’s (2004) study identifies semantic and pragmatic boundaries, which are similar to the cognitive and emotional/political boundaries. The first is concerned with understanding; the second is concerned with power and politics. Other authors (Foucault 1980; Hislop et al., 2000; Jørgensen, 2001; Fincham, 2002; Pozzebon and Pinsonneault, 2012) use the general concept of knowledge to refer to learning, while they use the concept of power to refer to politics and motivation to learn. According to Sturdy et al. (2009), the two boundaries are related to the fact that they all focus on learning; the first focuses more on knowledge itself, while the second focuses on influential power aspects outside the subject of knowledge, which may influence the motivation of individuals to learn and exchange knowledge.

According to Fincham (2002, p. 69), ‘knowledge’ and ‘power’ are ‘central’ to both “management and consultancy work”. This is because knowledge-based solutions are the products the consultancies offer to their clients, while power represents the different interests between consultants and clients, which influences the extent to which they are willing to exchange knowledge.

The relationship between knowledge and power has been addressed in the management literature (e.g. Hislop et al., 2000; Jørgensen, 2001), which is strongly influenced by Foucault (Pozzebon and Pinsonneault, 2012). Foucault (1980, p.52) suggests that it is “not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power”. Bennies et al. (1969) argue that social science relies on power, just as the movement of physical objects relies on energy. Therefore, we cannot discuss knowledge exchange between clients and consultants without discussing the influence of power on their relationship.

Although the study by Sturdy et al. (2009) provides insightful views about the influence of cultural boundaries on knowledge exchange between clients and consultants, it does not provide clear insights about the international exchange of knowledge between clients and

consultants. This is because the study was conducted in the UK and the cultural boundaries that were studied are between sectors, organisations and individuals as insiders and outside experts. Also, although the study included a case with a US-based consulting organisation, the insights do not provide an understanding of the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international consultants and local clients. This section argues that, if culture has been discussed as influential on knowledge exchange between different sectors, organisations and individuals in the same country, then it is plausible to assume that culture plays a more critical role on knowledge exchange between international clients and consultants. This is because cultural boundaries at an international level are much greater than those at a national level, since cultures, languages, politics, histories and power distances are different. The next two sub-sections elaborate on the influence of culture on the ability of individuals to learn and their motivation to exchange knowledge.

4.3.1.1 The Influence of Culture on the Ability of Clients and Consultants to Effectively Exchange Knowledge

Anthropologists have been concerned with the spread of knowledge amongst dissimilar groups of people (Sturdy et al., 2009) where different sets of meanings affect the knowledge exchange between parties from different cultures (Nonaka, 1994; Takeuchi, 1995; Bhagat et al., 2002).

Sturdy et al. (2009, p. 33) state that, because consultants are viewed as outsiders who belong to a different group of people, they face resistance from clients. This resistance results in the failure of meaningful communication because of the different views of the parties involved. This resistance has been described as a 'cognitive boundary' which is related to how people understand each other and the knowledge they share.

Culture as a Cognitive Domain

In the context of cognitive meaning, Sturdy et al. (2011, p.33) argue that cultural boundaries "lie in the heart of what can be seen as semantic boundaries or different knowledge domains which reflect conflicting meanings and languages". This notion has been highlighted previously by several authors (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Bhagat et al., 2002). Bhagat et al. (2002) note that culture has moderating effects on people's cognitive styles where, for instance, people vary in their signature skills, tolerance for ambiguity, and modes of thinking which consequently affects the transfer and absorption of knowledge. Nonaka (1994) and Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) state that knowledge is created, structured and transferred by the assurance and belief forms of the holders and recipients according to their sets of cultural values, beliefs and frames of reference.

The view that cognitive meaning is bound to the culture has also been established in the symbolic interpretive (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2013) and social constructionist (Goffman, 1959;

Miller, 1997; Stead, 2004) perspectives. Hatch and Cunliffe (2013, p. 73) suggest that “enactment, cognitive mapping, and sensemaking processes” are shared and recognised only by those who belong to similar cognitive domains. Jiacheng et al. (2010) argue that behaviours and perceptions of individuals are, to a certain extent, reliant on their social circumstances. Therefore, their interpretation of knowledge is rooted in their inherited culture (Jiacheng et al., 2010).

According to Goffman (1959), Miller (1997) and Stead (2004), people from different cultures have different references of meaning which consequently govern their interpretation of the knowledge they exchange with people from different cultural backgrounds. However, in order to overcome such boundaries, Sturdy et al. (2009) stress the need for those involved in the knowledge exchange to share ‘redundant knowledge’, which implies that people from different sectors or organisations share similar frames of reference. For instance, if management consultants work with a client who specialises in aviation or sports, they should have some knowledge about those fields. Similarly, the client should have some understanding of consulting work and the principles of management. Sharing such frames of reference results in more meaningful communications.

Culture as Redundant knowledge

The key role of redundant knowledge is to offer a bridging effect, which reduces the influence of the cognitive boundary on knowledge exchange between clients and consultants (Sturdy et al., 2009).

Although Nonaka (1994) and Sturdy et al. (2009) acknowledge that ‘redundant knowledge’ can be related to norms and social capital such as education, class, lifestyle, gender and religion, Sturdy et al. (2009, p. 13) consider the role of redundant knowledge about culture to be supportive, where knowledge exchange “can be complemented by social similarities between actors, derived from common social and cultural backgrounds”.

For this research, culture is a significant type of ‘redundant knowledge’ that international clients and consultants should have about each other. Because the study by Sturdy et al. (2009) does not offer any more explicit insights about the need for involved parties to gain redundant knowledge or a common understanding about their cultural backgrounds, literature outside consultancy research has been considered.

The role of cultural redundant knowledge has been acknowledged in the literature. For instance, Nonaka (1994) and Weir and Hutchings (2005) argue that individuals need to understand the culture and institutional traditions of those involved in knowledge-based activity. It is asserted that the international exchange of knowledge is dependent on the experience (implicit cultural knowledge) and ability of the individuals to operate in different cultural settings than their own (Nonaka, 1994; Weir and Hutchings, 2005; Carmeli et al.,

2010; Choi and Johanson, 2012). Choi and Johanson (2012) explain that knowledge exchange is highly affected by the individual's international experience of operating effectively with others from different backgrounds. This experience is reflected in the individual's ability to network and develop successful relationships through their understanding of the cultural settings of the environment within which they operate. Therefore, expatriates with long international experience are preferred by their international partners for international knowledge projects (Choi and Johanson, 2012).

Choi and Johanson (2012) also explain that the experience of those individuals is the type of implicit personal knowledge that allows them to make judgements, valuations and interpretations of the client situations (Choi and Johanson, 2012). Thus, those individuals can make effective use of their methods and tools to re-contextualise and customise their solutions to fit within the context of their clients (Nonaka, 1994; Weir and Hutchings, 2005; Choi and Johanson, 2012). The more international experience these individuals have, the more likely they are to become more capable of performing an effective construction of knowledge products (Carmeli et al., 2010; Choi and Johanson, 2012). Conversely, if consultants lack that experience, then they may fail to construct the needed solutions.

Nevertheless, even if those individuals have no knowledge of each other's cultural backgrounds, this can be slowly gained through the interpretive interaction between clients and consultants in which different forms of knowledge are exchanged, such as national and organisational cultures (Sturdy et al., 2009).

The literature on social construction supports the claim that cultural knowledge is among the different forms of knowledge that clients and consultants exchange. Authors like Goffman (1959) and Czarniawska-Joerges (1989) affirm that individuals exchange knowledge about their personal characteristics, which includes their cultural backgrounds, in their efforts to discover reality about each other and about the situation in hand. Czarniawska-Joerges (1989) affirms that these forms of knowledge are reflected in the construction of knowledge.

In conclusion, there are two issues related to the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international clients and consultants that have not been sufficiently and explicitly discussed in the literature. Firstly, culture has a significant influence on the ability of involved parties to enjoy meaningful communication through which knowledge is sufficiently exchanged (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Bhagat et al., 2002; Sturdy et al., 2009; Jiacheng et al., 2010). Secondly, gaining knowledge about the other side's culture is critical before and during the activity of knowledge exchange (Nonaka, 1994; Sturdy et al., 2009). This knowledge has a significant influence not only on the understanding of exchanged knowledge, but also on the contextualisation and construction

of new ideas, methods and concepts (Nonaka, 1994; Weir and Hutchings, 2005; Carmeli et al., 2010; Choi and Johanson, 2012).

4.3.1.2 The Influence of Culture on the Motivation and Willingness of Clients and Consultants to Exchange Knowledge (Influence of Power on Knowledge Exchange)

It is asserted that power and knowledge mutually constitute knowledge-intensive interactions (Foucault, 1980; Townley, 1993, Heizmann, 2011). In these interactive relationships, “knowledge is not always at stake” (Sturdy et al., 2009, p. 28), meaning that there can be elements other than knowledge that influence the exchange of knowledge. Learning, understanding or even sharing knowledge is not always an option for those involved in knowledge exchange activities. Instead, there might be “little choice” for those involved in the exchange of knowledge to share or adopt knowledge or adapt to new knowledge (p. 37). In other words, the exchange of knowledge can be “shaped by power relations varying between commitment and, in the most dependent/subordinate cases, behavioural compliance” (p. 38).

The notion here is that power is an instrument or mechanism for the accumulation or application of knowledge, which has long been acknowledged by authors like Foucault (1980) and Townley (1993). They argue that power facilitates the sharing and accumulation of knowledge. Foucault (1980) asserts that power legitimises knowledge. This is because power operates within networks of relations where those who possess power impose knowledge on others or pressure them to share knowledge. This influence of power extends to the point where it might eliminate cultural clashes during the process of knowledge exchange (Sturdy et al., 2009).

Nevertheless, power is the second cultural boundary discussed by Sturdy et al. (2009) and referred to as the emotional or political boundary. Although Sturdy et al. (2009) acknowledge the influence of power as a cultural barrier, it is not clear in this argument how and why power may influence knowledge exchange in the client-consultant relationship. The study by Fincham (2002) seems to provide an explanation for this influence from the perspective of agency theory. What distinguishes agency theory here is the fact that, unlike much theory on consultancy that stresses the role of consultants as experts or agents who bring new knowledge to the client (Fincham, 2002), agency theory focuses more on the agent as a subordinate figure (Donaldson and Davis, 1991; Fincham, 2002; Saam, 2007) who is empowered by knowledge (Foucault, 1980; Townley, 1993, Heizmann, 2011) and subject to the power of the principle at the same time (Bloomfield and Best, 1992; Nikolova and Devenney, 2009; Davenport and Early, 2010; Pozzebon and Pinsonneault, 2012).

Agency Theory

Agency theory suggests that the basis of the agency relationship is the set of rights granted from the principal to the agent by a binding contract (formal or implicit) to address the

principal's interests and wishes (Eggertsson, 1990). It is suggested that the agency relationship does not mean that both parties share the same interests and wishes. Agency theory asserts that any 'naïve' interpretation of the contract is unrealistic, because the interests of the principal and the agent are rarely identical. Even if the interests happen to be identical, it is impossible to guarantee that both actors possess identical information or, in other words, that the interpretation of the same information is identical (Rowlinson, 1997).

Fincham (2002) argues that agency theory helps to explain several aspects of the role of power in the client-consultant relationship. In light of the previous brief about agency theory, "*The client-consultant relationship can readily be seen as a type of agency relationship*" (Fincham, 2002, p. 72). This is because clients hire consultants to provide certain services that satisfy the clients' wishes and interests.

Four Aspects of the Role of Power in the Client-Consultant Relationship

Fincham (2002) proposes four aspects of the role of power in the client-consultant relationship.

Firstly, although consultants might be empowered by their knowledge (Foucault, 1980; Townley, 1993; Fincham, 2002; Heizmann, 2011) and by their image of fashion setters which leaves an impression of quality and superiority (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Jung and Keiser, 2012), consultants are still vulnerable to the clients' power to hire them, and accept or reject their services (Fincham, 2002).

On the one hand, in the context of consultants' power, the image that portrays consultants as possessors of quality and superior knowledge has been described as a rhetorical power (Fincham, 2002; Nikolova and Devenney, 2009; Davenport and Early, 2010). This power has an influence on the clients' decision to hire consultants (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Jung and Keiser, 2012). Also, during the interaction, this image has a significant influence on the clients' perception of the quality and suitability of the offered methods and techniques (Davenport and Early, 2010). Therefore, consultants find it critical to maintain this image before and during their interaction with the clients in order to maintain the effect of their rhetorical power (Nikolova and Devenney, 2009; Davenport and Early, 2010).

The maintenance of this rhetorical power is achieved through careful ways of acting and suggesting solutions that maintain the impression of this powerful image and assure compliance with clients' perceptions and expectations (Nikolova and Devenney, 2009). Scott (2001) describes this behaviour as the ability to maintain a persuasive influence based on advice, demands and reasons that result in the individuals believing in the solutions offered. In other words, according to Sillince (2000, p.1128), the maintenance of rhetorical power is

reliant on the “ability to make things become taken for granted” when offered by those who enjoy this kind of power.

On the other hand, in the context of clients’ power, authors (Bloomfield and Daniele, 1995; Pozzebon and Pinsonneault, 2012) argue that client-consultant relationships are constructed in contexts where consultants negotiate advice which is dependent on the clients’ consent or agreement (Bloomfield and Daniele, 1995; Pozzebon and Pinsonneault, 2012). This has been cited as an exercise of power by clients (Bloomfield and Best, 1992; Nikolova and Devenney, 2009; Davenport and Early, 2010; Pozzebon and Pinsonneault, 2012).

According to Fincham (2002), agency theory clarifies this intersection between clients’ and consultants’ power from the perspective of dependency. Although agency theory acknowledges the basic asymmetry between the agent and the principal, it suggests that the agent represents the junior partner in the relationship. Agency theory also confirms that, although the agent might be perceived as a junior partner in the relationship, this juniority is limited because of the same basic asymmetry between the agent and the principal (Fincham, 2002, p. 73).

The concept of the agency here is that the marginalised and tenuous status of the agent is transitional. In the context of the client-consultant relationship, this is reflected in the process of knowledge application by consultants. Although the consultant has an influence, there is a limit to that influence, and this is set by the client (Fincham, 2002).

Secondly, although consultants are empowered by knowledge (Foucault, 1980; Townley, 1993, Heizmann, 2011), their power can be limited by their ability to effectively interpret the clients’ needs, interests and wishes for which their knowledge is required (Fincham, 2002). From the perspective of agency theory, Fincham (2002) argues that this is different from socioeconomic relationships. In the client-consultant relationship, although the consultant might be empowered by the needed knowledge (Foucault, 1980; Townley, 1993, Fincham, 2002; Heizmann, 2011), the consultant still needs related knowledge and skills to effectively interpret the principal’s interests and wishes (Fincham, 2002; Carmeli et al., 2010; Choi and Johanson, 2012). This tends to limit the added value of the consultants’ knowledge (Nonaka, 1994; Fincham, 2002; Weir and Hutchings, 2005). Also, it limits the supply of compatible abilities to deal with the refractory real world on behalf of the clients (Fincham, 2002).

This issue is even more critical in international assignments of consultants. This is because, although consultants might have recent, advanced knowledge, they will be challenged by lack of understanding of related knowledge about the environment, such as culture, history, language, power-distance and politics, that would help them understand the social context

within which they will be operating (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Bhagat et al., 2002;). In other words, the lack of the cultural 'redundant knowledge', as described by Sturdy et al. (2009), may result in limiting the effect of the rhetorical power.

It is important to highlight that the context that must be understood does not only include the national or organisational environment of the client. According to Fincham (2002), agency theory suggests that the context should extend to effectively understanding the clients' interests and wishes from a personal perspective.

Thirdly, there is a battle of control between clients and consultants over authority and who leads the consulting project (Clark 1995; Ernst and Kieser 2002; Fincham, 2002; Werr and Styhre, 2003; Glückler and Armbrüster, 2003). From the clients' side, Werr and Styhre (2003) argue that clients may try to build boundaries around consultants to control and manage their influence. They argue that bureaucracy, vague understanding of consulting work, understanding of value creation to the organization, and the suspicion of the ambitions of consultants all play a significant role in the level of control that clients exert over their consultants.

From the consultants' point of view, because of their need to create legitimacy (Bloomfield and Daniele, 1995; Fincham, 2002) or to benefit from the consulting assignment (Jang and Lee, 1998; Glückler and Armbrüster, 2003), they usually seek to "take over" the problem from the client, which can result in the problem being defined differently (Bloomfield and Daniele, 1995, Fincham, 2003). This discrepancy in the definition of the problem may lead to a perception on the part of the clients that they are being led down a different path to the one they were expecting, hoping for, or are willing to accept.

From the perspective of agency theory, it is acknowledged that this is a battle for control, where the principal is compelled to exert a tight control over the agent. Here, the problem of agency appears because the agent is relatively free and has the right to exercise choice while the principal may not be able to exert the desired level of control. Therefore, agency theory asserts that, "the agent is no slave to the principal's interests" (Fincham, 2002, p. 73).

Fourthly, the client-consultant relationship may include, or be influenced by, powerful partners, who may not be directly involved in the interaction between the client and the consultant (Fincham, 2002). For instance, the client may be acting to serve the interests and wishes of his/her manager or board members. According to Rowlinson (1997), although agency theory leans towards relying on one-to-one relationships as its unit of analysis, it acknowledges the fact that relationships may include multiple agents and principals, and multiple hierarchies and relational chains, where principals might be agents in other relationships and agents might be principals in others. Fincham (2002) argues that this is 'patently' the case with client-consultant relationships, where, for instance, the principal,

the client, is him/herself an agent to the organisation. Nevertheless, the influence of power in this context can be related to (a) the hierarchical structure which governs resources (Nikolova and Devenney, 2009), (b) rewards and sanctions exercised on the actors in the client-consultant relationship (Jang and Lee, 1998; Fincham, 2002; Nikolova and Devenney, 2009), and (c) multiplicity of agents and principals which distributes the ownership of the tasks (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Fincham, 2002).

In terms of the influence of the hierarchical structure, Nikolova and Devenney (2009) argue that there are hierarchical structures that offer certain levels of power to certain actors. The power in the hierarchy is grounded in the control of resources through agents. This implies that certain actors are in positions to access and influence the discourse between clients and consultants, or to assign specific agents to deal with consultants where their choice of agents may serve hidden interests or agendas. Moreover, they can control the mode of participation, the topics of investigation, and the level of engagement.

In terms of the influence of rewards and sanctions, Nikolova and Devenney (2009) describe this type of power as 'positional power', which is related to the clients' or consultants' institutional relations that govern decision-making and the involvement of actors, and enforce certain behaviours. Positional power can represent an economic dimension, such as rewarding actors for achieving desirable outcomes or punishing them for undesirable ones. This power of actors who are not part of the interactions between clients and consultants to reward and punish adds more complexity to the influence of power on these relationships. According to Jang and Lee (1998) and Fincham (2002), this complexity resides in the difficulty of locating the power sources and understanding their interests and their level of influence. Jang and Lee (1998, p. 68) assert that, for consultants, locating the sources of power and becoming politically sophisticated in the ways in which they deal with them greatly affects the 'success' of the consultants' work.

In terms of the influence of the multiplicity of agents and principles, it is argued that power is embodied in forms of control that stem from the ownership of the tasks and projects that consultants are hired to deal with (Fincham, 2002). The challenge, according to Alvesson and Willmott (1992), is that ownership of projects and tasks are mapped into complex structures which might be not easy to trace.

Lastly, Nikolova and Devenney (2009) affirm that the role of power in the client-consultant relationship is poorly understood. The reason for this may be related to the historical neglect of the clients' side, which has long been perceived as unproblematic and subject to the consultants' power (Sturdy et al., 2009).

Moreover, if it has been argued that power is influential on the client-consultant relationship, then it is rational to assume this influence may be even more critical when the

interaction takes place between clients and consultants from different cultures, where the influence of power on relationships is also different.

Chapter 5: Conceptual Framework

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapters established that the client-consultant relationship is *interpretive* (Samson and Parker, 1994; McLachlin, 2000; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004) and *interactive* (McGivern, 1983; Fincham, 1999; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Furusten, 2009). Clients and consultants exchange different forms of knowledge that comprise personal experience and the application of specific business methods (Devinney and Nikolova, 2004; Sturdy et al., 2009). The acquisition of knowledge is argued to constitute the main objective of these interactions and interpretations (Fincham, 1999; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Sturdy et al., 2009; Furusten, 2009).

The last chapter of the literature review concluded that there are two cultural boundaries that may influence knowledge exchange between international clients and consultants. The first concerns limitations in the ability to understand the knowledge of those who come from different cultures that carry different norms (Nonaka, 1994; Takeuchi, 1995; Bhagat et al., 2002; Sturdy et al., 2009). The diversity of cultural norms in Saudi Arabia can be contrasted with Western paradigms of living and thinking. The second boundary concerns the influence of individual and institutional power. Knowledge is often regarded as an intellectual property, which is directly responsible for a person's career development. Hence, the desire for power can mean that members are protective of their experience and knowledge (Foucault, 1980; Townley, 1993; Fincham, 2002; Sturdy et al., 2009; Heizmann, 2011).

The aim of this chapter is to provide a systematic and conceptual framework that explains how culture's impact on the knowledge-exchange can be theorized. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section outlines the different perspectives by which the concept of culture has been discussed in the literature. Then, it offers an interpretive argument about the definition of culture and its levels, as suggested by Schein (2004).

The second section proposes the conceptual framework itself, which consists of four dimensions; namely, culture, language, power and knowledge. It discusses how the ambiguity of culture as one term that comprises many meanings can be operationalized by examining behaviours in the dimensions of knowledge, language and power through different stages of the interaction - before, during and after. By operationalizing the relationships between the different constructs in the model, the researcher deploys a working model of culture that enables the study of its impact in the context of knowledge-exchange between clients and consultants.

5.2 Culture from an Interpretive Perspective

This research aims to investigate the influence of culture on the knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients. Due to the central role that culture

plays in this, it is important to establish an understanding of what culture means and how its influence can be studied. This section begins by elaborating on the elusive nature of culture and proposes a definition found to be suitable for the objective of this chapter.

Defining the concept of culture is not enough because, although the proposed definition provides clear insights into what culture means, it does not offer a structured view through which culture can be seen. Therefore, in this section, an analytical model is proposed through which culture can be analysed and its influence studied in a structured way.

5.2.1 The Vague and Elusive Nature of the Concept of Culture

DiMaggio (1997, p. 263) argues that, although interpretive studies provide many insights about the role of culture, they “fail to build on one another”. This is because, although theories of culture have become sophisticated in conceptual terms, they are not easily operationalized. For example, scholars have not clarified the cognitive assumptions driving theories concerning the ambiguity of culture and how it can have different connotations of meaning. This is because, according to Durkheim (2008) and Elder-Vass (2012), the cognitive assumptions of individuals are socially constructed by their social experience, which forms their cultures. Accordingly, it is rational to question the influence of those culture-driven assumptions, which govern judgments about what is right/wrong, good/bad and how to behave and think, on the perceptions and conceptualisations of culture of those theorists (Holland and Quinn, 1987; Fryberg and Markus, 2007). This is a preliminary indicator as to how this concept is elusive and slippery.

Authors like Birukou et al. (2009) argue that culture is a slippery concept because of the ambiguity with which it is used to describe behaviours and decision-making processes. Misra and Gergen (1993), Kim (2003), and Cruz and Sonn (2011) agree that culture is mostly regarded as a problematic variable. This is because of the researchers’ tendency to handle it in ways that allow them to produce universal theories that are applicable to all people. This tendency to generalise cultural theories has led researchers to ignore critical details, such as different religions, histories and politics, which would challenge the universality of their theories (Lazear, 1999; Stead, 2004).

One of the perspectives through which culture is often viewed comes from Herskovits (1948, p. 17) who states, “culture is a man-made part of environment”. This means that man is actively engaged with forming norms that come to be accepted as a standard for other people. A similar idea is discussed by Geertz (1973, p. 89), who views culture as a “historical transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols”. This idea suggests that meanings and symbols are collectively appropriated over time and carry an existence of their own in the minds of the people. This view is also supported by LeVine (1984, p. 67), who suggests that culture is “a shared organisation of ideas that includes the intellectual moral, and aesthetic standards prevalent in a community and the meanings of communicative ideas”.

Shared ideas, morals and standards mean that they become traditional for those who have collectively formed or inherited them. This is asserted by the definition proposed by Brumann (1999), who seeks to summarise various definitions between authors. Brumann (1999, p. 4) writes that:

“Culture means the whole complex of traditional behaviour which has been developed by the human race and is successively learned by each generation. A culture is less precise. It can mean the forms of traditional behaviour which are characteristic of a given society, or of a group of societies, or of a certain race, or of a certain area, or of a certain period of time”.

For this research, we adopt the definition of Schein (2004, p. 17) who states that culture is:

“pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems”.

Table (4) summarises the key concepts used to discuss culture that demonstrate how it has developed over the past decades.

Table 4: Key Concepts Used to Discuss Culture

Authors	Key Concept
Herskovits (1948)	Culture is (man-made)
Geertz (1973)	Culture is a set of symbolic meanings transmitted to new generations.
LeVine (1984)	Culture is a set of shared meanings, ideas, and assumptions
Brumann (1999)	Culture is man-made, transmitted to new generations, shared as a traditional behaviour, characterised by social groups
Schein (2004)	Culture is man-made, transmitted to and adjusted by new generations, shared assumptions, related to social groups that share history.

The reason for the adoption of this definition is that, in addition to it being highly cited and less criticised than others (Alvesson and Berg, 1992), it acknowledges all the key elements demonstrated separately in the previous excerpts, which emphasise that culture is based on

shared assumptions, developed over time and influenced by different social circumstances. More importantly, this definition re-presents the elements previously discussed in sequential order with clear boundaries (Alavi et al., 2005) that reduce the slipperiness of the concept and provide a much clearer explanation of the concept of culture and its impact.

This definition emphasizes that shared experiences lead to a generation of shared social realities that govern perceptions and feelings. Also, because it asserts that culture is learnt through problem-solving social circumstances, it means that culture is socially constructed in accordance with conditions and circumstances experienced by people. This idea implies that cultures can never be identical because social conditions and circumstances are never identical. This does not mean we disregard fundamental similarities between cultures, such as basic assumptions shared by, for instance, Arabs and Anglo-Saxons. Rather, it means that studying the influence of culture requires analytical models that allow researchers to consider deeper differences, not only within but also between cultures. These differences are constructed by the different social conditions and circumstances that take place in different societies. The next section discusses the interpretive position this research takes to consider these deep and implicit cultural differences, which are vital for a robust study of the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients.

5.2.2 An Interpretive View of Culture

Finding or developing an analytical model to study the influence of culture on interpersonal interactions is not straightforward. This is because the relationship between culture and business and management practices appeared in the literature with the emergence of neo-institutionalisms, which suggest that organizational rules and laws are social constructs, and introduce the concept of organizational culture (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). Dobbin (1994) discusses the development of the relationship between culture, and business and management studies. He argues that theorising about culture in relation to business and management was neglected until the 1970s when neo-institutionalists began to describe management theories and practices as myths and symbols. Then, they began to theorise about the social construction of organisations, whereby the relationship between culture, and business and management started to develop within the concept of organisational culture. The reason for linking culture to business and management through organisational studies, and particularly through the concept of organisational culture, was the tendency to separate organisations from their social environments. The driver of this tendency was a dominant view at that time which suggests that organisations are entities that operate according to specific and universal management and business laws that focus on performance and development. With the emergence of the view that suggests management theories and practices are social constructs that cannot be isolated from their environments, researchers began to see organisations as cultures, where those rules and laws should be treated as social constructs (Dobbin, 1994). Accordingly, most of the

available analytical models that discuss culture within the business and management field focus on organisational culture.

Because the available analytical models focus on organizational cultures where organizational members are considered as part of a group, this chapter argues that if we aim to investigate the influence of culture on interpersonal interactions then we need to focus not only on group level but also individual level. Hatch and Cunliffe (2006; 2013) assert that focusing on culture at group level allows us to consider what makes a group of people distinctive and differentiated from others. But, focusing on a group's culture and ignoring sub-cultures to which individuals belong may lead the researcher to "miss the tensions and contradictions" resulting from the individual's personal views, which might not necessarily be shared with the group members. These different views lead to tensions and contradictions between group members while they manage and understand the world around them.

At the group level, we adopt one of the popular frameworks of culture proposed by Schein who offers a structured analytical model through which group culture can be studied. At the individual level, we discuss further assumptions that explain how individual cognitive and emotional systems are constructed of different cultures or sub-cultures from different groups. This allows the researcher to operate at a multidimensional level in the study of culture and its influence. This multidimensional approach that addresses culture at an individual level is particularly important for this study since it operates at the level of interpersonal interactions.

5.2.2.1 Culture at Group Level

For this research, the analytical model of culture offered by Schein (2004, 2010) is adopted. The reason for this is that it offers a structured and multi-level view of culture that allows the influence of culture on the interpersonal interaction between clients and consultants to be studied in a more effective way than with other models. This does not suggest an assumption that this model is comprehensive and sufficient to study the influence of culture. However, it is the basis upon which it is intended to develop a new model to study culture in client-consultant interaction by considering the individual level in relation to what distinguishes client-consultant interactions where cultural elements, such as knowledge, language and power, are operative. Table (5) offers a summary of some of the well-known models in the literature and their key similarities and differences to Schein's model. Following this table is a thorough discussion about Schein's analytical model of culture.

Table 5: The Different Analytical Models of Culture

Authors	Key Theme of the Model	Similarities with Schein's Model	Differences with Schein's Model
Denison et al. (1990)	Organisational culture can be described using four dimensions: Mission, Adaptability, Consistency and Involvement.	It (partially) acknowledges the importance of basic values. This is evident in the fact that values are sub-dimensions of consistency dimension.	It approaches culture from an angle that helps the strategy, vision, change, empowerment and development of the organisation. Because of its focus on these specific dimensions, the model is more suitable for studies that focus on organisational strategy.
O'Reilly (1991)	The model is developed based on an assumption that cultures can be described according to the core values of the organisation.	It acknowledges the importance of basic values as a core concept for describing culture.	The model focuses on eight classes: Innovation, Supportiveness, Stability, Outcome Orientation, Team Orientation, Respect for People, and Aggressiveness and Attention to Detail. Because of its focus on these specific dimensions, it seems limited to these eight classes. In other words, it does not offer the depth and flexibility needed to study culture in the interpersonal interaction.
Deal and Kennedy (1982)	Looks at organisational culture from the angle of how things are done in a certain environment. It depends on classifying environments into one of four types: Work-hard and play-hard culture, Tough-guy macho culture, Process culture, Bet-the-company culture	It has no similarities with Schein's model.	This model emphasises how quickly the organization obtains feedback, the ways by which members are rewarded, and the extent to which risks are taken. The focus of this model makes it unsuitable for our focus on knowledge exchange between clients and consultants.
Gerry Johnson (1988)	Proposed so-called 'cultural web' through which he identified elements that claimed to describe or impact organizational culture. These elements are: The paradigm, control systems, organizational structures, power structures, symbols, rituals and routines, stories and myths.	It acknowledges the role of values, beliefs, and basic assumptions within the elements of rituals, routines, stories and myths.	Although the model is flexible and allows the research to consider wider cultural dimensions, it remains more suitable for organisational studies than interpersonal interactions.
Stanley G. Harris (1994)	Proposed five categories of organisational schemata (accumulative knowledge gained by organisational members) that form	It acknowledges the role of previous experiences in culture.	Although this model offers more emphasis on the role of the individual in the construction and transformation of culture, it

	organisational culture. These categories are: Self-in-organization schemata, Person-in-organization schemata, Organization schemata, Object/concept-in-organization schemata, Event-in-organization schemata.		remains limited to five assumptions or (categories) which might be more suitable for organisational studies.
Cooke, R. and Rousseau, D. (1988)	They propose that culture can be seen from the behaviours that members believe are obligatory to fit in and to meet expectations in their environments. They propose that Organizational Culture Inventory measures behavioural norms grouped into three general types of cultures: Constructive Cultures, Passive/defensive cultures, and Aggressive/defensive cultures.	It allows the researcher to focus more on the individual's role through studying behaviour.	It is limited to three types of cultures with specific indicators such as passiveness and defensiveness.

Schein (2004) explains that culture is a dynamic phenomenon because it is constantly constructed through interactions between group members. He argues that routines, norms and rules guide and constrain members' behaviour. Any social unit or group that has some sort of history will have developed a culture. The strength of the culture depends on the length of its existence, the stability of its members and the emotional intensity of the shared historical experience.

This implies that culture is not something that can be deliberately constructed with specific and clear characteristics. Rather, it is something that emerges from continuous interactions with different social phenomena. The issue with this type of construction is the fact that the reason, cause and meaning of the existing cultural values and norms that have shaped the construction are not always visible. This implies that we must find effective ways that allow us to examine deeper levels of culture and unveil the reality of cultural norms, values, beliefs and assumptions. Therefore, it is thought that the model that seems to be suitable to address the dynamic nature of culture is the one proposed by Schein (1988, 2004, 2010).

The interpretive analytical model of Schein (2004) proposes that culture can be manifested and analysed at three levels. The degree of visibility in these levels ranges from the very visible manifestations that can be seen and felt, to the deeply and unconsciously embedded basic assumptions. Between these layers, there are different espoused values, beliefs, norms and rules that govern the behaviours that cultural members use to depict culture to others and themselves.

The suitability of this model stems from the fact that it explicitly acknowledges that culture has a clearly visible level as well as the deeper, less visible levels which seem to concern the majority of authors (Wilson, 2001). Scott et al (2003) affirm that Schein's analytical model of culture offers a multi-level approach to studying culture which allows the researcher to unlock unspoken or invisible assumptions. In other words, this multi-level approach allows the researcher to develop an understanding not only of visible cultural behaviour, but also of the unconscious beliefs and assumptions that guide the behaviour of the cultural member. Moreover, according to Alavi et al. (2005), Schein's model offers clear boundaries to the levels with which culture can be analysed, without oversimplifying the subject into several static dimensions, or overwhelming by adding many considerations that lead to confusion. In short, it offers a structured and multi-level argument about how culture can be analysed, without losing the richness of the concept or leading to confusion.

Schein's Interpretive Analytical Model by which Culture is Manifested

According to Schein (2004), culture can be manifested and analysed at three levels. The use of the term 'level' in the model is a reference to the degree to which cultural phenomena are visible to the researcher. The levels range from the very visible and tangible manifestations that can be seen and felt, to the deeply implicit, unconscious basic assumptions which Schein suggests are the essence of culture. Between the very visible and the very invisible levels are various espoused values and beliefs that set the rules of behaviour which the members of the culture follow as a way of portraying the culture to others and to themselves.

Artefacts (What we see)

Schein (2004) explains that artefacts are at the surface of culture and constitute the phenomena that can be seen, heard, felt and encountered by anyone who is not familiar with the culture. Artefacts include the visible output of the group, such as the architecture or physical environment, arts, language, technologies, style and clothing, emotional displays, manners of address, myths, stories, explicit lists of values, rituals and religion. At an organisational level, artefacts include organisational processes which set certain behaviours as routines, and structural elements such as characters, organisational charts, and the formal description of how the organisation should work. Schein (2004) stresses that the most important feature of this level of culture is that it is easy to observe, but also difficult to interpret. For instance, the Mayans and the Egyptians built highly observable pyramids, but the meaning of pyramids in each of these two cultures was very different as they were considered tombs by the Egyptians and temples by the Mayans. This means that observers can easily describe what they see or feel, but cannot necessarily construct the correct meaning from the observable artefacts only.

Therefore, Baumgartner (2009) asserts that it is dangerous to make deeper assumptions from visible artefacts alone. This is because the interpretations of the individual are

projections of his/her own reactions and feelings. Therefore, the actual cultural meaning of artefacts cannot be obtained by outsiders without performing a deeper investigation into the beliefs, values and assumptions associated with them.

However, Schein (2004) affirms that an observer might be able to identify the meaning of the observed artefacts if s/he comes from the same larger culture or from a culture that is a sub-culture of a larger one. This is particularly important for this research as the researcher comes from the culture under investigation, Saudi Arabia. The only challenge that remains for the researcher to consider is the fact that, although he might be able to identify the meanings of the observed artefacts in the Saudi culture and among Saudi clients, he needs to acknowledge that he is less capable of properly identifying the meaning of the observed artefacts in the cultures of the sample of international consultants.

Espoused Beliefs and Values (What people say)

This analytical level of culture is probably the most critical for two reasons, as explained by Schein (2004). Firstly, espoused beliefs and values are developed over time and stem from social issues experienced by members of the society. When these beliefs and values become taken-for-granted, people forget about the reasons or social issues that caused them to develop. Hence, people might not be able to explain why such beliefs and values are in place. Yet, they believe in their value and importance for their social life. Secondly, these taken-for-granted beliefs and values are determinants of the validity and applicability of new solutions offered by outsiders and insiders. The following lines explain the development of these beliefs and values and how they influence the interpretation of new solutions received from outsiders.

Schein (2004) argues that the learning of a group reflects the original beliefs and values shared by the group's members. These shared beliefs and values determine the group members' sense of what ought to be. Schein (2004) explains that, when a group faces a new challenge, issue or task, the first resolution suggested to deal with it reflects the *individual* assumption of the person who proposes that resolution about what is right or wrong, and what would work. Those individuals who take the initiative to propose solutions can influence their groups to follow certain approaches to solve problems. However, although the proposed resolutions might be applied and succeed, they do not become shared knowledge until this knowledge becomes a common action in relation to what is supposed to be done. This means that whatever has been proposed will remain a member's own belief until the group takes collective action. If the outcome of the collective action turns out to be valid, then the group reaches a new shared belief that certain actions solve certain problems.

For instance, in a sales business, if sales begin to decrease, the business manager may suggest that, "we have to increase advertising". This suggestion stems from the manager's

belief that advertising increases sales. The group of people who work for this business may have never experienced this dilemma before and never heard the above statement about the need to increase advertising to solve the dilemma; this is just a suggestion that comes from the manager's personal system of beliefs and values. The manager believes that when sales drop, the best course of action to be taken to solve this dilemma is to increase advertising. Currently, this personal belief of the manager does not have any status other than the fact that it is a suggestion that needs to be questioned, challenged, debated and tested.

If the manager convinces the group of people who work for this business to adopt this solution, and if the suggested solution succeeds, the group reaches a shared perception of its validity, applicability and value, which is that advertising increases sales. Then, this solution gradually transforms into a shared value or belief among the group members. Ultimately, shared values and beliefs become a shared assumption when the belief continues to solve the dilemma. The assumption may become deeply rooted among the group members, to the extent that they may forget that they were suspicious about its validity in the first place.

Nevertheless, not all beliefs and values go through such a transformation for two reasons. Firstly, not all personal beliefs result in reliable solutions. Only the empirically tested beliefs and values that continue to reliably solve problems for a group of people will be transformed into shared assumptions. Secondly, some values are not testable at all because they are domain-specific. This implies dealing with environment elements that are hard to control, such as moral and aesthetic matters.

However, Schein (2004) asserts that shared assumptions govern the extent to which new solutions are likely to be adopted or not. This is because these shared assumptions constitute the social validation system, which determines what works and how it should work. Also, they become 'non-discussable' and supported by sets of operational rules of behaviour. This implies that the assumptions that guide group members through the ways in which they should deal with certain situations and the ways in which new members should be trained align with these operational rules. In other words, these deeply-rooted shared values and beliefs become a sort of ideology or a philosophy that is absorbed over time and establishes how the group members should view the world around them, behave and deal with situations.

Nonetheless, the critical role of this level stems from the fact that it explains most of the observed artefacts. Moreover, beliefs and values at this level offer predictions for artefactual behaviour or reaction, because values and beliefs at this level operate at the conscious level and, accordingly, can provide an explanation of what the artefacts mean through a full or partial presentation of the history and social circumstances that

constructed them (Baumgartner, 2009). Alavi et al. (2005) argue that values and beliefs at this level are visible and group members are aware of them, so they can be debated, explained and gradually adjusted.

An example of the visible values and beliefs that operate at the conscious level can be made in relation to known social rules, such as segregation between men and women in the work place or non-public occasions in Saudi Arabia, where there is a belief that women should always have their own privacy and space away from men. Although this social rule stems from Islamic teachings, it has become a cultural value that people care about, whereby they appreciate places that offer gender segregation and avoid those that do not. Nevertheless, while such segregation seems to be a fundamental cultural value in Saudi Arabia, the application is different and changing, and people continuously debate what this segregation should mean and how it should be applied. This has resulted in new ways of applying segregation. For instance, in work places, instead of having women and men working in two different buildings, some work places now have male and female employees working on either side of a floor while sharing meeting rooms and hallways.

In the context of Saudi Arabia, a solution that does not consider privacy for women is unlikely to be accepted or even negotiated. This is because it would seem very foreign to the Saudi client, which implies that the offered solution is far from compatible and applicable. However, offering a solution that shows an explicit consideration for the privacy and space of women is likely to be accepted, or at least debated. Even if the proposed segregation style is not welcomed, clients are likely to debate and adjust the solution, and even their work space, to accommodate new changes while preserving women's privacy.

Basic Underlying Assumptions (What people deeply believe in and act upon)

Schein (2004) argues that basic assumptions are those that have become so taken-for-granted that they are extremely hard to change. This level of consensus on the shared assumptions results from continuous success in applying beliefs and values to solve certain issues, as discussed earlier. The difference between basic assumptions and the transformed assumptions discussed in the Espoused Beliefs and Values section, is the fact that the basic assumptions are deeply rooted to the extent that any behaviour initiated on any other premise is inconceivable. For instance, in capitalist culture, a company cannot be established while it has no potential to make profit. This is because it is inconceivable that one might form a company that operates at a continuous financial loss. In an engineering organisation, it is inconceivable to deliberately and willingly design a machine that is unsafe. This is because safety is a taken-for-granted assumption, and suggesting otherwise is unconvincing.

The above sense in which Schein (2004) presents basic assumptions is similar to what has been identified by Argyris and Schon (1974) and Argyris (1976) as 'theories-in-use,' which

are implicit assumptions that operate at the unconscious level of the cognitive and emotional systems which consequently govern the feelings, perceptions and ways of thinking of group members regarding the things around them.

Schein (2004) argues that what distinguishes basic assumptions and theories-in-use is the fact that they are non-debatable and non-confrontable and, therefore, extremely unchangeable. This is because they are deeply rooted in our unconscious and psychological systems, which gives culture its ultimate power. Culture as a set of basic assumptions sets out the things we should pay attention to the meanings of things, the emotional ways in which we react to actions, and the actions we should take in certain situations. Douglas (1986) and Schein (2004) argue that, when we develop integrated sets of 'basic assumptions', 'mental map', or 'thought world', we become highly comfortable with those who share the same integrated sets of basic assumptions, maps or world. Conversely, we will be very vulnerable and uncomfortable in situations where different sets of basic assumptions are in operation. This is because we will not be able to correctly interpret, understand or perceive what is going on. According to Schein (2004), the human mind requires cognitive stability. Therefore, any questioning or challenging of a basic assumption releases defensiveness and anxiety.

5.2.2.2 Culture at an Individual Level

The following section discusses the relevance of culture to the individual level. The individual experience of culture is thought to differ from the collective level. This is because people remain subjective in the way they experience events. Hence, personal dynamics can influence how generalised norms are interpreted and applied by people. For example, according to Elder-Vass (2012), from a subjective perspective, interpretations and actions of the individual appear to be the products of his/her choices motivated by his/her independently formed beliefs. But, "such an understanding ignores the most fundamental feature of culture: culture is a *shared* set of practices and understandings" (Elder-Vass, 2012, p. 38-39). Accordingly, if the individual were able to make his/her own unconstrained independent choice of the practices that he/she wishes to perform, there would be no such thing as culture. This is because our personal practices and beliefs do not constitute culture *per se* unless they are shared. Alexander (1992) argues that practices and beliefs are shared only if a group of people are influenced to follow them. Therefore, Elder-Vass (2012, p. 39) argues that a merely subjective view of culture cannot be assumed to be coherent; "it will lack the means to explain how culture can acquire the shared quality that makes it culture" (Elder-Vass, 2012). This perspective is contrasted with an objective one where culture is thought to represent an output that exists outside the immediate experience of its members. For example, although a member has the freedom to take any action, culture remains influential in that choice. In this way, it is an entity that exists independently of the member. This means culture cannot be analysed by studying the personal choices of individuals without considering the shared beliefs in the cultural groups to which those

individuals belong. The work of Emile Durkheim is frequently cited for being able to accommodate the objective and subjective perspectives of culture (Elder-Vass, 2012, p. 39). Durkheim (2008) argues that the individual acts on the basis of his/her own *representation* – which can be referred to as beliefs, dispositions or mental properties. Durkheim (2008) distinguishes between two important criteria, namely *individual representations* and *collective representations*. On the one hand, individual representations are basically the specific dispositions or beliefs of particular individuals. On the other hand, collective representations are the beliefs and dispositions that are shared across a particular society, in which most individuals share the same beliefs and dispositions (Durkheim, 2008).

Explaining the interplay between the objective and subjective perspectives of culture with the theory of ‘representation’ is similar to the notion of multidimensionality of culture discussed by Stead (2004). Culture itself can be looked at from a multi-dimensional perspective. This means that the culture of one person or a group of people can be constructed by more than one cultural group. In other words, there is a multidimensional grouping that can be linked to more than one cultural or sub-cultural ‘groups’, instead of ‘societies’, as suggested by Durkheim (2008). Authors like Pare (1996) and Stead (2004) assert that cultures are not necessarily related only to societies. Rather, cultures can be related to different institutional groups, such as race, religion, language and ethnicity. For instance, cultural groups such as Arab or English cultures are grouped by institutions of language, black or white cultures by institutions of ethnicity, Western and Eastern cultures by institutions of continents and Muslims and Christians by the institutions of religion. These groups have collective beliefs shared by their members, but that does not mean all members of a certain cultural group are culturally similar. This is because group members may happen to share other beliefs with other groups. For example, a person could be British, white, atheist and straight, agreeing to the institutional facts provided by British, white, atheist and straight institutions. However, this does not mean every British person is white, atheist and straight, and does not mean that all British people share the same grounds of these institutions and agrees to what they offer as realities or facts. This is what is meant by the dynamicity and multidimensionality of culture.

This means every person has cognitive and emotional systems that depend on the blend of cultures that person happens to adopt. Stead (2004) suggests that social constructionism provides a clear explanation of the multidimensionality of culture. Stead (2004, p. 393) states:

“social constructionism views people who share meaning-making in their relationships as being part of a culture (they could also be in other cultures as well). So, race, ethnicity, and language are not necessarily the only ways we can conceive culture. Cultural and cross-cultural psychologies tend to bind people within racial or ethnic groups with the result that too often researchers assume that people belong

only to one culture. It is important to note that many people straddle two or more cultures depending on to whom they are relating. To attempt to classify some people into only one culture is also to fall prey to a limiting role that categorization plays in post-positivist approach science” (Stead, 2004, p. 393).

Claiming that every individual is different does not mean that the similarities between people who share certain cultures are ignored. Although those who share the same blend of cultures, such as Asian, atheist and gay, have greater common ground and similarities, every person has different previous experiences, and these have a great impact on their cognitive and emotional systems. This is another factor that makes individuals different from each other. For instance, siblings who were born and raised in the same house may end up adopting different cultures and different ways of thinking which make them significantly different, regardless of their nationalities, religions, education and, more importantly, the fact that they belong to the same parents and family. Considering similarities and embedded differences between cultures would provide richer grounds for better understanding of situations.

5.3 The Conceptual Framework

The remainder of the chapter presents an operational model of culture based on Schein’s definition and analytical models of culture.

Despite the fact that Schein (2004) offers a popular definition and analytical model of culture, the concept of culture remains vague and elusive for studies that aim to examine its influence. If the aim of this research is to study the influence of culture on the knowledge exchange between international clients and consultants, then it is necessary to understand how this slippery concept of culture can be operationalised to answer this question. This requires us to look into two main dimensions. Firstly, we should look into an approach that acknowledges the elusive and vague nature of culture and offers assumptions that allow us to operationalise and explain how the influence of culture takes place within knowledge-exchange activities. This research proposes that social constructionism seems to offer the assumptions necessary to study the influence of culture on the interpretive interactions between international consultants and Saudi clients. Secondly, we should identify specific cultural components through which culture and its influence on knowledge exchange activities can be manifested. This research proposes that language, knowledge and power and key cultural constructs that allow the influence of culture on knowledge-exchange interactions to be manifested. Justification for these choices will be presented in the following sub-section.

Figure 6, below, demonstrates the social constructionist model through which it is intended to study the influence of culture on knowledge-exchange activities between international consultants and Saudi clients.

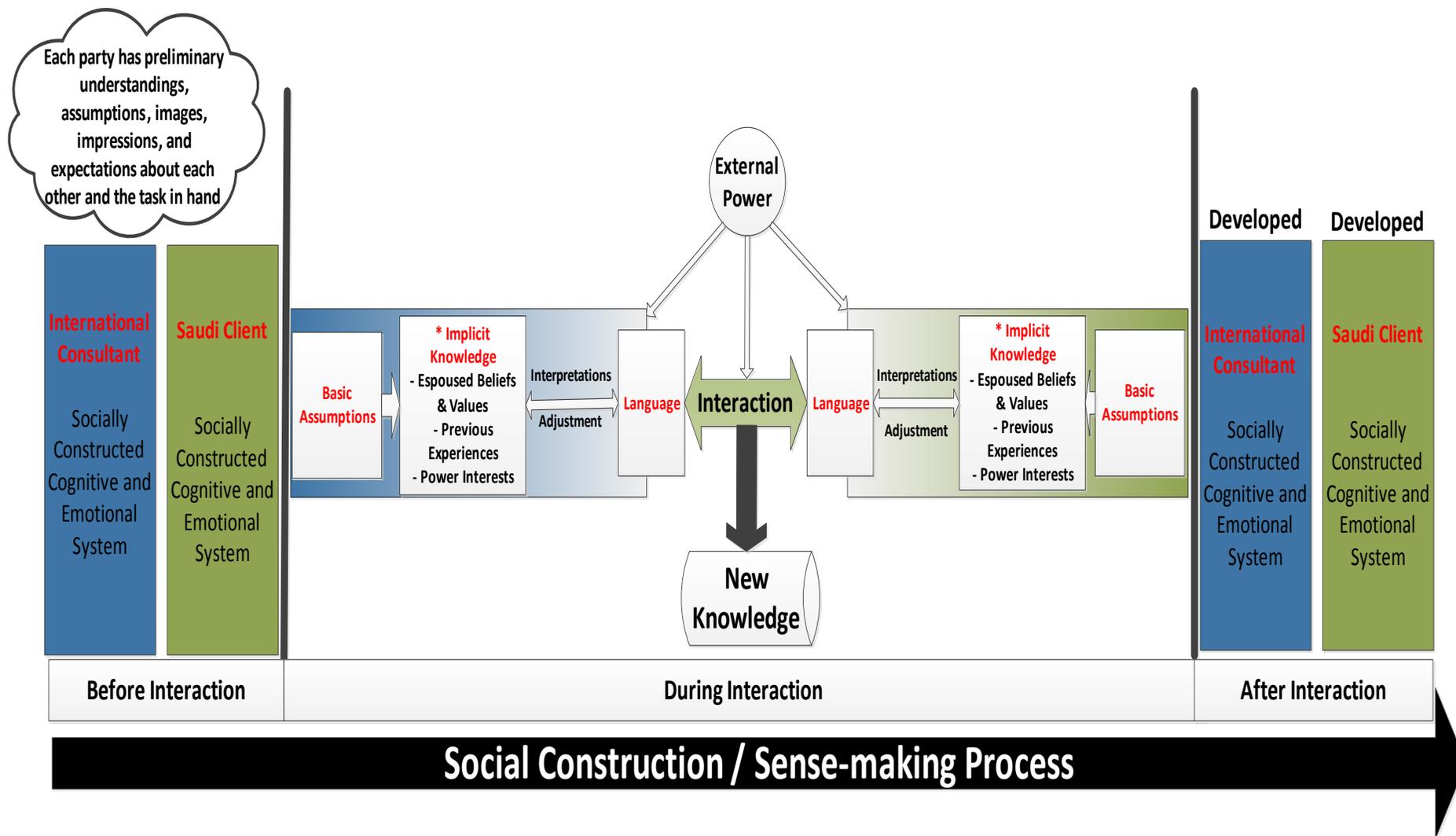


Figure 6: A Social Constructionist Model to Study the Influence of Culture on Knowledge Exchange Between International Consultants and Clients

5.3.1 Social Constructionist Approach to Studying the Influence of Culture on Knowledge Exchange between International Consultants and Saudi Clients

Young and Collin (2004, p. 374) argue that practitioners have been eager to find approaches that explain phenomena experienced in everyday life. Such approaches need to acknowledge the multidimensional and implicit differences between people and situations. Since the study of the client-consultant relationship and the exchange of knowledge remains interpretive and interactive, it is appropriate to theorize on the interpersonal processes among people (Burr, 1995). The social constructionist perspective has been deployed in the study of culture and knowledge because it provides explicit considerations for the meaning-generation mechanisms within which different cultural components, such as culture, knowledge, language and power are operative (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Burr, 1995; Searle, 1995; Hacking and Hacking, 1999; Stead, 2004; Elder-Vass, 2012).

In other words, a social constructionist perspective becomes suitable because it seeks to understand the role of interpretation in understanding how meaning is subjectively produced among individuals (Rosen, 1991, p. 274; Stead, 2004). Because of its focus on the meaning-generating level, social constructionism has been “regarded as the latest stage of development of cognitivism” (Young and Collin, 2004, p. 374). This implies that it offers assumptions that allow the researcher to operate at the deep levels of the interpretation process, where deeper cultural assumptions can be unveiled.

The essence of social constructionism is that it suggests that people are in a continuous sense-making or reality-finding process through which they construct meaning and actions to deal with different social phenomena they experience in their everyday lives (Searle, 1995, 2008; Czarniawska, 1997; Elder-Vass, 2012). Here, the relationship between culture and meaning-generating, as suggested by social constructionism, revolves around the fact that culture is a socially constructed system of meaning that governs human interaction and interpretation (Searle, 1995; Durkheim, 2008; Durkheim, 2008; Elder-Vass, 2012). In this context, the social constructionism view is that humans are cognitive entities (Czarniawska, 1997; Lindberg and Czarniawska, 2006) whose cognition, actions and reactions are governed by their socially constructed cultures. Hence, the study of people’s relationships and the norms and values through which meaning is emergent remains important for understanding how culture, as implicit knowledge, is maintained and communicated over time through symbolic interactions (Searle, 1995; Stead, 2004; Elder-Vass, 2012).

Social constructionism is suitable for this research because it acknowledges the culture-specificity of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Searle, 1995; Stead, 2004; Elder-Vass, 2012). Social constructionism asserts that, “knowledge in some area is the product of our social practices and institutions, or of the interaction and negotiations between relevant social groups” (Gasper, 1999, p.855, cited in Young and Collin, 2004). Thus, it can be inferred

that there is a need to study the processes by which perception of knowledge is conditioned by cultural differences.

5.3.1.1 The Three Stages of the Interpretive Interaction Through which the Influence of Culture can be Studied

Based on Goffman's (1959) suggestion that humans are engaged in the continuous activity of understanding each other before, during and after their interactions, this model suggests that the influence of culture on client-consultant interaction should consider key periodic stages. This section outlines three stages and offers a rational approach that traces the development of the interaction where different assumptions and indicators are expected to appear at each stage. This allows us to understand how the influence of culture on the interpretive interactions between clients and consultant takes place by focusing on how those assumptions and indicators develop or change as the interaction develops.

Phase 1: Before the relationship

At this stage, both parties are assumed to have different cognitive systems, governed by their cultures. According to Goffman (1959), individuals who come from different environments and engage in interactions with new people have preconceptions about each other and the task at hand, including preliminary understandings, assumptions, images and expectations.

Moreover, since people communicate through language, which has a fundamental role in interaction and interpretation (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 2001; Elder-Vass, 2012), it is important to focus on this component starting from this stage. The role of language at this stage resides in the rhetorical ways in which clients and consultants are described by themselves or by others. Furthermore, since people plan their presentations and try to show a certain image to the other side (Goffman, 1959), clients and consultants are assumed to express signs of power over the other side to demonstrate that they are empowered by knowledge, while clients demonstrate their power to hire the consultants (Bloomfield and Daniele, 1995; Fincham, 2002; Pozzebon and Pinsonneault, 2012).

Lastly, at this stage, according to Schein (2004), each side is expected to see cultural artefacts that might be understood correctly or misunderstood. These artefacts can be related to their preconceptions, or related to the power signs each party is trying to show to the other side. The understanding or misunderstanding of these artefacts should offer early indications about how the influence of culture may take place at this stage and how it develops as the relationship develops.

Phase 2: During the interaction

At this stage, all forms of knowledge (implicit and explicit, cultural and managerial) are exchanged by language (Sturdy et al., 2009). People are expected to interact with and

interpret signals, symbols and behaviours, which results in continuous adjustments of key elements in their cognitive systems, such as meanings, assumptions, expectations, images and impressions. The adjustment continues to take place as long as the interaction is running (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). At this stage, clients and consultants are not only expected to adjust their preconceptions, but are also expected to challenge each other with new input. In this context, it is expected that clients will challenge their consultants' understanding and interpretation of their situations or problems. Similarly, consultants are expected to challenge their clients about what the client should apply in order to solve the issue. This sort of challenging is expected to unleash the power component, whereby each party seeks to protect its interests and maximise its payoff out of this relationship (Fincham 2002, Sturdy et al., 2009).

From a social constructionist perspective people are continually interpreting what they observe and receive (Goffman, 1959; Weick 2012). Risager (2006) and Kramsch (2014) affirm that when people are engaged in knowledge-exchange activities, they are actually engaged in continuous construction, reconstructions, and modifications of their preconceptions. It is this interpretive interaction that results in the transmission of the actual meanings that both parties wish to deliver or acquire. According to Kramsch (2014, p. 36), in these interactions, people develop their own sets of meanings and speech methods in which the use of concepts is understood similarly by the people who belong to that community, despite their cultural backgrounds.

In other words, we should look into the influence of cultural similarities on people's interpretations of new knowledge. Also, we should look into the length and nature of interactions between people, and the influence of that on their understanding of each other, and the consequences of that for their interpretations.

At this stage, we assume that knowledge is socially constructed between clients and consultants. This assumption is also asserted by the social constructionist paradigm. Goffman (1959) and Weick (2012) assert that, because people are continually interpreting what they observe and receive, new social phenomena are developed from these interpretations. In other words, people engage in a continuous effort to interpret and understand others, not as a given but as an emergent phenomenon by which social circumstances are dealt with. Therefore, it is rational to assume that the emergence of new social phenomena is the emergence of a new reality acknowledged by those who participate in its construction. In this context, we refer to the management solutions constructed from the interaction between clients and consultants. The construction of new knowledge in these situations is explained by Czarniawska and Joerges (1989), who argue that reality is socially constructed, deconstructed, negotiated and elaborated in the interactions between humans, and even in humans' interactions with objects and nature.

In this context, social constructionists recognise that construction is an active process through which individuals are engaged in interpretive interactions in concert with culture, history and other broad factors to construct, jointly, the solutions they need. To those people, these solutions are regarded as knowledge (Young and Collin, 2004). This makes initial implicit knowledge, such as culture, essential for the development of new knowledge that suits the parties involved.

Also, we should look into how imported management solutions are adapted and applied through continuous interaction and interpretation between the parties. Management solutions that have been socially constructed in a different country, by a different group of people with different cultural settings, are not expected to be transferred and applied in a different country by different groups of people with different cultural settings. Unless people understand the reality of newly-imported management solutions, these solutions are unlikely to be successfully applied. The only way of finding the reality of these solutions is through direct interactions with those who constructed them. Social constructionism suggests that these interactions should go through extended interactions and interpretations through which reality is unveiled and meanings are adjusted (Elder-Vass, 2012).

In other words, we should look into how interpretive interactions between people who come from different cultures may or may not result in the emergence of new knowledge, and in the adoption and correct application of imported management solutions.

Lastly, it is important to highlight that, at this level, we should not only look into how culture, as an implicit knowledge, influences the interpretation of new knowledge, but we should also consider whether misinterpretation occurs at the language level or at the knowledge processing level, where culture, as implicit knowledge, is operative. In other words, to understand the relationship between culture and knowledge, we need to understand the relationship between culture, language and new knowledge.

Phase 3: After the interaction

At this stage, people are expected to have developed different/new knowledge and corrected or confirmed assumptions and expectations. At this stage, attention should be paid to the ultimate changes that involved parties go through when questions about how and why are raised. Also, at this stage, attention paid to how people intend to interact with similar parties in the future, for instance, how Saudi clients expect the interaction with consultants from certain countries or organisations should look, and how international consultants expect the interaction with Saudi clients from specific regions, sectors, or organisations to look. In other words, the focus at this stage should be on how the involved parties perceive the influence of culture on their relationship and how that affects their future relationships.

5.3.2 Secondly, the Key Cultural Constructs that Manifest the Influence of Culture on Knowledge Exchange Interactions

Culture is a system or a structure of meanings (Lazear, 1997; Fox, 1999; Jiang, 2000; Silverstein et al., 2004; Johnson et al., 2008; Dueck, 2012; Kramsch, 2014; Imia et al., 2016). In seeking to operationalise impact, the following sub-sections demonstrate the relationship between culture and language, knowledge and power.

5.3.2.1 Culture and its Relationship with Language, Knowledge and Power

The first sub-section explains the relationship between culture and language, and how cultural influences can be studied through language. It is affirmed that culture can be seen and heard through language. Put differently, language becomes the visible part of culture (Jiang, 2000; Silverstein, 2004). Language derives its meaning from culture (Jiang, 2004; Kim et al., 2015). This relationship between culture and language suggests that interpretive interactions between people are subject to the cultural meanings they associate with the words they use. Different cultures associate different socially constructed meanings to similar words that may have different meanings in other cultures. This implies that, if we want to investigate the influence of culture on interpretive interactions, we need to focus on how people communicate meanings through their language, and how they understand and perceive the meanings of the words they receive. By focusing on language to study culture, the researcher operates mainly at the artefactual level of culture, through which language as a symbolic system is visible, and at the level of espoused beliefs and values, which should explain the actual meanings of words and expressions that cause misunderstanding (Schein, 2004, 2010).

The second sub-section explains the relationship between culture and knowledge. It argues that culture is an implicit form of knowledge that is socially constructed over time (Berger and Lockman, 1991). This form of implicit knowledge is needed for interpretation and sense-making for 'new' knowledge to become conceivable (Burr, 1995; King, 1995; Hong et al., 2000; Graham, 2002; Leong and Clark, 2003; Sturdy et al., 2009; Imia et al., 2016; Berkenkotter and Huckin, 2016). This implies that people from different cultures have different forms of implicit knowledge (culture) that govern their conception and understanding of newly received forms of knowledge. This means if we want to investigate the influence of culture on knowledge exchange through interpretive interactions, we should also focus on how people from different cultures perceive and understand new ideas.

The third sub-section explains the relationship between culture and power. It discusses power as a fundamental cultural component (Torelli and Shavitt, 2015), which governs people's behaviour by controlling material resources, such as money and social resources, such as knowledge (Keltner et al., 2003). It was established in the third chapter of the

literature review that power influences people's motivation and willingness to exchange knowledge (Fincham, 2002; Sturdy et al., 2009). Hence, the influence of this component should be explicitly addressed when we conduct a culture-related study, especially in the Arab world where power is a part of everyday life that can be easily recognised in relationships between people (Cunningham, 1993; Sabry, 2010; Sakr, 2012). Ultimately, four scenarios of the influence of power on knowledge exchange will be introduced (Martin and Salomon, 2003; Zhao and Luo, 2005; Phene et al., 2006; Lucas, 2006). The relationship between culture and power offers an implicit dimension through which the influence of culture on knowledge-exchange interaction can be studied. The implicitness of this component stems from the fact that it operates at less visible levels. Although power can be recognised at the artefactual level through language and presentation, it remains embedded in people's espoused beliefs and values.

5.3.2.1.1 The Relationship between Culture and Language

It is broadly agreed that culture and language are inseparable (Jiang, 2000; Kim et al., 2015; Dueck, 2012; Kramsch, 2014); it would not be possible to have a culture without having a language to express it. The inseparability stems from the fact that language reflects culture where the meanings of its words and expressions are derived from culture. In other words, people can see culture through language that expresses thoughts and ways of thinking and living. Therefore, language is part of culture and culture is part of the language; "the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing a significance of either language or culture" (Jiang, 2004, p. 328). Kim (2004, p. 1) states that, "without language, culture cannot be completely acquired nor can it be effectively expressed and transmitted. Without culture, language cannot exist". This means that culture and language are closely interconnected, to the extent that it is difficult to identify the parameters that define language and culture as separate components, and whether culture impacts language or vice-versa. In other words, we cannot refer to culture without having a language that explains what we are referring to. Similarly, we cannot explain what we want to refer to using language without having a culture, as a structure of meanings, to explain the words and expressions we are using in our explanation. Trueba and Zou (1994); Jiang, (2000); and Kim (2004) affirm that it is commonly agreed that culture is a broad concept of which language constitutes a critical part. Imia et al (2016, p. 70) explain the relationship between language and culture:

'Language' is considered to be an inseparable collection of elements consisting of words, grammar, pragmatics, and narrative styles, together functioning as a medium through which cultural views and culture-specific epistemologies are reflected (Imia et al., 2016, p. 70)

Social constructionism offers a clear explanation of the inseparability of culture and language. It is asserted that language is a pre-requisite for any social construction (Burr,

1995; Gergen, 2001; Elder-Vass, 2012). Elder-Vass (2012, p.10) states, “It is language that shapes our understanding of the world, rather than the world that shapes the way we describe it using language”. This is because all forms of knowledge about people and situations are exchanged through interactions of spoken and non-spoken language. Silverstein (2004) argues that it is language that allows us to understand the true nature of cultural concepts because it reflects human conceptualization of the world’s elements. In other words, Silverstein affirms that we ‘hear’ culture only through ‘listening’ to language (2004, p. 621).

Therefore, because language is the visible part of culture, it can be treated at the artefactual level of culture that people can clearly see and hear, although they may struggle to understand it when it is used by people from other cultures. Jiand (2000) explains how language is the visible part of culture:

“Some people say that language is the mirror of culture, in the sense that people can see a culture through its language. Another metaphor used to symbolize language and culture is the iceberg. The visible part is the language, with a small part of culture; the greater part, lying hidden beneath the surface, is the invisible aspect of culture”. Jiand (2000, p. 328)

The idea that culture can be seen as an iceberg, with language as its visible part, illustrates the view that language constitutes cultural artefacts for those involved in an interpretive interaction, where the meaning of these artefacts cannot be obtained without considering the invisible aspects of culture, namely espoused beliefs and values, and basic assumptions.

Language Derives its Meanings from Culture

Jiang (2000) and Imia et al. (2016) argue that every language form has a different meaning from any others. The meanings of every language form are not similar because they are associated with a different culture. It is not about what language people speak; rather, it is about the culture they adopt, which fuels their language with meaning. Jiang (2000) argues that people who come from different cultures can use the same language forms to refer to different things. For instance, when a person says *lunch*, a Chinese man might be referring to rice or steamed bread, but an Englishman might be referring to pizza or a sandwich.

According to Kramsch (2014), language is our guide to social reality that conditions our thinking about social processes and problems. Hence, the ‘real world’ is unconsciously built upon the language habits of the cultural members. It is impossible for two languages to be sufficiently similar to represent the same social reality. This is because people who come from different cultural backgrounds associate different words with their social realities.

Social constructionism explains that the language feature which is essential for the constitution of social reality, is “the existence of symbolic devices, such as words, that by convention *mean or represent or symbolize* something beyond themselves” (Searle, 1995, p.60). The notion here is that the meaning of these symbols and signs is socially constructed and may vary from one environment to another.

Accordingly, Lazear (1999) argues that communication between individuals is facilitated when they all share the same language and the same culture. The same culture allows individuals to communicate without intermediaries, while the same language allows them to negotiate a contract without the use of a translator. This is because the ways in which language is used and the pool from which it gains its meaning (culture) is familiar to all parties. Jiang (2000) agrees that there is always an interactive influence between language and culture. This can be clarified by comparing society to a swimming lake in which culture is the water, while language is the swimming skill. When water is familiar to people, they swim rapidly and confidently, but when it is unfamiliar, they swim slowly and cautiously. This is similar to parties communicating confidently and successfully within a national culture are familiar with. On the other hand, when the communication takes place in a foreign culture, people become cautious and communication becomes difficult.

Language Includes Non-Spoken Symbols and Signs

Language does not necessarily need to be spoken. Berger and Luckmann (1991) argue that unspoken language is essential for the human capability of objectivation, which is the ability to convert concepts or abstract meanings into objects or physical signs. Berger and Luckmann (1991) assert that objectivation is also a social construction process, through which products of human activities are available to those who created them and those who can interact with them. For instance, the subjective conduct of power expression can be apprehended by several physical symbols, such as carrying a gun or a police badge. Anger expression can be apprehended by bodily symbols, such as facial expressions and arm movement. These symbols are available in the face-to-face situation, which gives people nearby easy access to the subjectivity in place. The idea here is that people who have access to such subjectivity can reach the same conclusions, which, in this example, is anger or intimidation by power. The notion that must be made clear here is that the meaning of these signs is also culture-specific (Berger and Luckmann, 1991).

The need for Translation

Kim (2004) asserts that it is difficult for non-native speakers to grasp the sociocultural meaning of words. This makes the interactions between parties who communicate through a second language more difficult. According to Dueck (2012), this difficulty becomes greater when we consider the fact that there are words that cannot be translated. According to Jiang (2000) and Dueck (2012), translations can never be fully alike. For instance, Jiang (2000) explains that the English word *dog* and the Chinese character *gou* both refer to the

same animal. Here, the English public associates *dog* with man's best friend, kept as a pet, and a good companion. On the contrary, the Chinese public associates *gou* with a noisy animal, watchdogs, defending property from thieves. The notion here is that language is culturally loaded, which means the translations of English and Chinese words are rarely equivalents. Silverstein (2004) argues that there is a sociocultural unconscious that seems to govern the meanings people associate with words. In this context, Kramersch (2014) explains that people of different cultures and languages think differently, and their way of thinking governs their choice of words to deliver the meanings they want and their interpretations of the words they receive. Even people who speak the same language, English for instance, but come from different cultures, such as American, British or Australian, have different worldviews which govern their choice of words and reflect the meanings they want to deliver and their interpretations of the received words. This is because, according to Kramersch (2014), language is a symbolic system that we begin to construct in our early childhood when we learn to speak in order to communicate with others. In other words, we develop a symbolic system called language that describes our thoughts and the meanings we want to communicate to others and these meanings are derived from the social life that develops our culture.

The construction of meaning for language begins when children learn to think - firstly by absorbing the words and thoughts of the members of the surrounding social space, then by making these thoughts and words their own in their psychological space (Kramersch, 2014). According to the sociocultural theory of the Soviet psychologist, Vygotsky, a society's culture and an individual's way of thinking are in an inherently interactive relationship as semiotic symbolic systems that organise thoughts and words (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch and Sohmer, 1995; Kramersch; 2014). This is how we acquire culture and the language that describes it, which also describes our way of thinking. Lantolf (2000) and Lantolf et al. (2015) agree that children's speech and cognition are shaped by the culture of those around them. This means the language that we acquire is a symbolic representation of our culture and the way of thinking of the people around us.

Having established the construction of meaning for language, the question arises as to when people learn new language. Here, although grammar and vocabulary seem to be the most important, it cannot be assumed that the cultural meaning of vocabulary and sentence construction is learnt to the extent that full meaning is absorbed. This is because the cultural meaning of language is something that people inherit and construct over a lifetime, not something that they can simply study and learn, like grammar (Kramersch; 2014; Lantolf et al., 2015). In other words, learning the language is not enough to understand the meaning. Rather, people need to acquire the culture that provides meaning to that language (Kramersch; 2014). This is important for speakers who use a second language to communicate, because, although they might use the same words and sentences to refer to similar contexts, their conceptualisations of the same terms might be dissimilar to different

degrees. For instance, two people from two different cultures might be taught how to use the English sentences “Thank you for your time” or “I will give you privacy”. Although both speakers know that they express appreciation for time and privacy, their conceptualization of time and privacy might be different. In terms of time, people from different cultures may have a different sense of urgency. In terms of privacy, people from different cultures may have a different understanding of the kind of borders and boundaries that should be provided when privacy is granted to someone. The notion here is that, although people from different cultures may learn to communicate using a second language, the meanings they attach to words, narratives and conceptual metaphors are governed by their original cultures. This is a critical issue for people engaged in an international, interpretive and interactive relationship where communication is taking place using a second language for one or both parties. The issue arises from the different meanings people associate with the words.

Thus, it is rational to assume that the probability of misunderstanding between those who communicate using a language that is not their own is higher than between those who communicate using the same language and sharing the same culture. This is because each party uses his or her second language at a different level, with different references of meanings. Their references of meaning are dependent on the cultures they happen to adopt, which provide the translated words for them.

5.3.2.1.2 The Relationship between Culture and Knowledge

The difference between Knowledge and Information unveils the Relationship between Knowledge and Culture

De Long (1997, p. 5) states that “one of the barriers to understanding how knowledge and culture interact is that they are two of the most intangible elements”. It is no wonder that the relationship between knowledge and culture is intangible. However, from our analysis of the concept of knowledge, we can find clear links through which the relationship between knowledge and culture can be made more visible.

The definition of knowledge can help us identify these links. De Long (1997) offers clear discussions about the definition of knowledge and how it can be related to culture. De Long (1997, p. 5) defines knowledge as “the combination of information and human context that enhances the capacity for action”. This implies that the concept of knowledge can be broken down into two main elements, namely information and social experience. On the one hand, De Long (1997) refers to information as explicit knowledge, which can be structured, codified in documents, and shared by formal and systematic languages. On the other hand, De long (1997) refers to the social experience as tacit knowledge, which is unstructured and more dependent on actions, social contexts, and personal experiences, making this type of

knowledge difficult to formalise, accurately interpret, and communicate. In other words, it is the type of knowledge that we know but cannot easily explain - it is culture.

Culture is a tacit knowledge people need to interpret and conceive 'new' knowledge

It is established that culture is an implicit form of social knowledge (Burr, 1995; King, 1995; Hong et al., 2000; Graham, 2002; Leong and Clark, 2003; Sturdy et al., 2009; Imia et al., 2016; Berkenkotter and Huckin, 2016) that people construct and acquire over time (Kramsch; 2014; Lantolf et al., 2015). This type of implicit knowledge is fundamental for the interpretation of new knowledge (Hong et al., 2000; Imia et al, 2016).

Hong et al. (2000, p. 709) state that, "cultural knowledge is conceptualized to be like a contact lens that affects the individual's perceptions of visual stimuli all of the time". This can be explained by the argument made by Hong et al. (2000, p. 710), who explain that culture is a meaning system which has a continuous and constant influence on the cognition of individuals. In other words, culture is a form of knowledge that becomes 'operative' in a certain 'interpretive task'. According to Imia et al. (2016), for cognitive psychologists, culture is knowledge that humans acquire which operates their cognitive systems.

Spelke (1994) explains how culture influences the cognitive systems of people and results in different interpretations of received information. Spelke (1994) argues that culture as a form of implicit knowledge begins to emerge early in life. Because these knowledge forms emerge within certain contexts in certain environments, they are domain-specific. People draw on these forms of knowledge to make sense of their surroundings. The fact that these forms of knowledge are domain-specific constrains those who possess them from discovering other meanings that emerge from other domains. Cresswell and Rivas (2016) affirm that culture is a domain-specific knowledge that affects people's cognition and their interpretation of new knowledge.

The notion that we seek to establish here is that culture is assumed to be a form of implicit knowledge which is pre-requisite for thought and understanding of other forms of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Spelke, 1994; Gergen, 2001; Weick, 2009). Berger and Luckmann (1991) argue that culture is a stock of social knowledge, which is constructed, shared and transferred from generation to generation, and is available for individuals to use in everyday life. People live in a world of common sense empowered by specific bodies of knowledge. Therefore, we can argue that knowledge is culture-specific, which means that it is acknowledged as knowledge among those by/for whom it was constructed to solve contextual issues. The following lines elaborate more on this argument.

Knowledge is Culture-Specific

Because culture governs people's cognitive systems (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Spelke, 1994; Hong et al., 2000; Gergen, 2001; Weick, 2009; Imia, 2016), it is argued that knowledge is culturally specific (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Burr, 1995; Czarniawska, 2001, Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006, 2013). This means that what is regarded as acceptable knowledge in one culture is not necessarily regarded the same way in other cultures (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006, 2013; Scott, 2013). In other words, what is regarded as real in one culture is not necessarily real in other cultures (Berger and Luckmann, 1991).

In their discussion of the sociology of knowledge, Berger and Luckmann (1991, p.13) argue that "reality is socially constructed" and, thus, knowledge is socially constructed. Their definition of 'reality' is "a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition" (p.13). Their definition of 'knowledge' is "the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics" (p.13). Berger and Luckmann (1991, p. 15) argue that 'reality' and 'knowledge' are justified by the element of their social dependence. What is 'real' to an English businessman may not be 'real' to a Tibetan monk because of the different social knowledge that English and Tibetan people use to recognise reality. Berger and Luckmann (1991, p. 15) argue that "specific agglomerations of 'reality' and 'knowledge' pertain to specific social contexts, and that these relationships will have to be included in an adequate sociological analysis of these contexts". This means that the reality that a group of people share determines what they regard to be 'knowledge' (Berger and Luckmann, 1991).

Burr (1995) provides a much clearer social constructionist argument about what is regarded as knowledge in different cultures. He argues that social constructionism insists that we should be critical about our taken-for-granted ways of perceiving the world around us. Social constructionism encourages us to believe that our observations of the world around us do not necessarily capture the actual nature or reality of the world. In fact, our view of what we regard as reality or conventional knowledge is limited to our own perception and belief of the existence of this knowledge. This means that our perceptions and beliefs are not necessarily shared with those who have different ways of looking at the world around them.

Burr (1995, p.4) states:

"The particular forms of knowledge that abound in any culture are therefore artefacts of it, and we should not assume that our ways of understanding are necessarily any better, in terms of being any nearer the truth, than other ways"

This statement by Burr (1995) is acknowledged by social constructionists like Czarniawska (2001) who affirms that knowledge is regarded as knowledge by those who are part of the

culture within which it was constructed, and according to the ways in which the members of that culture view the world.

Another social constructionist, Elder-Vass (2012), agrees that there is a social normativity on the ontology of knowledge that we believe to be socially constructed. This is simply because culture, experience and language are the pillars of the construction of knowledge. The notion here is that these pillars are dependent on the nature and circumstances of the environment in which they exist, and in which they participate in the construction of new solutions that become knowledge to those who witness their effect on their daily life. The characteristics of these components have a significant influence on the ways in which knowledge is constructed. With knowledge that has been constructed in different environments, the culture, experience and language are expected to produce different solutions that suit the characteristics of the environment.

Consequently, if societies have different cultures that govern their interpretations and production of knowledge, then it is rational to assume that specialised knowledge, such as management and business, produced in different societies, is different as well. This implies that they might not be applicable in environments other than their origin. Burr (1995, p. 7) affirms and explains this notion: “if all forms of knowledge are historically and culturally specific, this must include the knowledge generated for the social sciences”. Accordingly, it is rational to assume that *culture is the implicit knowledge that people acquire over time, and it highly influences their interpretations and approval of the new forms of knowledge they receive*. To understand how the influence of culture on knowledge takes place, we should seek to understand the implicit knowledge that governs people’s interpretations and perceptions. This happens by focusing on the espoused beliefs and values of the cultures within which knowledge exchange takes place. This implies that we should look into how people developed the current models and solutions which resulted from previous experiences and trials to solve issues.

Moreover, it is rational to assume that the cultural similarities of the participants in knowledge exchange activities determine the level of smoothness and effectiveness of the exchange of knowledge. The fact that culture is a pre-requisite form of implicit knowledge that influences people’s interpretations of new knowledge suggests that people who share similar cultures may have better grounds for understanding, and smoother interaction. This notion has been explicitly affirmed by Berger and Luckmann (1991). Berger and Luckmann (1991) argue that when people share similar cultures, it becomes easier for them to participate in interactions facilitated by their available institutions of social knowledge. But, people who have different institutions of social knowledge cannot participate effectively in interactions with others who lack such shared social knowledge.

5.3.2.1.3 The Relationship between Culture and Power

Power as Fundamental Cultural Component

In Arab culture, power is part of the typical lifestyle that people recognise and deal with on a daily basis, and can be frequently observed in public between family members, friends, officials, locals and internationals, teachers and students, etc. Authors like Cunningham (1993), Sabry (2010), and Sakr (2012) affirm that power is an influential cultural element that should always be present in culture-related research in the Arab world because of the influence of this element in everyday life.

For instance, Sabry (2010) discusses the life conditions of the working class, which constitutes the vast majority of Arabs. The example Sabry used to elaborate on the obvious role of power was an incident of an old Moroccan singer who had been imprisoned for addressing certain issues in the presence of powerful government officials in a musical concert. While criticism might be the norm and perceived as a healthy debate in the west, it is unacceptable and deeply disrespectful to publicly criticize those who enjoy more power in the Arab world. This kind of behaviour explains the huge difference and impact of power in the Arab world.

In Arab culture, according to Sabry (2010, p. 44), people with more power are known as “the people at the top”, “the people who give you your dole, call you up, tell you to go to war, fine you”, those who “treat you like muck”.

The researcher, as a Saudi Arabian, argues that the above example of power distance is not exclusive to top government officials. It can be better described as a pyramid of power that can be found in any social structure, such as a small family, private company, or the royal court. Power in the Arab world is not only about control; it is much broader than that. It can be seen as a social status that one obtains through social rules that people grow up with. For instance, the queuing culture in the Arab world is not as popular as it is in the west. But, when it exists in certain places, such as boarding a plane, those with particular powers can easily be excused from queuing. In other words, it is common that people who have connections are treated differently and allowed to jump to the front or enter through private doors. Although this behaviour is usually protested about, it happens quite often in the Arab world. In this context, Sabry (2010) argues that although the queuing scheme is increasingly seen as a modern encounter derived from the west, power seems to be more dominant than any social or rational order.

From the researcher’s experience, there is a limitless number of similar scenarios where the powers of money, connections, friendships and tribal hierarchy demonstrate vital and very obvious differences in occasions such as queuing. On many occasions, accomplishing a certain task depends on whom you know more than any other factor, such as your

competence or readiness. This is not a hidden fact. Rather, it is a well-known scheme which people follow to accomplish their day-to-day tasks. It is common for people to seek help from friends or relatives as insiders in some organizations to bypass restrictions or to facilitate and expedite processes. This behaviour is known as “*Wasta*”, which is an Arabic word used to refer to mediators or facilitators. This term has been thoroughly discussed in the research that addresses culture in the Arabic world; one of the most cited works on this subject is by Cunningham (1993), who argues that *Wasta* is a powerful cultural tool that appears to be broadly adopted in the Arab world. It is a norm that people adapt to and accept to the extent that finding *Wasta* is the first option when people seek to accomplish regular transactions.

Al-Omari (2008, p. 33) states, “the Arab culture demonstrates all the key features of high power distance cultures where bureaucracies are plagued with numerous layers and power brokers and exclusive privileges and perks are expected for those at the top”. From the researcher’s experience as an individual who was born and raised in an Arabic culture, the power held by the head of the family, organization or even the country is extreme to the extent that protesting might be seen as unacceptable, even in situations when an obvious wrong decision is being made, or in cases where a decision is made by someone who has no immediate connection to the subject. For example, in the Arab, and particularly in the Saudi culture, the grandfather is the one who has the ultimate yes/no answer on the marriage decision of his grandson or granddaughter. Any violation of this decision may result in the violator being cast out, not only from his family but also from the surrounding social space.

Moreover, the influence of power in the Arab culture, and especially the Saudi culture, can be seen in an example presented by Sakr (2012), who discusses the political economy in relation to cultural studies with the case of cinema in Saudi Arabia. Sakr (2012, p. 226) states, “it remains significant the making and showing of Saudi feature films was dominated during 2005-09 by a single company, Rotana, owned by a member of ruling family”. This example shows how the influence of power may extend to impact the national economy and bypass a rational and basic economic rule that suggests that monopoly is not fair and extremely bad for the economy.

Also, it has been suggested that the element of power in the Arab world extends to critical aspects of people’s lives, such as the justice systems. For instance, Lughod (2011) compares the European justice system during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the Arab culture during that time using the power element. Lughod (2011) states that European people were treated equally despite their status and positions. This angle would not have been discussed if power was not a distinguishing factor in the Arab culture and equal treatment is not as taken-for-granted as it is the European systems.

Nevertheless, the notion here is that the role of power is deeply rooted in Arab culture to the extent that children “learn to subordinate their own personal interests to those of the family as represented by father or grandfather” (Patai and DeAtkine, 1973, p. 28). This means that the element of power should be addressed more explicitly in culture-related studies in the Arab world.

The operationalisation of the concept of power

Power is defined as “an individual’s relative capacity to modify other’s states by providing or withholding resources or administering punishments” (Keltner et al., 2003, p. 256). One of the definitions that seems to be broadly adopted by researchers in social interactions and interpersonal influence is the one offered in 1959 by French and Raven (Aguinis et al., 1998; Raven, 2008). French and Raven (1959, p. 151) define power as the ability of an agent to change the opinion, attitude, behaviour, needs, goals, values, and all aspects of the psychological status of a target.

The cultural difference in relation to the component of power resides in the fact that people from different cultures have significantly different perceptions about power and the nature of its influence. In other words, it can be argued that the different perceptions of power can emerge from the different cultural views about the ways in which power is demonstrated, its meanings, and purpose. The essence of these differences stem from different beliefs, judgments, attitudes, behaviours and goals. (Keltner et al., 2003; Torelli and Shavitt, 2015). For instance, in some cultures, power is conceptualized as something that can be used to advance a personal agenda, and hence maintain and promote personal status. Other cultures conceptualize power as something that should be used to help or benefit others (Torelli and Shavitt, 2015).

For this research, the power bases proposed by French and Raven (1959) are adopted. This is mainly because their proposed bases answer two questions that seem to be important for the investigation into the influence of power on knowledge exchange interactions. These two questions are “(a) what determines the behaviour of an agent who exerts power? (b) What determines the reactions of the recipient of this behaviour?” (French and Raven, 1959, p. 151). According to Aguinis et al. (1998), these power bases are particularly appropriate for studying the influence of power on interpersonal interactions (Aguinis et al., 1998). Although the model does not explicitly refer to culture as a determining factor in the influence of power on interpersonal interactions, French and Raven (1959) explicitly acknowledge that the difference between these power bases resides in the fact there are different perceptions of them among people involved in the interpersonal interactions. This is evident in their definition of the five power bases proposed by French and Raven (1959) and the additional sixth base proposed by Raven (2008). Aguinis et al. (1998, p. 456) summarize the argument of the power bases proposed by French and Raven (1959) as:

1. Reward power is “based on the target’s perceptions that the agent has the ability to provide him or her with desired tangible or intangible objects”.
2. Coercive power is “based on the target’s perceptions that the agent has the ability to punish him or her”.
3. Legitimate power is “based on the target’s perceptions that the agent has the right to influence the target, who is obligated to comply”.
4. Referent power is “based on the target’s identification with or desire to be associated with the agent”.
5. Expert power is “based on the target’s perceptions that the agent can provide him or her with special knowledge”

After fifty years of use and application of this model, Raven (2008) acknowledges that it is still broadly accepted, especially among researchers who study the influence of power on interpersonal interaction. Raven (2008) argues that, through decades of use and follow ups on this model, and through tying this work to other works by researchers active in the same field, he concludes that an additional power base should be added to the model. Raven (2008) suggests that informational power should be the sixth power base that researchers should consider when studying the influence of power on interpersonal interactions. Raven (2008) defines informational power as based on the target’s perceptions of the ways in which the agent expects the work to be done.

However, Nesler et al. (1999) assert that it is unlikely that all power bases are equally important or even exist within every relationship. Instead, any single power base may exist in one relationship, or, more frequently, a combination of power bases.

Nevertheless, our consideration of power and its relationship with culture should not be limited to the different perceptions that people from different cultures may have about its meaning, role and impact, or the ways in which people comply with the power influence. If the influence of power is expected to take place on the target’s opinion, attitude, behaviour, needs, goals, values, and all aspects of the psychological status which are cultural constructs, then it is rational to assume that compliance with the power influence should also be compatible with the cultural assumptions associated with these constructs (Nesler et al., 1999; Raven, 2008). Nesler et al. (1999) explain that specific cognitive systems predict specific reactions. This implies that, if cultures construct the cognitive systems of the agent, then the predicted reaction should comply with the cultural construction of the agent. The conflict happens when the agent and the target come from different cultures and the predictions and the actual reactions are not compatible. Therefore, the agent and the target are expected to have a common understanding of what the power of the agent means, and how the target should comply if the relationship is to be smooth and productive. In the international context, Nesler et al. (1999) assert that different perceptions of power impact the power significance of the agent and, accordingly, impact compliance with their power.

In the context of the client-consultant relationship, consideration of the component of power should focus on how power is perceived by clients and consultants, the extent to which clients and consultants are aware of each other's perceptions and how clients and consultants seek to comply with and deal with visible and invisible power sources in their knowledge-exchange activities. For instance, if we take the informational base of power, it is rational to look into how junior clients and consultants perceive the power imposed by their superiors in relation to how the job should be performed; how those junior participants comply with this power with their bosses, while maintaining an active and productive relationship; and how they deal with conflicts. Ultimately, our analysis should unveil the extent to which different perceptions and compliance with power can affect knowledge-exchange interactions.

Chapter 6: Research Methodology

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6.1 Introduction

Remenyi et al. (1998, p. 28) define research methodology as “the procedural framework within which the research is conducted. It describes an approach to a problem that can be put into practice in a research program or process”. Within the procedural framework, social phenomena are interpreted to provide explanations about their occurrence.

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the methodological framework of this thesis. It discusses the research philosophy adopted to govern the chosen methods for data collection and analysis. It elaborates on the ways data have been collected, and the steps that have been followed to break down the key ideas that influence the building of the thesis. Moreover, it presents the limitations of the chosen methods, and the researcher’s strategies to overcome or reduce their effect.

The chapter begins by discussing the main research philosophies and their epistemological and ontological assumptions. These assumptions describe how the researcher sees the world as this underpins the chosen research strategy, methods and analysis (Saunders et al., 2009). The research philosophy adopted is based on research into international management in general, and on the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients in particular.

Ultimately, this chapter outlines the adopted research strategy, adopted methods for data collection and analysis based on the research question, sampling, and ethics.

6.2 Research Philosophy

As suggested by Remenyi et al. (1998) and Saunders et al. (2009), adding value to an existing body of knowledge is the main goal of academic research. This is because new insights are generated about the structure and composition of a social phenomenon (Remenyi et al., 1998; Saunders et al., 2009). Research philosophy is an overarching term used to describe the process of knowledge development (Saunders et al., 2009).

Saunders et al. (2009, p. 110) discuss the two major dimensions that compose the study of a research philosophy, namely ontology and epistemology. On the one hand, ontology “is concerned with the nature of the reality” It has two dimensions: either objectivism, which “portrays the position that social entities exist in reality external to social actors concerned with their existence”, or subjectivism, which “holds that social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of those social actors concerned with their existence”. Moreover, it holds that during the continual social interaction between actors, the social phenomena are in a continuous state of revision and development (Saunders et al., 2009).

On the other hand, epistemology concerns what is regarded as acceptable knowledge. In Social Sciences, the dominant epistemological positions are positivism and interpretivism (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Being a positivist “implies that the researcher is working with an observable social reality and that the end product of such research can be the derivation of laws or law-like generalisations similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists” (Remenyi et al., 1998, p. 32). In the context of social science, positivists have two principal assumptions. Firstly, the social world is an objective entity that exists externally. Secondly, the researcher acts as an independent and objective analyst who examines the phenomena’s behaviour (Blumberg et al., 2011). Hence, it implies that information can be collected and analysed in a factual way (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011; Blumberg et al., 2011). Positivism is usually associated with natural science (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Interpretivism is opposite of positivism. It proposes that social sciences need a different research philosophy. It focuses on the inapplicability of natural science research principles, which cannot be used to understand the social world (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Blumberg et al., 2011). Blumberg et al. (2011, p. 17) state “interpretivists argue that simple fundamental laws are insufficient to understand the whole complexity of social phenomena”. The interpretivist view is that “the social world is constructed and is given meaning subjectively by people” (Blumberg et al., 2011, p. 17). Interpretivists share the view that social research requires research procedures that recognise the uniqueness of human conditions in opposition to the natural order (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Interpretivism therefore concentrates on meanings, feelings and attitudes that constitute the uniqueness of human conditions. These are considered to be variable factors that can influence social phenomena and make them different from each other based on the humans involved in them (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011; Blumberg et al., 2011). For instance, people from different cultures have different feelings and attitudes towards certain management, and this influences the degree to which the style is accepted or rejected in that culture. (Saint-Martin, 2011).

The notion here is that the phenomena of endorsement or rejection of certain management methods cannot be studied without serious consideration of the cultural constructs that distinguish the perceptions, feelings and attitudes of people who display these styles, or who are subjected to them. In other words, a social phenomenon created or influenced by culture cannot be observed or measured separately from that culture. On the other hand, the effect of ice on the movement of trucks, and the influence of room temperature on computers can be isolated for study because computers and trucks exist independently of ice and room temperature (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011; Blumberg et al., 2011). Cultures, however, cannot be isolated from the people who inherit and re-construct

them, and, accordingly, construct the social phenomena they experience (Goffman, 1959; Weick, 2012).

6.2.1 The Interpretive Approach Used in This Study

This sub-section discusses the suitability of the interpretive approach for the study of culture on knowledge exchange between international clients and consultants. The discussion compares the positivist and interpretivist approaches in order to demonstrate the suitability of the interpretive approach. Also, the discussion presents the major considerations related to the validity and reliability of the chosen approach.

In the context of international and cross-cultural management research methodologies, authors like Usunier 1998, Earley and Singh, 1995, and Saunders et al. 2009 are critical about following a positivist approach for business and management studies in general, and for international and cross-cultural studies in particular. Interpretivists argue that international business and management research is far too complex to be limited to theorising by specific 'laws' in as the way that the physical sciences are (Usunier, 1998; Saunders et al., 2009). The complexity in cross-cultural research stems from the fact that it deals with different cultures, languages and world views. In other words, cross-cultural research deals with different subjective ontologies and interpretive epistemologies that cannot be effectively addressed through positivist and objectivist approaches.

The interpretive argument is based on the belief that rich and deep insights into this complex social world would be severely undermined if this complexity were reduced to law-like generalisations (Saunders et al., 2009). Usunier (1998, p. 67) argues that for the international business researcher, there are different management and cultural variables that are difficult to 'conceive' in the research design and strategy. It is the researcher's responsibility to maintain and cautiously manage those variables. Therefore, Earley and Singh (1995, p. 99) state that using a solely positivist approach to international business and management research can be 'doomed to failure'.

In the context of this research, which focuses on the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international consultants and clients, the interpretive approach is thought to be more suitable. At the field and organisational levels of analysis, it has been established that consulting knowledge is contextual and subjective (Gibbons & Wright, 1999; Hansen et al., 1999; Apostolou & Mentzas, 1999; Lahti & Beyerlein, 2000; Morris, 2001; Alvesson, 2004; Werr, 2012). Interpretations of rhetoric and content may vary significantly from one culture to another (Morgan et al., 1983; Benders and van Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002; David and Strang, 2006; Zott and Huy, 2007). This is because cultures constitute source of meaning to those who belong to them (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Burr, 1995; Searle, 1995; Hacking and Hacking, 1999; Stead, 2004; Elder-Vass, 2012). Therefore, the interpretive approach is suitable for dealing with the subjectivity of

knowledge, the different interpretations of rhetorical descriptions, and the content of knowledge-based products and services.

At the interpersonal level, the study of the influence of culture on knowledge exchange becomes more pressing because of the complexity (Kitay & Wright, 2004) and uncertainty (Fincham, 2003; Furusten, 2009) embedded in the client-consultant relationship. Also, the consultancy research explicitly acknowledges that the client-consultant relationship is *interactive* (McGivern, 1983; Fincham, 1999; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Furusten, 2009) and *interpretive* (Samson & Parker, 1994; McLachlin, 2000; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004). Therefore, it is thought that the interpretive approach is most suitable to address such complicated relationships.

It has been established that knowledge exchange in the client-consultant relationship is influenced by culture (Sturdy et al., 2009) and power boundaries (Fincham, 2002; Sturdy et al., 2009). On the one hand, culture influences people's ability to understand the knowledge they receive from those from different cultural backgrounds (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Bhagat et al., 2002). Hence, it can be understood better by following an interpretive approach.

On the other hand, power has a significant influence on motivation and willingness to exchange knowledge (Fincham, 2002; Sturdy et al., 2009; Carmeli et al., 2010; Choi and Johanson, 2012). This is because power can be perceived as threatening by those who experience the consequences that follow decisions. The challenge here is that power can be practiced by who have different degrees of control. This means that members can be more or less concerned about the consequence of their decisions. This situation creates an uneven environment of decision making control (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Jang and Lee, 1998; Fincham, 2002; Nikolova and Devenney, 2009). Power can be influenced by the interpretation and interests of those involved in consulting projects (Fincham, 2002; Carmeli et al., 2010; Choi and Johanson, 2012). Moreover, power can be witnessed as a battle between clients and consultants for control over authority and leadership (Clark 1995; Ernst and Kieser 2002; Fincham, 2002; Werr and Styhre, 2003; Glückler and Armbrüster, 2003). These power aspects are not straightforward and are sometimes hidden from public display. Therefore, the interpretive approach provides a better platform for the effective identification of 'hidden' power elements.

However, if we are to understand how clients and consultants interact to exchange knowledge, we need to consider interrelated variables through which the influence of culture can be studied. In the conceptual framework chapter, it was established that culture is a structure of meanings. It governs the sense-making systems through which humans develop understanding. It was argued that culture is hidden because it is internally constructed. However, it was established that although culture is hidden, it can be

perceived through the language that people use to express their thoughts and feelings. It was also established that culture and experience are forms of knowledge that humans need initially to interpret other forms of knowledge received from others. In other words, studying the influence of culture requires a focus on the pre-existing forms of knowledge that govern internal interpretations of new knowledge received through language. Also, what makes the study even more complicated is the fact that culture, language and knowledge are socially constructed, and that every relationship is unique, even within the same country or organisation. Therefore, the interpretive approach is thought to be more suitable because of the flexibility it offers to address such interrelated variables.

6.2.1.1 Intellectual Positions and Assumptions in the Interpretive Approach

The intellectual positions and assumptions offered by the interpretive approach are tools with which the researcher can deal appropriately with the previously discussed complexities. The following lines elaborate on these intellectual positions.

First of all, it should be made clear that this is exploratory research since it seeks to understand how knowledge exchange between international clients and local consultants takes place in Saudi Arabia. In their argument about exploratory research, Earley and Singh (1995, p. 327) argue that international management has long been driven by the question “how they do things over there?”. According to Earley and Singh (1995), answering this type of question requires a deep understanding of the investigated phenomena, and the *flexible frameworks* offered by the interpretive approach help the researcher reach the required level of understanding.

Flexibility is necessary in international research because it allows the researcher to alter the direction of data collection as indicated by emergent data that may lead to richer findings (Saunders et al., 2009). However, this does not mean that direction is absent in exploratory research. Rather, it means that the initial focus is broad and becomes gradually narrower as the research develops (Adams and Schvaneveldt, 1991).

If the objective is to understand how culture influences the interaction between international consultants and Saudi clients in the context of knowledge exchange, then the two flexible key intellectual positions offered by the interpretive approach should be considered. These are phenomenology and symbolic interaction, and together they provide the assumptions required to understand the social phenomenon in hand.

The Schools of Phenomenology and Symbolic Interaction

On the one hand, phenomenology comes from a view about how we make sense of the social world around us (Saunders et al., 2009). The phenomenological school sees behaviour as a result of experience which governs perspectives, understanding and perceptions of meanings and events. The focus of phenomenological research is a person’s experience in

relation to another person or to a phenomenon, and how the experience is interpreted and expressed (Remenyi et al., 1998; Goulding, 2005). In other words, phenomenology concerns the consciousness that governs an individual's interpretations and perspectives (Husserl, 2012).

On the other hand, symbolic interaction comes from a view that humans are in a continuous state of interpreting the world, and continually adjust meanings and actions (Saunders et al., 2009). This means that people develop or adjust meanings for the objects around them, their social interaction with these objects, and those who hold meanings for them (Blumer, 1986).

Thus, we can say that symbolic interaction and phenomenology are interconnected, whereby phenomenology is concerned with the consciousness of individuals, while symbolic interaction is concerned with the development of the consciousness through social interaction. In other words, phenomenology focuses on how prior experience influences current understanding and perception of meanings and events, while symbolic interaction focuses on the continuous interpretation and adjustment of meaning through interaction. This implies that the researcher must interpret the individual's sequence of consciousness that governs his/her perception of the reality that the researcher seeks to understand (Zahavi, 2001; Gallagher and Zahavi, 2005; Husserl, 2012). This means that the researcher should put more emphasis on the reflexivity of the individual, which should be interpreted in relation to the situation under investigation (Gasson, 2002). Husserl (2012) asserts that the researcher should focus on the perception of the individual since his/her perceptions constitute the truest forms of knowledge. This allows the researcher to examine the phenomenon as it is originally given to the consciousness of that individual.

This is reflected in the client-consultant relationship where both parties have experiences and different stocks of social knowledge (culture) that govern their perceptions, impressions, presentations, views of each other, and understanding of each other's knowledge. In other words, each party views the world differently and, through interactions, exchanges different forms of knowledge (Sturdy et al., 2009) which results in the adjustment of meanings and, probably, the construction of new methods and techniques. This was explicitly discussed in the third chapter of the literature review where it was made clear that there is a dramatic increase of knowledge exchange between clients and consultants (Devinney and Nikolova, 2004; Sturdy et al., 2009). Therefore, the assumptions of phenomenology and symbolic interaction are crucial for understanding the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international clients and consultants.

The Researcher's Role in the Interpretation of Social Phenomena and Symbolic Interaction

Interpretivism recognizes that the role of the researcher in the interpretation process is dependent on the researcher's personal views about the world around him/her. It acknowledges that the researcher is part of the phenomenon under investigation, and tries

to make sense of what is happening by recognising subjective realities and providing interpretive explanations (Blumberg et al., 2011). Earley and Singh (1995) affirm that the researcher's own culture is central for his/her sense-making system.

This observation is particularly important for this research because the researcher and the social phenomenon under investigation are located within the same culture, making the researcher more capable of effective interpretation. However, this shared culture is also a potential source of bias that the researcher must be cautious of. In this subsection, the researcher acknowledges the role of this shared cultural background in the research.

According to Remenyi et al., (1998) and Saunders et al., (2009), it is crucial for the interpretivist to adopt an empathetic role. The challenge for the researcher is to enter and understand the social world under investigation from the stand point of those who live in it. The researcher's deep understanding of Saudi culture and how it differs from regional and international cultures makes his interpretations more reliable. Since the researcher was born and raised in Saudi Arabia, it is rational to assume that he is more capable of understanding critical details and complications than those who are not from Saudi Arabia.

This view can be discussed from two main perspectives: firstly, the researcher's ability to recognise and understand the differences between people involved in the interactions with consultants. This emphasises the difference between conducting research into people rather than objects such as trucks and computers (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 116). Interpretivism states that it is essential for the researcher to understand the differences between humans as social actors who influence the social phenomena. This is explained by the theatre metaphor, which suggests that, "actors play a part that they interpret in a particular way (which may be their own or that of the director) and act out their part in accordance with this interpretation. In the same way, we interpret everyday social roles in accordance with the meaning we give to these roles. In addition, we interpret the social roles of others in accordance with our own set of meanings" (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 116).

Secondly, this view can be discussed in terms of the researcher's ability to understand and explain the differences between the social contexts within which the interactions take place. Authors such as Remenyi et al., (1998) and Saunders et al., (2009) state that business and management cases are both complex and contextual. This is because they result from different sets of social circumstances and different kinds of people coming together at a certain time to perform a certain goal. Therefore, such cases require consideration and understanding of the people involved and the social contexts that contribute to the creation of the social phenomenon.

For instance, the researcher is capable of understanding how the national atmosphere after a sudden cut in government spending and the declaration of a national transformation plan

influences clients. Only those located within that context are able to understand and provide a realistic assessment of the national atmosphere and how it implicitly influences clients' motivation, confidence and optimism for the future. From within this context, the researcher is also able to assess how the national context influences clients' interactions with international consultants, their perceptions, and the extent to which they are willing to use or apply the solutions provided.

In the context of avoiding bias, the researcher understands that although having a deep understanding of the culture within which the research is conducted is important, he is an instrument for data collection and should not be influenced by his empathetic role but isolate himself to take an independent view of the phenomenon (Chenail, 2011). This will be discussed further in the sections dealing with the role of the researcher in interviewing, and research ethics.

6.2.2 Considerations Related to the Reliability and Validity of Social Research

Mason (1996) states that reliability, validity and generalisability are different assessment measures that test the quality and rigour of research.

6.2.2.1 What is meant by the Validity and Reliability of the Research?

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) and Kvale (1989) argue that reliability is about questioning whether a repeated investigation of the same social phenomenon would produce the same conclusions. Brock-Utne (1996) claims that high reliability in social research is not guaranteed. This is because, according to LeCompte and Goetz (1982), it is very difficult to freeze social settings and reach similar conclusions.

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) divide validity into internal and external validity. External validity concerns the extent to which the research findings can be generalised. Internal validity concerns whether researchers' observations match their developing theoretical ideas or not. In other words, according to Brock-Utne (1996), internal validity concerns the correctness of the interpretation of the social phenomenon.

Reliability and validity are often present in discussions about positivist and interpretivist approaches (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Mason 1996). At this juncture, it is important to highlight the positivist critique about the generalisability of phenomenological research that assumes if the phenomenon has occurred then there is a possibility it may occur again. This critique comes from the reduction approach followed by positivists, which is based on exploring the relationships between the studied variables. Positivists use this approach to control the investigation or the experiment in hand, which enables the researcher to understand how variables behave. Positivists expect the reduction approach to lead to simplifications of the real-world environment in which variables usually and naturally exist (Remenyi et al., 1998).

Conversely, this simplification of the world is the phenomenological critique against positivism. They argue that this simplification means that some of the complicating and most interesting factors are stripped out of the results of positivist research. Therefore, the phenomenological school uses the holistic approach which allows much more complicated cases to be examined. The holistic approach involves the context of the study in addition to as many of the variables as possible being studied. Thus, the nature of the researcher and the characteristics of the social contexts constitute parts of the research framework (Remenyi et al., 1998).

However, Brock-Utne (1996) argues that reliability and validity are interdependent whereby the reliability of research depends on the extent to which its findings can be generalised, and vice versa.

6.2.2.2 Validity and Reliability in this Study

In the context of this research, there are two important considerations related to validity and reliability, namely differences between the world's cultures, and differences between the social contexts from which management issues emerge.

Firstly, there exists the consideration that the world is comprised of different cultures that govern people's ways of thinking, and the meanings they give to symbols around them (Schein, 1992; Hofstede, 2010). This has led researchers (e.g. Ember and Ember, 2009; May, 2011) to question the generalisability of cross-cultural studies, which is a major validity concern.

Questioning the generalisability of cross-cultural studies can be justified in relation to the above discussion about the interdependency of reliability and validity. In the context of validity, cultures are different from one country to another, which implies that the extent to which research findings can be generalised depends on the extent to which two cultures are different.

In the context of this research, the sample of clients and consultants takes into consideration the presence of cultural differences. For example, the client must be a Saudi national born and raised in Saudi Arabia and absorbed in Saudi culture, while the consultant must be a non-Saudi, neither born nor resident in Saudi Arabia, other than for consultancy work. The combination of two particular cultures in one relationship gives unique indications. For instance, the indications derived from studying relationships between Saudi clients and American, German, or Romanian consultants are unlikely to be similarly replicated from relationships in which the client is Indian, Russian or Turkish. If one or both sides of the relationship are different, the findings are expected to be different too. The

extent to which findings may be similar depends on the similarity of the combination of cultures in the relationships under investigation.

In the context of reliability, the interpretation of the client-consultant relationship depends on the researcher's cultural background, and the extent to which one or both cultures are familiar to him/her. In other words, the culture of the researcher has a significant influence on his/her views of the world, and the similarity of conclusions from researcher to researcher depends on the similarity of their cultural backgrounds. For instance, the conclusions of a Saudi and a Kuwaiti researcher are more likely to be similar than those of a Chinese and a German researcher. This is because Saudis and Kuwaitis are closer in terms of their worldview than Chinese and Germans are in theirs.

Secondly, because clients' issues stem from their own social contexts (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006; Scott, 2013), consulting projects are expected to be different from one context to another, as established in the literature review chapters (Hofstede, 1999; Kipping, 1999; McKenna, 2006). Therefore, studying knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients on issues that stem from the Saudi Arabian environment does not necessarily mean that findings will be fully replicated when studying knowledge exchange in consulting projects in other environments.

Replicating cross-cultural studies is difficult. This is because, as Remenyi et al. (1998) and Saunders et al. (2009) assert, business and management cases are both complex and contextual. This makes the issue of generalisation more problematic. However, if similar studies are conducted and produce consistent findings that support the emerging theory this provides a level of general validity (Remenyi et al., 1998; Baxter and Jack, 2008). This can be established through future research.

In order to overcome the issues of generalisability in this study that requires a focus on context, the sample has been enlarged to reach different consultants and clients from different organisations and industries. This adds to the validity of the findings because similar findings from a sample that contains different contexts have a level of validity at a national level.

In the context of reliability, the findings from these different contexts are still subject to the researcher's background with researchers from similar backgrounds more likely to produce the same results. However, the researcher has focused on contexts familiar to him such as clients in education, banking and transportation, and consultants who provide business and management advice. Researchers with the same background and understanding of these sectors are more likely to produce similar results.

6.3 Research Ethics

Ethics in research “refers to the appropriateness of your behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work or affected by it” (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 183-184).

Ethical issues in business and management research arise at several stages (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009) such as at the formulation of the research topic, research design, gaining access, data collection and analysis, data storage and writing up the research findings. The research needs to act in a moral and responsible manner (Saunders et al., 2009).

Ethical issues must not be ignored since they directly speak about the integrity of the research and about the disciplines involved. However, discussing or writing about ethics in business and management research is frustrating because of the broad definitions of what is ethical and what is not (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Debates on ethical principles in business and management research have been broken into four key areas according to Bryman and Bell (2011):

1. Is there any harm to participants?
2. Is there a need for knowledgeable consent?
3. Is there an assault of privacy?
4. Is there a deception involved?

Usually, according to Saunders et al. (2009, p. 184), ethical concerns are managed by a code of ethics that universities provide. This code of ethics provides “a statement of principles and procedures for the conduct of your research highlighting what is and what is not considered ethical.” This code of ethics assures that the researcher does not transgress the university’s behavioural norms” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 184). Therefore, since the University of Brighton has an established code of ethics, and since the researcher is part of the same university, then this code of ethics must be followed as highlighted by Bryman and Bell (2011).

In light of the above, ethical considerations have been addressed at six stages. The following elaborates on the ethical considerations at those stages.

Firstly, at the stage of designing the semi-structured interviews, the interviews and topics of discussion were designed and worded in such a way so as to not irritate, discomfort or offend the interviewee. This is because this research focuses on the influence of culture, which is related to the individual’s values, norms and beliefs that are not necessarily shared with the interviewer. The questions and the ways they were asked did not give any indications as to specific assumptions or views that may influence the interviewee’s

feedback. Also, they were designed and communicated in ways that allowed the interviewee to be fairly open and unprejudiced in their views about the other side, in case of bad experiences. This was because it was important to make sure the feedback received was rational rather than emotional.

Secondly, at the stage of gaining access it was highly ethical not to apply any pressure on those that the researcher wanted to gain access to. People have the right to have their own privacy and should not feel pressurised or forced to participate or cooperate, as this can be considered as a type of harm (Robson, 2002; Saunders et al., 2009). Additionally, pressurising people would result in weak data and limited feedback because of their hesitation to participate, which may result in withholding or misrepresenting information. Therefore, in gaining access to individuals, the researcher deliberately avoided contacting top management who might force employees to participate in the interviews. Instead, personal contacts were used to arrange meetings with those who were motivated and willing to share their personal views and experiences. The subject of the research was encouraging for those who had gone through the interaction and felt that there were cultural influences that they would like to share. Thus, they were motivated to share their rich and insightful views, which came from a real sense of the issue under investigation.

Thirdly, at the stage of interviewing, in addition to making sure the time, place and medium of the interview (in person, by phone, Skype) were acceptable, there was a process that the interviewer went through before conducting any interview. Before the meeting, the interviewer shared a copy of the code of ethics that explained to the interviewees their rights and privacy. If the interviewee was happy with the content of the code ethics, he/she signed a consent that allowed the interviewer to conduct the interview as agreed.

At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer began by giving the interviewee a brief introduction to the aim of the research. Then, the interviewer explained, again, that the interview would be audio recorded, and transcribed by a transcriptionist who had both signed a confidentiality agreement and shared his/her official identification documents, and that the transcripts would be shared with supervisors and examiners. The interviewer asked verbally for the interviewee's permission to proceed after making sure that the previous points had been fully understood. During the interview, the interviewer maintained the scope of the content and the ethical considerations that had been addressed during the design of the interview in addition to making sure that the interviewees were not pressured to answer any question.

Fourthly, at the stage after data collection, each interview was transcribed by an individual who had signed a confidentiality agreement and shared his/her proof of ID. The hiring of those individuals was through a freelancing company that supervises those agreements and provides further assurances that data will always be protected as agreed.

Fifthly, at the stage of data analysis, some transcripts were shared with supervisors only for discussion. Sharing interviews with supervisors had already been made clear and approved by interviewees.

Finally, at the stage of writing up, the researcher maintained all ethical considerations that had been taken into account in the previous five stages.

6.4 Research Strategy: Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was first proposed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 (Saunders et al., 2009; Suddaby, 2006) as a practical method for interpretive research that focuses on analysing the real meanings and concepts used by actors in social settings (Suddaby, 2006; Glaser and Strauss, 2012). Grounded theory is built upon two main concepts: firstly, continuous comparisons where data are expected to be collected and analysed concurrently. Secondly, sampling according to theory development, which determines which data should be collected next (Suddaby, 2006).

The main distinguishing feature of grounded theory is that it begins with data collection, not with a theory, and not even with a predefined research project (Blumberg et al., 2011). Saunders et al. (2009) argue that although grounded theory could be the best example of an inductive research approach, it is better to see it as theory building by using both inductive and deductive approaches. Therefore, grounded theory strategy is helpful for research that seeks to *predict* and *explain* human behaviour. This is because predications require inductive approach while explanations require a deductive approach. Although an initial theoretical framework can be used for data collection, theory is expected to develop from data gained by a sequence of observations. These data generate predictions that can be tested by further observations to either confirm or reject the developed theory. Testing theory by constantly referring to data leads to grounded theory being perceived as both an inductive and deductive approach within which theory is grounded in repeated reference to data.

The Application of Grounded Theory in this Study

The researcher has been cautious in his application of grounded theory. This is because in an online workshop held at Brighton University in 2012, Dr. Barney Glaser was critical about the different ways grounded theory has been used by researchers. According to Dr. Glaser, many researchers use grounded theory incorrectly by over simplifying its use. This is because they seem to perceive that it gives them the freedom to approach their data in any way they see fit. Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 577) explicitly address this concern, stating “researchers sometimes appear to have used just one or two features of the grounded theory but refer to their having used the approach without qualification”.

Suddaby (2006) raised six misconceptions about grounded theory that researchers seem to fall for. Firstly, adopting grounded theory is not a reason to omit the literature review or to delay the evaluation of existing literature until data analysis. Secondly, it is not production of raw data. Instead, the researcher should consider a conceptual level with collected data to derive conclusions with theoretical insights. Thirdly, it is not theory testing, analysis of content, or word counting. For instance, in research that focuses on the social construction of reputation, the researcher cannot start with interpretive premises and claim to adopt grounded theory by reporting word counts from interviews. Fourthly, grounded theory is not a systematic approach or formulated procedure that can be simply applied to data. It is not a mechanical approach that involves techniques and procedures focusing on the quantity of the interviews, or computer software that analyses data or sorts them into categories. The researcher should not forget that grounded theory is a highly creative interpretive process and not a logical deductive technique. Fifthly, grounded theory should not be considered perfect. It is a 'messy' process whereby the researcher needs to develop a tacit knowledge and a sense for the data collected. Lastly, grounded theory should not be considered easy since "the seamless craft of a well-executed grounded theory study [...] is the product of considerable experience, hard work, creativity and, occasionally, a healthy dose of good luck" (Suddaby, 2006, p. 239).

Because of these misconceptions, the researcher learned how to apply grounded theory from key sources such as Glaser and Strauss (2012), and sources that take a balanced position towards this strategy such as Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009), and Bryman and Bell (2011). These sources adopt a balanced position to the application of grounded theory and explain it as set out by its founders. Moreover, they lay out the main criticisms against grounded theory and leave it to the researcher to determine how these critics can be dealt with. Hence, the researcher has considered the above misconceptions in his application of grounded theory. The following lines elaborate on how the grounded theory was applied and how its application addressed the above misconceptions.

Firstly, an extensive literature review has been conducted at the beginning of the study. This was because of the broadness of the research question at the beginning of the study, which aimed to investigate *the influence of culture on the internationalisation of consulting firms*. This research question was derived from the preliminary gaps discussed in the introduction chapter which suggest that consultancy research should acknowledge the role of clients and study the work of consultants in cross-cultural settings. Such a broad research question was expected to lead to unmanageable and loose data collection that lacks direction and relevance. Therefore, it was thought the literature must be reviewed before conducting any data collection to add order and relevance to the collected data. Moreover, conducting such a literature review was expected to enhance the researcher's understanding about the consulting work and its relation to knowledge and culture. The outcome of this literature review was a set of subjects that the researcher expected to be useful to gain more insights

about the research area. This literature review resulted in the following areas of focus as presented in table 6.

Table 6: Key Subjects Derived from the Initial Literature review

Subject	Bibliography
The role of social bridges and social links in the international expansions of consultancies	(McKenna, 1995; Kipping, 1999; Glücker & Armbrüster, 2003).
The influence of culture on the construction of organizations	(Schein, 1990; Money et al, 1998; Hofstede et al., 2010; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013)
The influence of culture on the organizational knowledge	(Quinn, 1992; Apostolou & Mentzas, 1999; Sarvary, 1999; De Long and Fahey, 2000; Empson, 2001; Alvesson, 2004; Ko et al., 2005; Weir & Hutchings, 2005; Awazu, 2007; King, 2007;Nissen, 2007; Moitra & Kumar, 2007; Ajmal & Koskinen, 2008; Donate & Guadamillas, 2010).
The role of knowledge for consulting firms	(Quinn, 1992; Abrahamson, 1999; Fincham, 1999; Savary, 1999; De Long and Fahey, 2000; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Grolic et al., 2003; Werr & Stjernberg, 2003; Awaz, 2007; Morita and Kumar, 2007; King, 2007; Ajmal and Koskinen, 2008; Hong and Nguyen, 2009; Ambos and Schlegelmilch, 2009).
The role of reputation of consultants	(Clark, 1995; Gallouj, 1997; Kipping, 1999; Kipping, 2002; Glücker & Armbrüster, 2003; Connelly et al.,2011)
The role of client's identity in consultancy	(Schein, 1997; Geva et al., 2000; Hislop, 2002; Kubr, 2002; Kilburg, 2002; Werr & Stylre, 2003; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2004; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Czerniawaska, 2007; Sturdy & Wright, 2008; Sturdy et al., 2009)
The social complexity of client-consultant relationship	(McGivern, 1983; Samson & Parker, 1994; Clark, 1995; Gallouj, 1997; McLachlin , 2000; Soriano, 2001; Simon & Kumar, 2001; Glücker & Armbrüster, 2003; Kitay & Wright, 2004; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004; Visscher, 2006; Tomenendal, 2007; Donnelly, 2008; Richter and Niewiem, 2009; Furusten, 2009).
The role of trust in consultancy	(Kipping, 1999; Glücker & Armbrüster, 2003; Kitay and Wright, 2004 Merilainen et al., 2004; Richter & Niewiem, 2009).

Also, the outcome of this literature review had reflected on the research question. The researcher's deeper understanding of the research area led him to develop a research questions that is less broad than the preliminary research question the researcher had at the beginning of the study. The updated researcher question generated from the literature review aimed to investigate *the influence of culture on the international dissemination of knowledge by consulting firms.*

Accordingly, by conducting an extensive literature review the researcher addresses the first misconception suggested by Suddaby (2006) that stresses adopting grounded theory is not an excuse to omit literature review.

Secondly, after developing a considerable understanding about the key related subjects from the literature review and adjusting the researcher question, a pilot study was conducted in the spring of 2014 for four weeks. Table 7 offers a brief biographic information about the interviewees who participated in the pilot study.

Table 7: Biographic Info for Interviewees of the Pilot Study

Interviewee Name	Occupation	Organisation	Length of Experience in the Region
Adnan Chaudry	Director of Finance & Operations - Middle East	McKinsey & Company - Dubai	8 Years
Imran Munshi	Partner – Healthcare Sector	McKinsey & Company - Dubai	6 Years
Zubair Ansari	Internal Consultant – Finance	King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre - Riyadh	3 Years
Fahad Alqasem	Founder and CEO	Amwal Consulting	Saudi Consultant (Native consultant)
Yazeed Khaleefah	Project Manager	Tadawul	Saudi client

The interviewees had been chosen based on their experience in the Saudi consulting industry. The researcher aimed to interview at least one person from every sector. Therefore, three international consultants, a Saudi consultant, and a Saudi client had been chosen for the pilot study. Having international and local consultants in addition to a Saudi client gave the researcher the opportunity to discuss the subject from different perspectives. The international consultants offered views related to their international background and their perceptions about the Saudi market. The Saudi consultant offered views related to his international competitor along with a feedback about the importance of

his understanding of the local culture. The Saudi client offered views related to his perceptions about the international and the local consultants along with insightful feedback about the role of culture in his experience with both types, local and international consultants.

The researcher approached the interviewees without preparing notes or giving any introductions other than sharing the research title. Although the interviewees knew that they were part of a pilot study, the interviews were completely informal and were not recorded. The informality of the pilot studies allowed the interviewees to talk openly about their views of the subject, how it should be approached, key points that should be included, suggestions about how to approach interviewees, and clarifications of critical points such as the purpose of the interviews and the level of confidentiality.

From the researcher's observations on his perceptions, reactions, and even feeling along the interviewees' responses and reactions, the researcher noticed two key issues that need to be cautiously considered when collecting culture-related data. Firstly, in this culture-related research, the respondents may not freely express their views and feelings and may avoid reacting to particular culture-related issues to avoid being offensive or disrespectful to the researcher's own culture. Secondly, the researcher might unconsciously feel offended, apologetic, or try to intervene to correct particular cultural misunderstandings which might influence the flow of data. Therefore, the researcher paid attention to his verbal responses, facial expressions and body language whenever the respondent touched on a sensitive subject. The researcher encouraged the respondents to freely express their views without any constraints. Encouragement took place implicitly through gentle smiles and nodding, which made the respondents feel comfortable to proceed.

Also, having conducted an extensive literature review allowed the researcher to conduct an effective pilot study. This was evident in the interviewees' appreciation to the research subject and to the researcher's knowledge about the issue under investigation. This is because they made it clear that, based on their experience, knowing about the impact of culture on the work of consultants is crucial and must be addressed. The pilot study allowed the researcher to verify his understanding about the key subjects, develop clearer relationships between those subjects, and gain deeper insights from an empirical perspective.

Thirdly, after conducting the pilot study, the researcher conducted a general conceptual review to identify the main concepts constituting the latest version of the research question and the relationship between them. Subsequently, four main concepts for investigation were derived from the conceptual study: culture, knowledge, power, and language. Table 8 demonstrates the key subjects identified during the conceptual review.

Table 8: Key Subjects of the Conceptual Framework

Subject	Bibliography
The vague and elusive nature of culture	(Herskovits, 1948; Geertz, 1973; LeVine, 1984; Holland and Quinn, 1987; Misra and Gergen, 1993; Brumann, 1999; Lazear, 1999; Kim, 2003; Schein, 2004; Stead, 2004; Fryberg and Markus, 2007; Durkheim, 2008; Birukou et al., 2009; Cruz and Sonn, 2011; Elder-Vass (2012).
Interpretive Approach for the Study of Culture	(Denison et al., 1990; O'Reilly, 1991; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Dobbin, 1994; Schein, 1988, 2004, 2010; Wilson, 2001; Scott, 2003; Alavi et al., 2005; Cunliff, 2006, 2013; Durkheim, 2008; Baumgartner, 2009; Elder-Vass, 2012)
The manifestation of the impact of culture using a social constructionist approach	(Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Rosen, 1991; Burr, 1995; Searle, 1995; Czarniawska, 1997; Hacking and Hacking, 1999; Stead, 2004; Young and Collin, 2004; Lindberg and Czarniawska, 2006; Elder-Vass, 2012)
The relationship between culture and knowledge	(Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Spelke, 1994; De Long, 1997; Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Burr, 1995; King, 1995; Hong et al., 2000; Czarniawska, 2001; Gergen, 2001; Graham, 2002; Leong and Clark, 2003; Weick, 2009; Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006, 2013; Elder-Vass, 2012; Kramsch, 2014; Lantolf et al., 2015; Cresswell and Rivas, 2016; Imia et al., 2016).
The relationship between culture and power	(French and Raven, 1959; Patai and DeAtkine, 1973; Schwartz 1992; Cunningham, 1993; Appadura, 1996; Nesler et al., 1999; House et al., 2002; Keltner et al., 2003; Al-Omari, 2008; Raven, 2008; Torelli and Shavitt, 2015; Hofstede et al., 2010; Sabry, 2010, Lughod, 2011; Sakr, 2012)
The relationship between culture and language	(Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Trueba and Zou, 1994; Burr, 1995; Wertsch and Sohmer, 1995; Lantolf, 2000; Gergen, 2001; Lazear, 1999; Jiang, 2000; Kim et al., 2015; Dueck, 2012; Kramsch, 2014; Lantolf et al., 2015; Imia et al., 2016)

Although the relationships between these four concepts were not *fully* developed in a form of a conceptual framework before data collection, identifying them at this stage played a critical role in governing the scope and structure of the interviews. This resulted in more effective utilisation of time with interviewees. Also, identifying these concepts allowed the researcher to have well-linked and multidimensional ideas and subjects that allowed him to steer the interviews more effectively. For instance, an insightful question about recognising the influence of power through language allowed the researcher to gain deeper insights into the mechanisms interviewees employ to deal with implicit factors that they do not appear to consider explicitly, such as reacting to powerful tones. In other words, the early consideration of these concepts allowed the researcher to expand his data collection with clear reference to the implicit issues such as the demonstration of power through language,

which the interviewee might not consider communicating explicitly without an explicit question from the researcher.

By conducting a conceptual study before the main data collection, the researcher addresses suggestion made by Suddaby (2006) that the researcher should consider a conceptual level with collected data to derive conclusions with theoretical insights.

Fourthly, after the conceptual study, the primary data collection was conducted within nine weeks. The researcher approached data collection with an open mind about what could be found, and used the emergent new data to generate ideas and points of discussions that could be either verified by other interviewees or used to gather new insights from other interviewees. For instance, at the beginning of the data collection, the researcher had not considered that the influence of culture on the work of international consultants in Saudi Arabia had any direct financial cost until one of the interviewees mentioned that the cultural constraints in the country makes the environment less comfortable for international consultants. Consequently, international consultants prefer to stay in Dubai while they participate in projects in Saudi Arabia. In these cases, the cost of hiring international consultants rises because they request to be flown in weekly from Dubai. This has resulted in the so-called 'transaction cost' being more expensive for Saudi clients. Having received this insight, the researcher determined to take every opportunity to ask new interviewees if culture resulted in higher transaction costs.

lastly, after data collection, the researcher became much clearer about the related subjects and main issues that seem to concern clients and consultants. Therefore, before conducting any more data analysis, the researcher went back to the literature to identify more specific research questions that he should try to respond to from the data. Accordingly, because the literature review was conducted at three levels, the field (industrial), organisational, and interpersonal, the researcher was able to identify four gaps in the research. Table 9 presents the identified gaps.

Table 9: Research Questions Derived from Second Stage of Literature Review

Literature Review Level	Gap in the Literature	Description	Bibliography
Field (Industrial) Level	Influence of Culture on Internationalisation of Consultancies	Although the research offers great insights about the international expansions of consultancies, it does not offer explicit insights about the impact of culture on those expansions.	(Merkle, 1980; Hood, 1991; Wren and Greenwood, 1998; Kipping, 1999, 2002; Clark and Fincham, 2002; McKenna, 1995, 2006; Saint-Martin, 2011; Faust, 2012; Wright and Kipping, 2012; Aitken, 2014)
Organisational Level	Influence of Culture on Symbolic Interaction	Although the consultancy research seems to discuss the role of management fashion in the construction of legitimacy for consultancies, it does not offer any insights about the role of culture on clients' perceptions about what is fashionable.	(Morgan et al., 1983; Abrahamson, 1996; Abrahamson and Fairchild, 1999; Benders and Veen, 2001; Zott and Huy, 2007; Deephouse and Suchman, 2008; Westphal, and Graebner, 2010; Jung and Keiser, 2012; Markóczy et al., 2013)
	Influence of Culture on usability of Knowledge Management Systems' Outputs and Tools	Although the literature discusses the critical role of knowledge management systems for consultancies, it does not offer any insights about the usability and transferability of the knowledge tools offer by these tools and knowledge when applied in environments that are culturally different than their origins.	(Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Gardner et al., 2008; Reihlen and Nikolova, 2010, Werr, 2012)
Interpersonal Level	Influence of Culture on People's Ability to Understand Knowledge from Others	Although the literature began to acknowledge and address the role of culture and power on knowledge exchange activities between clients and consultants, the available literature discusses	Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Bhagat et al., 2002; Fincham 2002; Carlile, 2004; Sturdy et al., 2009, 2011;
	Influence of Culture on People's Motivation to Exchange Knowledge with Others	the impact of culture and power among sectors and organisations within the United Kingdom only. This means the research is still in need to address these gaps on an international level where the impact of culture and power on knowledge exchange between international clients and consultants is addressed.	Donaldson and Davis, 1991; Bloomfield and Best, 1992; Jang and Lee, 1998; Glückler and Armbrüster, 2003; Fincham 2002; Saam, 2007; Sturdy et al., 2009; Nikolova and Devenney, 2009; Davenport and Early, 2010; Pozzebon and Pinsonneault, 2012)

Also, having conducted instant data analysis during data collection, the researcher realised that the conceptual framework needs to include three stages of interaction, namely before the consulting engagement, during the consulting engagement, and after the consulting engagement. This was thought to offer better structure for operationalising the research by positioning relations between the components of culture, power, knowledge, and language within specific periods of the interaction. Therefore, the researcher returned to his conceptual framework to integrate the previously identified components of culture, power, knowledge, and power within a model that allows him to study the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between clients and consultants at three stages of interaction. Also, developing the relationship between the main components of the conceptual framework led the researcher to develop the ultimate research question which seeks to investigate *the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients*.

Eventually, the primary data analysis began after specifying the research gaps, questions and conceptual framework. During data analysis, more data had been collected to verify findings or to gain more insights about emerging findings. Data analysis will be discussed in an independent section later in this chapter.

Nonetheless, in terms of addressing the fourth, fifth and sixth misconceptions that stress on the fact that grounded theory is an interpretive approach that should not be considered perfect or easy, the researcher was clear that he should avoid considering grounded theory as an easy and perfect systematic approach. Therefore, in addition to the above considerations, the researcher has considered the importance of developing the theory from the emergent data. In other word, the development of theory began with data analysis not during literature review, or the conceptual study. Therefore, the conceptual framework for this research was fully developed after data collection and right before data analysis. This means that the relationships between concepts were identified after data collection, and that the researcher developed an understanding about the investigated phenomenon from the collected data, not from the literature and theoretical review. Thus, it can be assumed that the theory emerged purely from the collected data, where the data was analysed according to a conceptual framework that was developed for it.

Finally, to overcome lack of experience in adopting grounded theory, the researcher studied some research that has adopted grounded theory, used the help and guidance of his supervisors, and engaged in several workshops, one of which was conducted personally by Dr. Barney Glaser.

6.5 Data Collection Method

According to Blumberg et al. (2011), the researcher determines what type of data collection techniques should be used to collect the data needed to answer the research question. The

sample also plays an important role in the selection of data collection techniques especially if the samples are humans who are required to expose their thoughts, ideas and experiences. For social research that seeks to collect data from humans, there are two common techniques. First, the researcher can observe behaviours, events, conditions, people or processes. Second, the researcher can communicate with people about different topics through interviews (Blumberg et al., 2011).

For this research, interviewing was found to be the most suitable technique for data collection. The following sub-section justifies this choice, and the next sub-section presents the sampling of interviewees.

6.5.1 Qualitative Interviewing

Why Interviewing for this Research?

Potter (1996, p. 96) defines qualitative interviewing as a “technique of gathering data from humans by asking them questions and getting them to react verbally.” There are two reasons why interviewing was selected as the main data collection technique for this project. Firstly, because this is qualitative research, interviewing is a key data collection technique. The flexibility of this method is attractive as it allows the researcher to conduct different interviews with different people at different times and spaces (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Secondly, this research investigates the influence of culture on knowledge exchange in the client-consultant relationship, and this is known to be interactive and interpretive. If the aim is to gather data close to reality about the influence of culture on such relationships, it is important to capture the experiences of those engaged in this interpretive interaction. Polkinghorne (2005) explains that human experience is complex, which makes it a difficult area to study. This complexity requires data collection techniques that give informants the chance to freely express their experiences in ways and terms they consider to be close to their interpretation of the reality lived.

In other words, interviews provide a natural setting that stimulates the informant’s previous experiences. This allows the informant to reflect and interpret in light of the phenomenon under investigation. As stated by Cohen et al. (2007, p. 29), interviewing is “a valuable method for exploring the construction and negotiation of meanings in a natural setting.” This is because, as stated by Berg (2007, p. 96), interviews enable interviewees to “speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings.” According to Kvale (1996, p. 174) an interview is a conversation that aims to gather descriptions of the personal experience of the interviewee in relation to his/her own interpretations of the meanings of the phenomenon under investigation. In a similar vein, authors like Polkinghorne (2005), and Barbour and Schostak (2006) affirm that interviews are extendable conversations between participants that aim to gain in-depth information about a particular subject. They

also allow interviewees to interpret and describe a particular phenomenon in terms of the meanings they attach to it. Kvale (1996, p. 5-6) explains that interviewees provide descriptions of the social phenomena through expressions that demonstrate their interpretations of the meaning of the social phenomena. Therefore, Polkinghorne (2005, p. 137) describes the data gathered by interviewing as 'language data' as an indication of the critical role language plays in the informants' descriptions of the social phenomenon. The following subsection elaborates on the role of language in interviews.

The Role of Language in Interviews

Methodology and philosophy find language to be critical to understanding the qualitative research interview (Welch and Piekkari, 2006). Alvesson and Deetz (2000) alert researchers to the fact that language, discourse and symbols play a significant role in shaping meaning in interviews (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000). This is explained by Welch and Piekkari (2006, p. 418) who state that "once interview data are seen as interpretive, 'collaborative' language becomes a constitutive act rather than just a medium for information exchange."

In fact, as discussed in the conceptual framework chapter, language is not only a medium for communication, it is also a cultural resource that associates meanings with words and symbols (Duranti, 2009). Linguistic anthropology explains language in diverse cultural settings. The anthropological grounding of this notion is that language should be understood as it is used by people who are conceptualized as being institutionally and historically situated in a particular cultural setting. From this perspective, language constitutes the context for thoughts, social identities, and interactions (Goodwin and Duranti, 1992). The notion here is that understanding the language of the community within which the study is conducted is critical because culture dictates the meanings of the terms used by interviewees who are members of the society. Thus, if the main purpose of interviews is to develop natural settings for interviewees to interpret their personal experiences and describe their perceptions about the phenomenon under investigation, then close attention must be paid to the actual meanings of the words and symbols they use. This is because their choice of words and symbols and the meanings they associate with them is derived from their own cultures. Consequently, the researcher needs to develop a close understanding of the meaning of those words from the perspective of the interviewees themselves.

According to Welch and Piekkari, (2006, p. 421), language has been described as a tool for "creating and describing the cultural reality." Therefore, "learning the language is not enough; in addition, researchers need to familiarize themselves with the "communicative norms" of a particular society." This indicates that knowing the language allows us to understand only the common meanings of words that seem to be shared in the semantic domain from which language was learnt in the first place. But, when dealing with international informants, it is important to understand the cultural meanings behind the

words that emerge from the informant's culture. In this context, Welch (2006) describes culture as a linguistic institute. This notion is important for this research because knowing the cultural meanings of words or the linguistic institute that the interviewee is using, is important for understanding their descriptions of their realities. For instance, although British, Australians and Americans speak English, the meanings they attach to words are not necessarily the same (e.g. chips, crisps, potatoes). This is because, as discussed in the conceptual framework chapter, language is socially constructed, and the same words have different constructed meanings from one society to another (Stead, 2004).

Thus, if English-speaking nations give different meanings to similar words, or different words to similar things, then it is rational to assume that differences in meanings is much greater among non-English speaking nations such as Arab nations. According to Stead (2004) although people might be using the same language to communicate, the meanings they associate to the words they use are not necessarily identical. Therefore, it crucial for the research to pay a close attention to the meanings that his interviewees associate with the words they use in their descriptions of their experiences and perceptions.

However, Welch and Piekkari, (2006) affirm that in international research, the language of the interview becomes more critical because of the different cultures from which people draw the meanings of the linguistic terms they use. Therefore, Welch (2006) argues that because of the different cultures and linguistic institutes that dominate different international environments, qualitative interviewing provides a strong tool for data collection allowing the researcher to gain deep insights into dynamic, context-dependent, interpretive and interactive phenomena.

In the context of this research, culture and language are two of the four main concepts focused on, and so their complexity becomes even greater. In fact, even the two remaining concepts - power and knowledge - are complex because power is expressed through spoken and non-spoken language while knowledge is also exchanged through language. Therefore, consideration of language and culture will be multi-dimensional since they are influential on the interviewing process as well as on the knowledge exchange interaction; this is the social phenomenon that is studied and about which interviews are conducted.

The Role of the Researcher in the Interviews

Chenail (2011) argues that qualitative researchers should not intervene, by any means, with the input they receive from their informants. Informants should be fully motivated to communicate their own perspective and the researcher must not impose any and use any signals that could affect the of the input received. This has significant implications for the trustworthiness of the data. Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2003, p. 320) explain the significance of this issue by saying that "the researcher as an instrument can be the greatest threat to trustworthiness in qualitative research if time is not spent on preparation for the field".

Authors like Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2003) and Chenail (2011) affirm that preparation for the field can be conducted through pilot studies in which the researcher has the chance to reflect on the expected response and measure his reaction to it. The aim of such pilot studies is to prepare the researcher to control his bias, and to use his understanding of the interviewees' culture to interpret what has been shared instantly and in an unbiased way in order to steer the interview in the planned direction. Therefore, a pilot study was conducted before preparing for the primary data collection, as discussed earlier in the research strategy section.

The researcher realises that he should also appreciate the difference between his own and the international consultants' understanding of Saudi culture. For this reason, the researcher acknowledges that some cultural challenges that might sound or look insignificant to him might be extremely influential for the international consultant. Similarly, the researcher's understanding of western cultures, which he has been acquiring from previous education in Canada, the United States, and the UK since 2012, should not undermine the challenge that Saudi clients might experience in understanding particular words and behaviours of Western consultants. The researcher should make use of his exposure to those cultures and, at the same time, put himself in the shoes of others who might lack this prior knowledge.

Secondly, in targeting two groups of respondents, namely clients and consultants, with the intention of gathering data about the opposite group, the researcher understands that he might be subject to expressions of frustrations or blame for failure from one group against the other. Respondents may feel that sharing their views with the researcher will result in a solution to ongoing struggles with the other side. Or, they might feel that the researcher is able to explain their views, concerns or struggles to the other side. For instance, an angry client might use his/her interview to vent anger or to blame someone for failures or shortcomings. Therefore, the researcher acknowledges that he should maintain a rational and logical status to ensure he does not get carried away by emotional feedback from respondents. This is also important to keep data flowing from the respondent without distractions.

Semi-Structured Qualitative Interviews

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), there are several features that distinguish qualitative interviewing. Firstly, it concentrates on the interviewee's point of view, unlike quantitative interviewing which concentrates on the specific points in the researcher's mind that need answers. Secondly, in qualitative interviewing, "rambling or going off the tangents is often encouraged" because "it gives insights into what the interviewee sees as relevant and important" while in the quantitative research "it is usually regarded as a nuisance and discouraged" (pp. 466-467). Thirdly, qualitative interviewing can depart from the guide, whereby additional questions can follow up on an interviewee's reply, and the order and

wording may be adjusted. Fifthly, in qualitative interviewing the researcher seeks to acquire rich and detailed answers, while in quantitative interviewing the researcher looks for answers that can be easily coded and quickly processed. Lastly, in qualitative interviewing, the researcher can interview the same person several times and on several occasions.

There are two types of qualitative interviews - unstructured or semi-structured - as discussed by Bryman and Bell (2011).

Unstructured interviews may use only one question leaving the interviewee free to reply about what he or she thinks is important and worth mentioning. This type of interviewing is very similar in nature to a conversation. In the semi-structured interviews, the researcher usually has a set of questions on explicit topics, which is referred to as the interview guide. Although the researcher has specific questions, the interviewee can still answer freely within a pre-defined scope. In this type of interview, questions can be asked in different sequences and questions not on the list can be asked too. However, all interviewees should be asked general questions using the same wording (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

For this type of research, the semi-structured interviewing technique is suitable, mainly because grounded theory is the chosen research strategy, as will be discussed in the next section. Adopting grounded theory requires the researcher to define the scope of the interview in a semi-structured format and allows the interviewee to answer freely. Semi-structured interviews also allow the researcher the flexibility to add additional internal questions according to the emergent data. Interviews have three sections; the first seeks to gain insights about the influence of culture on the client/consultant work, the second seeks to add the component of knowledge to the component of culture, and the third seeks to add the component of language to the previous components of culture and knowledge. The component of power is explicitly stated in the second and third section but is also in the first section as a cultural element. The tables below present the questions prepared for the semi-structured interviews along with themes (or justifications) associated with the question, and the bibliography related to those themes. Also, diagrams of the semi-structured interviews that explain relationships between questions are attached in Appendix A.

Semi-Structured Interviews Prepared for International Consultants

Table 10: Consultant Interviews: Introduction

Step	Description	Bibliography
Introduction about the research.	Introducing the Research Subject to the interviewee	
Privacy Assurance	Reiterating privacy assurance and explaining who would be able to access the interview.	
Name, Nationality, Job Title, Organisation Name	Biographic information about the research	
Length of International Experience	Length of international experience provides indications about the consultants' ability to work with international individuals in general	(Nonaka, 1994; Weir and Hutchings, 2005; Carmeli et al., 2010; Choi and Johanson, 2012)
Length of Experience with Saudis	Length of experience with Saudis provides indications about the consultant's ability to work with Saudis in particular.	(Nonaka, 1994; Weir and Hutchings, 2005; Carmeli et al., 2010; Choi and Johanson, 2012)

Table 11: Consultant Interviews: The Culture Section

Question	Justification	Bibliography
<p>Can you tell me about the impressions and assumptions you had about KSA and Saudis before you started?</p> <p>--</p> <p>How do you present yourself as an international consultant in SA, socially and professionally?</p> <p>--</p> <p>How do you think your clients perceive you?</p> <p>--</p> <p>When did you start learning about Saudi culture, How?</p>	<p>Enquiring about previous knowledge about the country, and the expected perception about self.</p>	<p>(Goffman, 1959; Weik, 2009)</p>
<p>If your knowledge about the country and its people has changed, what changed and how? Give me examples, please?</p>	<p>Enquiring about the influence of continuous reality finding through interaction, and whether interaction adjusts understanding of the other or not.</p>	<p>(Searle, 1995; Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Elder-Vass, 2012; Miller, 1997; Goffman, 1959; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1989; Czarniawska, 1997; Stead, 2004)</p>
<p>To what extent do you think you understood your clients' culture?</p> <p>--</p> <p>What were the main difficulties? Why were they difficult?</p> <p>--</p> <p>How did you overcome these difficulties and to what extent did you manage to overcome them?</p>	<p>Capacity of sense-making of the new environment by outsiders, the main obstacles, and the ways in which internationals deal with cultural shocks.</p>	<p>(Czarniawska, 1997; Weik, 2009; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1989; Stead, 2004; Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Elder-Vass, 2012)</p>
<p>Do you think more understanding of someone's culture and environment enhances the ways you work with that person?</p> <p>--</p> <p>Tell me about your clients' understanding of your way of thinking and working as a consultant.</p> <p>--</p> <p>Tell me about the influence of your understanding of your client's way of thinking and working.</p>	<p>More direct questions about the influence of culture on the work of consultants. This question should give more insights about the influence of personal knowledge that people develop about each other (in case the interviewee has not covered this already in previous questions).</p>	<p>(Goffman, 1959; Stead, 2004; Young and Collin, 2004; Bauman, 1999)</p>
<p>As a result of your Interactions with International clients, have you changed as a person? How?</p> <p>--</p> <p>Have you developed any new behaviours and ways of thinking?</p>	<p>Enquiring about the influence of international experience on the person's behaviour and way of thinking. In other words, this question adds to the argument about Constructionism vs Realism</p>	<p>(Searle, 1995)</p>

Table 12: Consultant Interviews, The Knowledge Section

Question	Justification	Bibliography
<p>How do you use your organisational (products) and personal knowledge with Saudi Clients? -- How do you deal with your client's knowledge about what they have/need? How understandable is this? -- What are the challenges you face when you try to understand your clients' knowledge and needs?</p>		
<p>To what extent do you believe that knowledge can be generalised and used similarly among your clients? -- What are the national barriers? -- What are the organisational barriers? -- What are the individual barriers?</p>	<p>Enquiring about the influence of environment on the applicability of knowledge.</p>	<p>(Hatch and Cunliffe, 1997; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Savary, 1990)</p>
<p>What is the role of power on the applicability of knowledge?</p>	<p>Enquiring about the influence of power which can be shaped in the different interests, hidden agendas, invisible actors or the applicability or approval of the advice.</p>	<p>(Fincham, 1999; McLachlin , 2000; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Furusten, 2009).</p>
<p>How do you customise knowledge to fit within your clients' environment? Examples? -- How do you gain and verify knowledge about your international clients and their issues?</p>	<p>Enquiring about the extent to which consultants believe in or are willing to customise their products and services.</p> <p>Customising knowledge requires understanding clients' situations. Hence, the enquiry is about how consultants gain and verify the knowledge they gain from their clients to make sure their customisation serves real situations.</p>	<p>Moitra and Kumar, 2007; Donate and Guadamillas, 2010; De Long and Fahey, 2000; King, 2007; Ajmal and Koshinen; Nissen, 2007; Apostolou and Mentaza, 1999; Ko et al., 2005; Empson; Martin and Salomon, 2003)</p>
<p>How do you exchange knowledge with your international clients? What are the challenges? -- Do you have or have you developed knowledge transfer methods for Saudis only? -- How do you deal with the language barrier in your knowledge transfer to Saudi clients?</p>	<p>Enquiring about knowledge exchange or transfer techniques that consultants use with their international clients.</p>	<p>(Nissen, 2007; Li and Hsieh, 2009; Choi and Johnson, 2012; Hong and Nguyen, 2009; Apostolou and Mentzas, 1999; Ajmal and Koshinen, 2008; Ko et al., 2005)</p>

Table 13: Consultant Interviews: The Language Section

Question	Justification	Bibliography
<p>Do you find language to be a barrier in your interactions? How do you overcome this issue? Examples?</p> <p>--</p> <p>Do you feel more comfortable and understandable when your discussions are related to technical matters such as finance?</p>	<p>Language as a set of constitutive institutions agreed and normed by their environments. Here the discussion is driven through the difference between languages used in certain industries, organisations and in the outside world.</p>	<p>(Searle, 1995; Wolframe, 2003; Sturdy et al., 2009)</p>
<p>In the context of spoken language, what linguistic approach do you follow with your international clients? (normal, simplified, complicated to show sophistication, or no preference?)</p> <p>--</p> <p>How do you deal with local linguistic institutions in Saudi and in international assignments in general?</p> <p>--</p> <p>How do you deal with misinterpretations from your side and your clients' side?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implicit Meanings • Weight of meanings 	<p>Enquiring about using language as a tool for impression management.</p> <p>Enquiring about how consultants pay attention to the role of language on their work, and to what extent.</p> <p>Knowing more about the issue of misinterpretations, translation, different language institutes, different meanings for the same words.</p>	<p>(Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch and Sohmer, 1995; Kempen, 1998; Searle, 1995; Jiang, 2000; Stead, 2004; Kim et al., 2015; Dueck, 2012; Elder-Vas, 2012; Kramersch, 2014; Lantolf et al., 2015)</p>
<p>Can you tell me about the role of soft language?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gesture institutions • Understanding emotional signs. 	<p>Enquiring about the interviewee's understanding of tone, body language & facial expression, which are part of signification and objectivation systems and are highly influenced by culture.</p>	<p>(Berger and Luckman, 1991; Wertsch and Sohmer, 1995; Eldar-Vass, 2012; Kramersch; 2014)</p>
<p>Can you tell me about communicating with Saudi females?</p>	<p>Trying to gain more insights about the influence of the image of Saudi females on their work with international consultants.</p>	
<p>Power and Language</p> <p>--</p> <p>Have you witnessed the role of power in the spoken language? How does it influence your work?</p> <p>--</p> <p>Have you witnessed the role of power in soft language? How does it influence your work?</p>	<p>Enquiring about how consultants may discover the source of power through language, and how he/she reacts to it.</p>	<p>(Fincham, 1999; McLachlin , 2000; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Furusten, 2009).</p>

Semi-Structured Interviews Prepared for Saudi Clients

Table 14: Client Interviews: Introduction

Step	Description	Bibliography
Introduction to the research.	Introducing the research subject to the interviewee.	
Privacy assurance	Reiterating the privacy assurance and explaining who would be able to access the interview.	
Name, Nationality, Job Title, Organisation Name	Biographic information about the interviewee.	
Do you have any international education or work experience?	Length of international experience provides indications about the clients' ability to work with internationals in general.	(Nonaka, 1994; Weir and Hutchings, 2005; Carmeli et al., 2010; Choi and Johanson, 2012)
Length of experience with international consultants	Length of experience with international consultants provides indications about the client's ability to work with international consultants in specific.	(Nonaka, 1994; Weir and Hutchings, 2005; Carmeli et al., 2010; Choi and Johanson, 2012)

Table 15: Client Interviews: The Culture Section

Question	Justification	Bibliography
<p>Can you tell me about the impressions and assumptions you had about your international consultants before you started?</p> <p>--</p> <p>How do you present yourself as a Saudi client to your international consultants, socially and professionally?</p> <p>--</p> <p>How do you think your consultants perceive you?</p> <p>--</p> <p>Do you learn about your consultant's culture before you meet them? How?</p>	<p>Enquiring about previous knowledge of the country, and the expected perception about self.</p>	<p>(Goffman, 1959; Weik, 2009)</p>
<p>If your impression and understanding of your international consultants changed after you worked with them, how did they change? Give me examples, please.</p>	<p>Enquiring about the influence of continuous reality finding through interaction, and whether interaction adjusts understanding of the other or not.</p>	<p>(Searle, 1995; Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Elder-Vass, 2012; Miller, 1997; Goffman, 1959; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1989; Czarniawska, 1997; Stead, 2004)</p>
<p>To what extent do you think you understood your consultants' culture?</p> <p>--</p> <p>What were the main difficulties? Why were they difficult?</p> <p>--</p> <p>How did you overcome these difficulties, and to what extent did you manage to overcome them?</p>	<p>Capacity of sense-making of outsiders' ways of thinking and behaviour, the main obstacles to this process.</p>	<p>(Czawniawaska, 1997; Weik, 2009; Czawniawaska-Joerges, 1989; Stead, 2004; Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Elder-Vass, 2012)</p>
<p>Do you think more understanding of someone's culture and environment enhances the ways you work with that person?</p> <p>--</p> <p>Tell me about your consultants' understanding of your way of thinking and working as a</p> <p>--</p> <p>Tell me about the influence of your understanding on your consultant's way of thinking and working.</p>	<p>More direct questions about the influence of culture on the work of consultants and clients. This question should give more insights about the influence of personal knowledge that people develop about each other (in case the interviewee has not covered this in previous questions).</p>	<p>(Goffman, 1959; Stead, 2004; Young and Coliin, 2004; Bauman, 1999)</p>
<p>As a result of your interactions with international consultants, have you changed as a person? How?</p> <p>--</p> <p>Have you developed any new behaviours and ways of thinking?</p>	<p>Enquiring about the influence of international experience on the person's behaviour and way of thinking. In other words, this question adds to the argument about Constructionism vs Realism</p>	<p>(Searle, 1995)</p>

Table 16: Client Interviews: The Knowledge Section

Question	Justification	Bibliography
<p>Why do you hire international consultants? Why not locals? -- How do you define and communicate what you need to international consultants? -- Do you think dealing with international consultants needs special skills and knowledge? Explain, please.</p>	<p>Enquiring about clients' views and images about international consultants.</p>	<p>(Goffman, 1959; Weik, 2009)</p>
<p>To what extent do you believe that knowledge can be generalised and used similarly with different clients? -- What are the national barriers? -- What are the organisational barriers? -- What are the individual barriers?</p>	<p>Enquiring about the influence of environment on applicability of knowledge brought by internationals.</p>	<p>(Hatch and Cunliffe, 1997; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Savary, 1990)</p>
<p>What is the role of power on the applicability of knowledge?</p>	<p>Enquiring about the influence of power, which can be shaped for different interests, hidden agendas, invisible actors or the applicability or approval of the advice.</p>	<p>(Fincham, 1999; McLachlin, 2000; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Furusten, 2009).</p>
<p>How do you manage to customise the consultant's knowledge to fit within your environment? Examples? -- How do you gain and verify the applicability of the knowledge you receive from your consultants?</p>	<p>Enquiring about the extent to which clients believe or manage to customise the products and services they receive. Customising knowledge requires understanding of what has been offered. Hence, the enquiry is about how clients gain and verify the knowledge from their consultant to make sure their customisation requests are based on correct understanding.</p>	<p>Moitra and Kumar, 2007; Donate and Guadamillas, 2010; De Long and Fahey, 2000; King, 2007; Ajmal and Koshinen; Nissen, 2007; Apostolou and Mentaza, 1999; Ko et al., 2005; Empson; Martin and Salomon, 2003)</p>
<p>How do you exchange knowledge with your international consultants? What are the challenges? -- How do you deal with the language barrier in your knowledge transfer with international consultants?</p>	<p>Enquiring about knowledge exchange or transfer techniques that clients use with their international consultants.</p>	<p>(Nissen, 2007; Li and Hsieh, 2009; Choi and Johnson, 2012; Hong and Nguyen, 2009; Apostolou and Mentzas, 1999; Ajmal and Koshinen, 2008; Ko et al., 2005)</p>

Table 17: Client Interviews: The Language Section

Question	Justification	Bibliography
<p>Do you find language to be a barrier in your interaction? How do you overcome this issue? Examples?</p> <p>Do you feel more comfortable and understandable when your discussions with international consultants are related to technical matters such as finance?</p>	<p>Language as a set of constitutive institutions agreed and normed by their environments.</p> <p>Here, the discussion is driven through the difference between languages used in certain industries, organisations and in the outside world.</p>	<p>(Searle, 1995; Wolframe, 2003, Sturdy et al., 2009)</p>
<p>In the context of spoken language, what linguistic approach do you follow with your international consultants? (normal, simplified, complicated to show sophistication, or no preference?)</p> <p>How do you deal with local linguistic institutions associated with different international consultants from different cultures and probably different industries?</p> <p>How do you deal with misinterpretations from your side and from your consultant's side?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implicit meanings • Weight of meanings 	<p>Enquiring about using language as a tool for impression management.</p> <p>Enquiring about how clients pay attention to the role of language on their work, and to what extent.</p> <p>Knowing more about the issue of misinterpretations, translation, different language institutes, different meanings for the same words.</p>	<p>(Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch and Sohmer, 1995; Kempen, 1998; Searle, 1995; Jiang, 2000; Stead, 2004; Kim et al., 2015; Dueck, 2012; Elder-Vas, 2012; Kramsch, 2014; Lantolf et al., 2015)</p>
<p>Can you tell me about the role of soft language?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gesture institutions • Understanding Emotional signs. 	<p>Enquiring about the interviewee's understanding of tone, body language & facial expression, which are part of signification and objectivation systems and are highly influenced by culture.</p>	<p>(Berger and Luckman, 1991; Wertsch and Sohmer, 1995; Eldar-Vass, 2012; Kramsch; 2014)</p>
<p>Can you tell me about communicating with female and international consultants?</p>	<p>Trying to gain more insight about the influence of Saudi males' image of females on their work with international female consultants.</p>	
<p>Power and language</p> <p>How do you see the role of power in the spoken language? How is that communicated to the consultant?</p> <p>How do you see the role of power in the spoken language? how is that communicated to the consultant?</p>	<p>Enquiring about how clients may communicate power or discover sources of power through language, and how he/she reacts to it either from the other clients or from international consultants.</p>	<p>(Fincham, 1999; McLachlin, 2000; Soriano, 2001; Devinney and Nikolova, 2004; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Furusten, 2009).</p>

6.5.2 Sampling

Since grounded theory has been adopted as a research strategy, sampling should consider the analysis of the emergent data. Having conducted a pilot study before primary data collection has contributed to the sampling. Analysis of the data gathered from the pilot study indicated adjustment of the target sample and interview questions. In other words, the pilot study enabled the researcher to target informants who can provide data related to the broad literature review and theoretical understanding.

The sampling was conducted according to three fundamental principles. Firstly, there was focus on both the client and consultant sides of the interaction. This was important to gain a thorough understanding of the situation from both sides. Also, by focusing on both sides, the critique raised by recent studies that consultancy research focuses mainly on consultants and neglects the role of clients was addressed (Sturdy et al., 2009).

Secondly, the sample focused more on the characteristics of the individuals than on the characteristics of their organisations. If the main objective was to study the influence of culture on knowledge exchange in the client-consultant relationship, then it was rational for the sample to focus on the individuals who are part of this interpretive interaction within which knowledge exchange takes place. Thus, the focus is more on the personal experience of the informant, which might extend to the organisation he/she works for. As discussed in the conceptual framework chapter, although national and organisational cultures can be perceived to be similar in some countries or organisations, individuals from the same national culture tend to be blends of different sub-cultures that construct their cognitive systems such as religion, sexual reference, and race. Additionally, individuals are influenced by difference life-experiences which impact their cognitive and emotional systems This means individuals from the same organisations are unlikely to be identical in their views and perceptions about the phenomenon under investigation. Therefore, the focus should be on the individual as a socially constructed cognitive system rather than on a specific national or organisational culture that the informant might not be highly attached to. Thus, the focus is not on the size of the consulting or client organisations. Although the influence of organisational culture, structure, size and objectives are acknowledged and discussed in this research, to the aim is to consider these organisational components in the analysis rather than at the point of sampling for data collection. The hope is that such a mixed sample of participants from different organisations provides more insights and increase the validity, reliability and generalisability of the findings. Authors like Remenyi et al. (1998) and Baxter and Jack (2008) affirm that validity and reliability increases when similar insights come from different informants with different backgrounds.

Also, by focusing on the individual level, those with the sort of background and experience that believed to be crucial for the data can be targeted. For instance, Saudi clients who have

directly interacted with international consultants can be targeted rather than Saudi decision makers who claim to be using consulting services while they instruct their employees to interact with consultants. This situation was found to be common among Saudi clients who hire international consultants to work mainly with their employees while they themselves have little or no interaction with them. Similarly, individual consultants who have directly interacted with Saudi clients were targeted rather than the senior or partner consultants who appear on the brochures but do not actually take part in interactions. This does not mean that clients from top management level or senior or partner consultants were excluded. However, they were part of the sample only if they had direct experience interacting with the other side. Furthermore, by focusing on the individual level, those with different lengths of experience of interacting with the other side could be targeted, offering an additional angle from which to analyse the data. For instance, the length of experience gives a deeper insight into how people adjust their understanding of each other when they interact more. Thirdly, the focus is on English language speakers. This is because of the critical role of language in the interaction between clients and consultants, which influences the smoothness of their communication and the effectiveness of their interpretations. The decision to limit the sample to those who speak English can be justified in two ways.

Firstly, this is international and cross-cultural research where language plays a significant role in the ways the sample (clients and consultants) interact with each other, and express their views, as informants, to the researcher. Therefore, it is important to conduct the interviews in the same language that the interaction took place in, in the first place. Using the same language in the interviews allows the researcher to gather more implicit data for the topic. For instance, the researcher can gather more data about the language skills of the interviewees, and the influence of that on the interactions.

Secondly, the coding and data analysis will be conducted in English and, therefore, interviews should be conducted in English. If the interviews with the Saudi clients were to be conducted in Arabic, then important insights would be lost in translation, and the data analysis would become hard to control. Additionally, translating the Arabic data to English is time consuming.

Nevertheless, sometimes, Saudi interviewees express themselves in Arabic if they find an Arabic word is closer to the meaning they want to convey. This happens even with international consultants who use Arabic terms in their consulting projects with Saudis. These incidents allow the researcher to gain more understanding about the actual meanings of words and phrases, and of other elements such as emotions, and the joint construction of buzzwords that may have different meanings when applied in different contexts by other groups.

However, certain criteria were used to select Saudi clients and international consultants. The next sub-sections discuss these criteria.

6.5.2.1 The Sample of Saudi Clients

In order to find clients that match the three sampling principles discussed earlier, it was necessary to identify which sectors were likely to offer the target clients. Ultimately, the semi-government sector was found to be the active in using the services of international consultancies. Unfortunately, it was not possible to find official resources that explain the difference between semi-government and government sectors in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, four Saudi officials (two from the government and two from the semi-government sectors) were approached, and they agreed that the semi-government sector has different policies, by-laws and pay-scales that mean this sector operates on a business-like basis. The government sector usually uses the semi-government sector as an arm to deal with the private sector at national and international levels.

There are two reasons that this sector is more likely to offer the target sample. Firstly, the Saudi government performs most of its consulting projects through its semi-government organizations. It has been witnessed that this sector has a high level of spending on consulting services, especially with the development projects running in the country since 2006 (vision-2020) and the reform initiatives of 2015, vision-2030 (Bianchi et al., 2016). Therefore, it is more likely that individuals who are willing to speak about their experience with international consultancies can be found in this sector.

Secondly, this sector primarily employs Saudis unlike the private sector, which is reliant on non-Saudis. This is another reason to concentrate on this sector since the sample focuses on Saudi clients. Moreover, because of the different policies, by-laws, and pay-scales, this sector attracts a certain quality of Saudi employee who is highly educated and English-speaking. It is assumed that individuals with these qualities will understand the phenomenon under investigation, and consequently provide rich insights for the project.

Each interviewee must have individually been a key participant in at least one consulting project in which they directly interacted with international consultants. Table (18) presents biographic details about the Saudi clients interviewed for this research.

Table 18: Biographic Data About the Saudi Clients Interviewed

Name	Sex	Occupation	Organisation Name	Any International Work or Education Experience	Length of Interaction with Intl Consultants
1. Check Hardcopy	Male	IT and operation Director	Check Hardcopy	Training Courses	9 Years
2. Check Hardcopy	Male	Medical Informatics Manager	Check Hardcopy	Schooling in UK, Bachelor from US, Training Courses	16 Years
3. Check Hardcopy	Female	Management and Quality Assurance Officer	Check Hardcopy	Training Courses	5 Years
4. Check Hardcopy	Female	Senior Project Manager	Check Hardcopy	MSc from UK and Training Courses	15 Years
5. Check Hardcopy	Male	Head of Medical Informatics Department	Check Hardcopy	MSc from the US and Training Courses	4-5 Years
6. Check Hardcopy	Male	Regional Manager	Check Hardcopy	Training Courses	13 Years
7. Check Hardcopy	Male	Service Delivery Manager	Check Hardcopy	MSc from Canada and Training Courses	2 Years
8. Check Hardcopy	Male	Project Manager	Check Hardcopy	Bachelor from the US and Training Courses	4-5 Years
9. Check Hardcopy	Male	Director of Contracting and Purchasing Department	Check Hardcopy	Training Courses	10 Years
10. Check Hardcopy	Male	PMO Manager	Check Hardcopy	Training Courses	13 Years
11. Check Hardcopy	Male	Head of Planning and Monitoring	Check Hardcopy	Training Courses	11 Years
12. Check Hardcopy	Male	Director of Information Technology	Check Hardcopy	Training Courses	7 Years
13. Check Hardcopy	Male	Head of Clearing and Settlement	Check Hardcopy	Training Courses	14 Years
14. Check Hardcopy	Male	Government's Risk and Compliance Director	Check Hardcopy	Training Courses	12 Years

6.5.2.2 The Sample of International Consultants

The consultant sample focused on consultants from the Americas and Europe for two main reasons. Firstly, the number of Western consultants operating in Saudi Arabia is much higher than the number from consultants who come from other parts of the world. Secondly, Western consultants are expected to be more culturally different to Saudi clients than those from the East. This is because there are much bigger religious, social and linguistic differences between the West and the Middle East than between the Far East and Middle East. The religious teachings of Islam and the Qur'an have a significant impact on the cultures, social structures, politics and language of those who come from India and Malaysia. On the contrary, this religious influence is very minor in the West.

The sample includes all international consultants who match the above criteria, regardless of their employment status and whether they represent firms, are self-employed, or internal consultants/advisers. This is because of a basic assumption argued by Sturdy et al. (2009) that a consultant is an outsider who brings outside knowledge to the client regardless of whether he is a representative of a consulting firm, self-employed, or an internal consultant/adviser who is listed on the payroll at the clients' organisation. This provides different and deep insights. For instance, the internal adviser provides better understanding of the influence of consultants' familiarity with clients on their interactions and interpretations.

All those consultants who have worked and lived in Saudi Arabia or who visit occasionally while they live in other countries are included in the sample. The variety of the lengths of experiences is assumed to provide insights such as the influence of international experience on the ability of consultants to operate in different cultures.

Table 19 presents biographic details about the international consultants that were interviewed for this research.

Table 19: Biographic Data about the International Consultants Interviewed

Name	Sex	First Language	Occupation	International Experience	Experience in SA	Nationality	Organisation name	Prior Knowledge of SA Culture
1. Check Hardcopy	Female	English	Human Resources Consultant (Talent Management)	7 Years	3 Years	American	Check Hardcopy	Not Aware
2. Check Hardcopy	Male	English	Technology Strategy Manager	15 Years	2 Years	American	Check Hardcopy	Slightly Aware
3. Check Hardcopy	Male	English	Head of the Enterprise Program Management Office	16 Years	6 Years	Irish	Check Hardcopy	Not Aware
4. Check Hardcopy	Male	English	Advisor	Long!	17 Years	South African	Check Hardcopy	Slightly Aware
5. Check Hardcopy	Male	Polish	Banking Consultant	7 days	7 days	Polish	Check Hardcopy	Slightly Aware
6. Check Hardcopy	Male	Spanish	Co-founder of a new Consulting firm	Long!	1.5 Years	Spanish	Check Hardcopy	Moderately Aware
7. Check Hardcopy	Male	Spanish	Managing Director at Palladium for Europe, Middle East and Africa.	20 Years	6 years in GCC countries / 5 months in SA	Spanish	Check Hardcopy	Above Average
8. Check Hardcopy	Male	English	Change Management Consultant	32 years	4.5 years	American	Check Hardcopy	Slightly Aware
9. Check Hardcopy	Male	German	Senior Manager / Accenture Middle East	15 Years	5 Years	German	Check Hardcopy	Above Average
10. Check Hardcopy	Male	Romanian	Management Consulting Manager	4-5 years	8 Months	Romanian	Check Hardcopy	Above Average
11. Check Hardcopy	Male	Spanish	a Country Director for Saud for Palladium.	15 Years	2 Years	Argentinian	Check Hardcopy	Moderately Aware
12. Check Hardcopy	Male	Dutch	Management Consultant	12 Years	8-9 Years	Belgian	Check Hardcopy	Moderately Aware
13. Check Hardcopy	Male	English	Financial Consultant	5 Years	5 Years	American	Check Hardcopy	Above Average

6.5.3 Access

Gaining access to collect data for this research was expected to be challenging and time consuming, and this indeed was the case. Although many consulting projects were in progress in the semi-government sector, gaining access was challenging mainly due to the interviewees' time constraints, and suspicion about the actual goal of the research. Some of those approached thought the findings might expose issues they wanted to cover up such as using consultancies to legitimise management actions. These issues will be discussed in detail in this sub-section.

6.5.3.1 Timing of Access

The access to clients and consultants took place in the spring of 2015. This was an exceptionally good time to collect data about the interactive experience of Saudi clients and international consultants because they had been engaged in intensive consulting projects since 2005-6 when the Saudi government began major development projects supported by increasing oil prices. Those ten years of interactive experience between clients and consultants from different cultural backgrounds made them more motivated to share their experience about the role of culture in their work. This was evident from the feedback from a majority of interviewees who agreed to participate on the basis of their belief that culture has a critical influence on consulting work in Saudi Arabia, and must be studied.

6.5.3.2 Access to Clients

Gaining access to the client side was arranged through personal contacts. Because of the researcher's age group, educational background in computer science and business information systems which are broadly adopted in the country, and because of work experience at King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Researcher Centre which has national and international relationships with semi-government organisations and private companies, it was possible to develop a vast network of relationships with individuals from different semi-government organisations who supported the researcher in gaining the necessary access.

Although having a strong and broad network of contacts facilitated the process of gaining access to clients, finding those who matched the sample criteria was not easy because of the limited number of suitable people. However, eventually, fourteen interviewees were reached from a list of twenty-five candidates.

Those fourteen interviewees were individuals who interacted directly with international consultants; their positions were right below top management who they reported to directly. The other eleven candidates were from top management and provided initial agreements but were not interviewed for two main reasons. Firstly, they failed to allocate time for the interviewer despite agreeing to an interview of not more than 75 minutes. The

challenge of managing time constraints was clear when one of these candidates aborted the interview after only 13 minutes on being called for an urgent meeting. The second reason, raised by two of the fourteen interviewees, was that top management was concerned that the outcome of the research might expose weaknesses, malpractice, or misconduct in the use of consulting services by top management. This explains why other managers and senior staff did not respond to requests or politely excused themselves from participation. This experience provided early indications about clients' behaviour and issues such as shame of failure and hidden agendas, which were evident in the data collected.

6.5.3.3 Access to Consultants

Access to consultants was also arranged through personal contacts, which took three approaches. Firstly, the researcher had relationships with international consultants who managed to arrange introductions to other international consultants with experience of Saudi clients. Secondly, the researcher was introduced to international consultants in Saudi Arabia through clients with whom those consultants have worked or have been introduced. Consultants agreed to participate as a favour to their clients in order to enhance the existing relationship or to establish a new one. However, the researcher was aware that the feedback received from those consultants might avoid jeopardising the favour or the desired impression on the client. Thirdly, Saudi nationals who work at international consulting firms introduced the researcher to international consultants at their firms. The introduction to those consultants was mediated by the fact that the researcher is conducting research into a sensitive subject the consultants seemed to be interested to know more about. Those consultants were motivated to speak because they experienced the influence of culture on their work on a daily basis and, therefore, wanted to share their views, which they cannot communicate to their clients. They were also driven by the fact that they want to educate the Saudi market about how to deal with them as international consultants.

6.6 Data Analysis

In their discussion about the analysis of qualitative data, Glaser and Strauss (2012) seem to be very flexible and avoid offering any systematic approach to conducting analysis on qualitative data. They suggest that the analyst should focus on "generating theoretical ideas, new categories and their properties, hypotheses and interrelated hypothesis" while "constantly redesigning and reintegrating his theoretical notions as he reviews his material" (p. 101). Although this approach seems to be flexible enough to allow the researcher to use his judgement on important details related to the impact of culture, and his implicit understanding of his own culture, it is also necessary to impose some order onto such flexibility. Therefore, the researcher has adopted the approach proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), which suggests three procedural stages to analyse qualitative data—namely, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

* *Open Coding*: “The process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 61). This process produces concepts that can be grouped and transformed into categories (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman and Bell, 2011).

* *Axial Coding*: “a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 96). According to Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 578), “this is done by linking codes to contexts, to consequences, to patterns of interaction, and to causes”.

* *Selective Coding*: “The procedure of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in further refinement and development” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 116). According to Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 578), what is a so-called ‘core category’ is “the central focus around which other categories are integrated. It is the storyline that frames the account”.

According to Glaser and Strauss (2012), the different grounded theory stages the researcher follows during qualitative data analysis should transform from one to another. This means that the researcher should understand that he/she might be working at a certain stage and eventually finds him/herself transformed to the next one. This is indeed what happened during data analysis in this study. It was clear that the researcher should begin with open coding with the data split into four categories identified from the literature, namely culture, knowledge, power, and language. The main objective of splitting the data was to make it more manageable for an organised data analysis. Nonetheless, the researcher did not feel that he completed the open coding until the concepts and categories had been identified, and the relationships between them had begun to develop, which is part of the axial coding. Then, the researcher realised that further axial coding needed to be conducted on the output of the open coding. At this stage, the researcher placed the output of the open coding on the conceptual framework to analyse the datasets according to the different stages of the consulting activity, namely the stage before the consulting engagement, the stage during the consulting engagement, and the stage after the consulting engagement. The aim of axial coding was to develop clear and verified codes that explain the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international consultants and clients at the three different stages. Ultimately, the researcher was able to identify the core category from which a clear grounded theory could be formulated through so-called selective coding.

Therefore, in this chapter, it is suggested that data analysis was conducted according to the above three stages, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. During these stages, the researcher did not use any data analysis software such as Nvivo but relied on Microsoft Word to read the transcripts, highlight excerpts, search for specific words and sentences, and organise the derived excerpts, themes, into tables.

The following three sub-sections explain how the data analysis was conducted at each of these stages.

6.6.1 First Order of Analysis: Open Coding

At this stage of data analysis, the primary data had been studied. Grounded theory was adopted by trying to develop an overarching idea about the important dimensions through which the data could be studied. Therefore, the researcher conducted an exhaustive review on every interview to capture the overall narrative in each interview. This allowed the researcher to grasp an understanding about the dominant ideas or narratives that clients and consultants tend to share. It was evident that those dominant ideas are pressing matters that interviewees seek to share when they had the chance.

Therefore, the researcher thought that those ideas must be considered in the analysis. For instance, one of the interviewee seems to focus on that fact that he perceives Saudi culture as aggressive and unfriendly with foreigners. This perception led him to behave with an extreme caution that he described as ‘walking on eggs’. This perception made him feel uncomfortable in his experience in Saudi Arabia, which affected his motivation and willingness to remain the country for the entire period of the project. This dominant view seems to appear in different subjects covered in the interview where the interviewee made many of his answers around his negative perception about culture and the reflection of that on his consulting experience. Table (20) contains samples of the main narratives shared by different interviewees.

Table 20: Main Narratives Shared by Interviewees

Interviewee	Narrative
Check Hardcopy	Negative Perceptions about Culture Lead to Caution and Discomfort
Check Hardcopy	Showing Cultural Similarities Facilitates Consulting Work
Check Hardcopy	Showing Cultural Similarities Facilitates Consulting Work
Check Hardcopy	Different Cultures Change the Person
Check Hardcopy	Consultants Exploit the Weak Contracting System
Check Hardcopy	Consultants are Enemies
Check Hardcopy	Consultants are Partners
Check Hardcopy	Junior Clients can do better Jobs than consultants

Then, after developing an overarching understanding about the main narratives shared by the interviewees, the researcher considered the research question, the literature review, and the conceptual framework in order to specify the main categories into which the data could be split. The interview data was split into four broad categories derived from the literature review and the conceptual framework. These are: culture, knowledge, power and language. Therefore, at this stage of analysis, the researcher focused firstly on, identifying the excerpts that offer insights about each of these four components, and secondly, on understanding the relationship between them and other categories.

This was complicated because the researcher had to deal with a substantial amount of data. More importantly, the interrelations between the broad components (culture, knowledge, power, language), meant that although the data had been split to deal with one component, it was extremely difficult to identify and categorise excerpts that offer insights about that component only. In fact, most of the excerpts include multidimensional relationships that offer insights about at least two components. This is because the research question itself seeks to study the influence of *culture* in relation to *knowledge* exchange and in relation to *power* and *language* which are operative within those client-consultant relationships.

This stage was done manually and iteratively, and the researcher read through the transcripts and highlighted each dataset that belongs to each component in a different colour. This allowed the researcher to grasp an initial understanding about the data and see where the categories overlapped. It also helped with the development of initial relationships between categories that emerge from those overlaps. Then, each dataset was flagged with its category name. Datasets with overlapping categories were flagged with the most dominant category. For instance, if a dataset contained both power and language but power seemed to be the key theme, then that data set was flagged under the category of power, with a note to indicate its link to the language category. The following subsections elaborate on these broad categories.

The analysis at this stage resulted in the following table (21) that contains all themes and codes identified for all components.

Table 21: All themes and Codes Identified for All Components Resulting from Open Coding

THEMES		CODES	
Experience Facilitates Knowledge Exchange		Culture Impacts Interpretation / Impact on Level Understanding	CULTURE
Cultural Factors		Culture Impact on Behaviour / Impact on Quality of Interaction	
1. Openness			
2. Motivation			
3. Ability to Socialize			
4. Trust towards Foreigners			
5. Role of Emotions			
6. Gender Issues			
7. Punctuality			
8. Sense of Urgency			
9. Shame of Failure			
10. Risk Taking			
11. Bureaucracy			
1. Legitimizing personal views / decisions.	2. Addressing personal interests of the powerful is the main goal	Priority is to personal interest of the powerful	POWER
Locating power sources facilitates interactions for consultants		Locating power sources facilitates interactions for consultants	
Powerful people should be handled with extreme care		Powerful people should be handled extremely carefully	
Hidden Agenda		Hidden Agenda	
1. Consultants as doers instead of thinkers.	2. Slave treatment	Status-based Relationships	
1. Hierarchy increases individualism	2. Hierarchy leads to silence	Hierarchy Issues	
3. Hierarchy affects access			
4. Privilege seeking through climbing hierarchy			
5. Hierarchy contains ineffective but powerful members			
6. Diplomacy is effective with hierarchy			
1. Following Communication protocols for approval	2. Interference with implementation of development of advice	Approving advice is subject to delay or blockage by powerful members	
3. Change among powerful members			
4. Battle between top and middle management			

Table 22 Contd.: Themes and Codes Identified for All Components Resulting from Open Coding

THEMES		CODES	
1. One-to-one sessions		Knowledge Transfer Methods	KNOWLEDGE
2. One-hour sessions (Boredom)			
3. Dialog (Partnership) VS Command			
1. Not knowing the requirements & Scope		Knowledge Development Challenges	
2. Hands-Off approach by clients results in less cooperation.			
3. Clients want the latest fashion regardless of applicability or need.			
4. Consultants are expected to advice and execute			
		1. Translations to Arabic.	LANGUAGE CONSIDERATIONS
		2. Documentation (Minutes of Meetings)	
		3. Hiring Locals to Explain Meanings	
		4. Body and Eye Language	

The following subsections explain the process used to analyse the data in relation to these four broad categories. The data was analysed in its entirety, and excerpts were cross-checked several times in order to split them into the above categories.

The Category of Culture

The first order of data analysis on the dataset of culture resulted in themes and codes presented in table 22. The excerpts that represent these themes will follow after the discussion about the emergence of these themes and codes from this level of analysis.

Table 23: Themes and Codes Related to Culture

CULTURE		
Themes		Codes
Experience Governs level of Understanding		Culture Impacts Interpretation
Cultural Factors		Culture Impacts Behaviour / Impact on Quality of Interaction
1. Openness		
2. Motivation		
3. Ability to Socialize		
4. Development of Trust towards Foreigners		
5. Role of Emotions		
6. Gender Issues		
7. Punctuality		
8. Sense of Urgency		
9. Shame of Failure		
10. Risk Taking		
11. Bureaucracy		

The first order of analysis focused on identifying cultural elements that affect the interpretive interaction between clients and consultants within which knowledge is exchanged. This analysis produced twelve themes (openness, motivation, ability to socialise, development of trust towards foreigners, role of emotions, gender issues, punctuality, sense of urgency, shame of failure, risk taking, bureaucracy and length of experience). Further analysis on the generated themes led to some aggregations between themes that seem to be related to each other, or where one seems to explain the other. For instance, the theme of (risk-taking) seems to explain the theme (shame-of-failure). This is because people seem to be unwilling to take risk because they are afraid of the feeling of shame that is associated with failure in the Saudi culture. Similarly, the theme (ability to socialise) and the theme (development of trust) were aggregated. Initially, these two themes were identified because of the key words (trust) and (socialising) which did not seem to be related at the beginning of the analysis. However, further analysis on excerpts related to these two codes suggested that they were related because socialising is a method of developing trust.

During this further analysis, themes such as motivation were found to be more common in the dataset of power. Therefore, it was removed from this dataset. Although this theme is related to category of culture, its relationship with the category of power seems to be more dominant because motivation seems to be greatly affected by the actions of the powerful over those with less power.

After aggregating the interrelated themes, another process of categorisation was conducted in the researcher's effort to make more sense of the data. The main purpose of this categorisation was to aggregate the themes under more general codes. This revealed that some of the identified themes offer insights about how culture influences *behaviour* while others offer insights about how it influences *interpretations*. Therefore, two codes were generated, namely *culture Impact behaviour* and *culture Impact interpretation*.

Under the code of behaviour, the themes that represent cultural factors that affect the ways people do things were listed. This is because it was clear to the researcher that cultural elements such as openness, ability to socialise, gender issues, taking things personally (emotions), and punctuality are behavioural that affect the quality of interaction. People tend to behave differently in relation to time, emotion, gender, and transparency, which may cause conflict between people who come from different cultures with different perceptions about these elements.

On the other hand, under the code *interpretations*, the data analysis generated a unique theme that seem to be related to how people's experience which include knowledge about each other's cultures influence their interpretations of the knowledge they exchange with

each other. This was apparent in the words that informants used to explain their views about the role of their knowledge about each other's culture in their interpretive interactions with others, such as 'understanding', 'meanings', 'interpretations' and 'misunderstanding'. The excerpts extracted under this unique theme suggest that the knowledge people have about each other's culture influences the extent to which they understand the knowledge they exchange with each other.

Table (23) in Appendix B presents an example of excerpts, themes and codes that explain the above thematic table (22).

The Category of Power

The first order of data analysis on the dataset of power resulted in themes and codes is presented in table 24. The excerpts that represent these themes will follow after the discussion about the emergence of these themes and codes from this level of analysis.

Table 24: Themes and Codes of the Dataset of Power

POWER	
Themes	Codes
1. Legitimizing personal views / decisions.	Priority is to personal interest of the powerful
2. Addressing personal interests of the powerful is the main goal	
Locating power sources facilitates interactions for consultants	Locating power sources facilitates interactions for consultants
Powerful people should be handled with an extreme careful manner	Powerful people should be handled with an extreme careful manner
Hidden Agenda	Hidden Agenda
1. Consultants as doers instead of thinkers.	Status-based Relationships
2. Slave treatment	
1. Hierarchy increases individualism	Hierarchy Issues
2. Hierarchy leads to silence	
3. Hierarchy affects access	
4. Privilege seeking through climbing hierarchy	
5. Hierarchy contain in-effective powerful members	
6. Diplomacy is effective with hierarchy	
1. Following Communication protocols for approval	Approving advice is subject to delay or blockage by powerful members
2. Interference with implementation or development of advice	
3. Change among powerful members	
4. Battle between top and middle management	

As we move from one dataset to the other, the data becomes more organised and the analysis takes a different form. This is because the researcher begins to relate to previously identified excerpts, themes, and codes. This can be seen from the angles of discussion made about the first order of analysis on every dataset.

The analysis on the dataset of power revealed eighteen themes and seven codes. Some of the identified themes represent independent codes by themselves, such as *hidden agenda*. This is because this theme does not seem to be strongly related to other themes while there is enough data that makes this theme a code by itself. Moreover, having analysed the dataset of culture previously, this allowed the researcher to relate some of the new themes identified in the dataset of power to existing themes identified in the dataset of culture. For instance, identifying the theme of (lack of openness) in the dataset of culture allowed the researcher to relate this theme to the new theme of (hidden agenda) in the dataset of power in his effort to make more sense of the impact of these two themes. This process

allowed the researcher to begin developing and understanding the relationship between different components at an early stage.

Nevertheless, it was clear from an early stage of the analysis that power has a significant impact on consulting projects in Saudi Arabia. The most dominant impression the researcher had from the data at this first order of analysis was that there is a strong sense of personal interests reported by clients and consultants. The challenge was to identify more specific areas of focus through which the researcher could understand how the personal interests of the powerful members impact the consulting project. Therefore, the eighteen themes had been categorised under seven codes where each code offers a relatively different insight about the impact of power.

The first code consists of the themes that assert that the main priority for consulting projects is to address the interests of the powerful members. Two themes were listed under this code. The first deals with the excerpts that discuss the need for powerful members to construct legitimacy for their personal views and decisions using consultancy. The second deals with various personal interests of powerful members (hidden and disclosed), which determine the main goal of the consulting project. The criterion that best distinguishes the excerpts about addressing the personal interests of the powerful members is that they refer to the fact that those interests must be accommodated.

The second code contains a single theme that seems to offer an independent insight about a single issue which is about locating power sources at the client side. Because of the dominant role of the personal interests of powerful members, clients and consultants reported that it is important to locate power sources in order to assess the importance of feedback and priority of requests. The reason behind categorising this insight under one code is because it has enough data that allows it to stand alone as a single critical point.

The third code also contains a single theme that seems to offer an independent insight about a single issue which is about acknowledging the power status of powerful clients. The importance of acknowledging the power status implies dealing with them elegantly. This is because powerful members seem to take great pride in their role and influence. Therefore, not acknowledging their power might be perceived as insulting and lead to severe reactions that may result in the termination of the consulting project.

The fourth code also contains a single theme that seems to offer an independent insight about a single issue which is the hidden agenda possessed by powerful members. It was reported that there is a strong sense of hidden agenda that makes knowing the real requirements problematic and affects the quality and authenticity of the exchanged knowledge and, consequently, the quality or approvability of advice.

The fifth code deals with the fact that some Saudi clients seem to perceive their relationship with clients to be based on status. This might be because of the intensive role of power. Two themes related to this issue were reported. Firstly, it was highlighted that Saudi clients view their consultants as doers more than thinkers. This led clients to take a hands-off approach in their work with consultants, while consultants think and do all the work. Secondly, because of the strong sense of pride among powerful members, clients seem to treat consultants as 'slaves', 'butlers' or 'worshippers' - words used by informants.

The sixth code contains issues related to the fact the Saudi work places are highly hierarchical. There are six themes categorised under this code. Those themes related to difficulties in accessing different levels of management, increasing levels of individualism among those who are part of the hierarchy, hierarchy increases silence among those without power, the desire to increase privilege among members of the hierarchy, and the presence ineffective people within the hierarchy affects the consulting work. Lastly, it was reported that diplomacy seems to be an effective approach to dealing with hierarchy issues.

The seventh code contains themes that deal with the fact that approving advice is subject to delay or blockage by powerful members. It was reported that there are issues related to the impact of power on the approval and implementation of the consulting advice. There are four themes that constitute this code. First, there are slow communication protocols that need to be followed to interact with higher management. These protocols lead to delays or complete blockage for advice approval and implementation. Second, there is deliberate interference by power members with the implementation process to alter change for their personal benefit. Third, there seem to be frequent change among powerful members. This means that any change in powerful members is a change in the interests and requirements. This leads to delays or blockage of advice approval or implementation if the new powerful members do not share the same interests with the previous ones. Fourth, there seems to be a battle between middle and top management, which is mainly driven by the personal interests of power members in both levels. Table 25 in appendix B presents an example of excerpts, themes and codes that explain the above thematic table 24.

The Category of Knowledge

The first order of data analysis on the dataset of knowledge resulted in the themes and code presented in table 26.

Table 25: Themes and Codes of the Dataset of Knowledge

KNOWLEDGE	
Themes	Codes
1. One-to-one sessions	Knowledge Transfer Methods
2. One-hour sessions (Boredom)	
3. Dialog (Partnership) VS Command	
1. Not knowing the requirements & scope	Knowledge Development Challenges
2. Hands-Off approach by clients results in less cooperation.	
3. Clients want the latest fashion regardless of applicability or need.	
4. Consultants are expected to advise and execute	

The first order of analysis on the dataset of knowledge revealed seven broad themes (not knowing the requirements, hands-off approach by clients, wanting the latest regardless of applicability, consultants are expected to advice and execute, one-to-one knowledge exchange sessions, one-hour knowledge exchange sessions, dialog vs. command). Further analysis on these identified themes suggests that they can be grouped under two codes, namely knowledge development challenges, and knowledge transfer methods. This is because the analysis revealed that there are some excerpts that discuss specific knowledge transfer methods while others discuss challenges that affect knowledge development in these interpretive interactions.

Under the code of knowledge transfer methods, three methods were identified. Firstly, it was reported that knowledge transfer between clients and consultants should be conducted on a one-to-one basis, which was found to be effective by clients and consultants. Secondly, it was reported that knowledge transfer between clients and consultants should be conducted within one hour to avoid boredom. Thirdly, the data analysis at this stage revealed contradicting feedback from clients and consultants. The contradiction was that international consultants believed that the most effective knowledge transfer method with Saudi clients was order and command. This means that consultants should tell clients what to do instead of working with them and explaining to them what should be done and why.

On the other hand, clients perceive that consultants are outsiders, and since they do not accept orders from outsiders any command from international consultants would not be obeyed. This contradiction has been noted for the second order of analysis. This is because understanding this contradiction requires consideration of the component of power where the data seem to suggest that consultants empower themselves with the power of the decision-makers who hired them. Therefore, they feel they can act as if they are the decision makers themselves.

Under the code of knowledge development challenges, four key interrelated challenges seem to concern clients and consultants. Firstly, consultants and junior clients reported that there is an issue with the clarity of requirements and scope of work. The analysis of the data under this theme suggests that there might be power-related issues such as hidden agenda, which may explain why consultants and junior clients communicated challenges around clarity of requirement and scope.

Secondly, it was reported by clients and consultants that there is an issue with the level of engagement. This resulted in what has been described by consultants as a 'hands-off' approach by clients. Further analysis on the data under this theme suggests that it might be related to issues of motivation and status-based relationship, which were previously identified in the dataset of power.

Thirdly, it was reported by clients and consultants that clients always ask for the latest fashion. While clients reported that they ask for the latest to set their expectations high and to expose the consultants' awareness about latest practices, consultants seem to perceive that clients ask for the latest fashions because they have enough financial resources. Further analysis on the dataset under this theme suggests that this issue might be related to the shame of failure and the need for powerful members to construct legitimacy. Lastly, it was reported by consultants and clients that consultants are expected to advise and to execute their advice. Although this theme seems to be related to the issue of clarity of scope and perhaps to the status-based relationship, at this stage of analysis, this issue appeared as clients and consultants have different ways of doing things. However, this theme was flagged with the above relationships for further analysis to be conducted in the second order of analysis. Table 27 in appendix B presents an example of excerpts, themes and codes that explain the above thematic table 26.

The Category of Language

The first order of data analysis on the dataset of language resulted in the following table that presents the main codes. Because there seems to be four themes with enough data that allows every theme to be an independent code by itself. Table (28) presents only four codes which emerged from four themes as well.

Table 26: Codes Emerging from Dataset of Language

LANGUAGE CONSIDERATIONS	
Codes	
1.	Translations to Arabic.
2.	Documentation (Minutes of Meetings)
3.	Hiring Locals to Explain Meanings
4.	Body and Eye Language

It was assumed by the researcher that language would have a critical impact on knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients. This assumption was based upon the fact that people who speak different languages are more likely to experience misunderstandings (Stead, 2004). The data analysis on the dataset of language suggests that the role of language on knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients does not seem to constitute a significant impact. This is because there are four considerations that clients and consultants seem to take into account, which reduces the likelihood of misunderstanding. Firstly, it was reported by clients and consultants that translation seems to facilitate the interaction between the two parties. Secondly, it was suggested that documentation such as minutes of meetings and email seem to clarify misunderstandings before things become complicated. Thirdly, it was reported that clients and consultants find it mandatory to have a local team member who can explain and communicate implicit meanings between clients and consultants. Lastly, it was reported by both parties that body language can be an effective way to clarify input, but may also be a cause of misunderstanding.

For the second order of analysis, the researcher aggregated the language considerations under the code of (knowledge transfer methods) in the dataset of *knowledge* since all these considerations can be regarded as methods of knowledge transfer. Consequently, all the codes derived from language became themes aggregated under a new code that deals with

language considerations. Table 29 presents an example of excerpts, themes and codes that explain the above thematic table 28.

6.6.2 Second Order of Analysis: Axial Coding

The second order of analysis focuses on conducting advanced axial analysis on the output of the first order of analysis. Since the relationships between the main categories and units have begun to appear more orderly, the researcher focused on the outputs of the first order of analysis to develop deeper understanding to systematically explore and explain the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between clients and consultants. At this stage, as suggested by Saunders et al. (2009), the researcher began to identify more clearly what is happening and why, the influential factors on the phenomenon under investigation, how those factors are managed within the context under examination, and the outcome of those contexts and situations.

At this stage of axial coding, the researcher began to analyse and compare the organisation of data with the conceptual framework. The objective of this step was to place the data analysis into an organised framework that allowed for more rigorous explanation of the phenomenon.

The proposed conceptual framework suggests that the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international consultants and local clients can be studied at three stages of the interaction, namely the hiring stage, the advice development stage, and the advice implementation stage. This is because each stage seems to have different characteristics and, therefore, different angles from which the impact of culture can be studied. For instance, while the first stage is driven by perceptions and impressions, the second stage is driven by interpretations of explicit and implicit cultural elements that govern meaning of the exchanged knowledge. This implies that the researcher's focus in the first stage should be on the impact of culture on presentations and embedded perceptions, and in the second stage on the ability of individuals to recognize and adapt to the cultural elements driving the behaviour and interpretations of every party. Thus, the second order of analysis allowed the researcher to focus more on analyzing the output of the first order of analysis in relation to specific subjects derived from the literature such as issues related to impression management and transferability of knowledge management tools.

Table (31) presents the data structure for the findings. It depicts six main dimensions that emerged from the (Axial Coding) second order of the data analysis (second column from the right). Additionally, it presents the constituent second order codes and first order concepts that emerged from the codes of the first order of analysis (first and second column from the left). It is important to highlight here that some of the concepts that emerged from the open coding had been aggregated and the rhetorical descriptions of others have been slightly adjusted to fit the context in which they have been placed in the second order of analysis. All this was a result of the second order of analysis or (Axial Coding). For instance, all the themes identified under the category of language had been aggregated under one theme called (Considerations Related to Knowledge Transfer Methods). Those aggregated themes

were integrated under the dataset of Knowledge and the dataset of language had been eliminated, as explained earlier. Moreover, some of the themes had been replicated in more than one stage of the interaction. This is because those these keep appearing in those stages when the data was placed on the conceptual framework. Nevertheless, the following sections will elaborate more on the emergence of those themes and codes.

The overarching emergent dimensions had been placed within the stage of consulting interaction in which they are likely to be operative. At the hiring stage, the impact of culture can be explained through two dimensions: (1) The Impact of Prior Knowledge on Presentation, (2) Impact of Power on the Hiring Decision. At the advice development stage, the impact of culture can also be explained through two dimensions: (1) Accommodating Culture as System of Explicit and Implicit Norms Values, and Assumption, (2) Accommodating Power Dynamics at Client Side. At the advice implementation stage, the impact of culture can be explained through two dimensions as well, (1) Clash of Implicit Perceptions about implementation task, (2) Appropriation of Clients' Power Structures.

At every stage of the consulting engagement, the researcher paid close attention to the role and relationship of culture, knowledge, power and language within every code. For instance, in his effort to explain the impact of *prior knowledge* of the country on the consultant's presentation at the hiring stage, the researcher studied the impact of prior knowledge of *culture*, *power dynamics* and *language* to understand and explain how the impact on knowledge takes place. This means that the researcher operated on a multidimensional basis to understand and explain the phenomenon. This required an intensive and iterative cross-checking of all themes and codes from the first order of analysis to the second order.

Moreover, to strengthen this type of analysis, the researcher used personal memos and notes made during the interviews that explain certain reactions or observations that cannot be audio recorded. Also, the researcher returned to some interviewees to gain further feedback on some conclusions. This approach allowed the researcher to confirm the emerging findings as he progressed with the analysis.

Table 27: Main Dimensions Emerging from Axial Coding

First Order Concepts	Codes for Second Order of Analysis (Axial Coding)	Aggregate / Overarching Theoretical Dimensions	The Hiring Stage		
Previous Experience Affects Marketing Strategy	Prior Knowledge	Impact of Prior Knowledge on Presentation		The Hiring Stage	
Reputation is a Key Element in the Hiring Process					
Knowledge about National Culture can be Misleading					
Trust Towards Foreigners is Variable					
Issues Related Unknown Scope of Work					
Issues Related to Different Expectations					
Considerations Related Knowledge Transfer Methods					
Bureaucracy Slows Decision-Making	Power Impact	Impact of Power on the Hiring Decision			The Hiring Stage
Seeking Legitimacy Can be Exploited					
Addressing Personal Interests is Confusing					
Locating Power Sources is Important					

Table 28 contd.: Main Dimensions Emerging from Axial Coding

First Order Concepts	Codes for Second Order of Analysis (Axial Coding)	Aggregate / Overarching Theoretical Dimensions	
Gender Issues	Gender Issue	Accommodating Culture as System of Explicit and Implicit Norms Values, Assumption	The Advice Development Stage
Motivation	Intensive Role of Emotions		
Shame of Failure			
Risk Taking			
Ability to Socialize	Un-willingness to socialize		
Trust Development			
Punctuality	Lack of Sense of Urgency		
Sense of Urgency			
Addressing Personal Interests is Important	Dealing with Powerful Clients	Accommodating Power Dynamics at Client Side	
Acknowledging Power is Important			
Interference of Powerful Members Damages Advice			
Hidden Agenda Complicates Knowledge Development			
Clients' hands-off is Confusing for Consultants			
Considerations Related to Knowledge Transfer Methods			
Locating Power Sources is Important	Dealing with Powerless Clients		
Clients' hands-off is Confusing for Consultants			
Considerations Related Knowledge Transfer Methods			
Issues Related to Unknown Scope of Work	Different Perceptions about responsibilities and expectations	Clash of Implicit Perceptions about implementation task	The Advice Implementation Stage
Issues Related to Different Expectations			
Clients' hands-off is Confusing for Consultants			
Considerations Related to Knowledge Transfer Methods			
Interference of Powerful in Implementation lead to Clashes	Dealing with Powerful	Appropriation of Clients' Power Structures	
Approving Advice Through Hierarchy is Problematic			
Hidden Agenda Complicates Advice Implementation			

The following sub-sections present brief summaries about the main findings, thematic trees, and tables that present the excerpts and codes that constitute the above themes and sub-themes.

6.6.2.1 The First Stage: The Hiring Stage

It was suggested in the conceptual framework chapter that individuals who have different cultural backgrounds tend to possess different understandings, assumptions, images and expectations about others. Those different assumptions and perceptions influence the ways people present themselves to others, and the ways they interpret the presentations of others (Goffman, 1959). Also, it was suggested that language plays a significant role in the interpretive interaction between individuals who come from different cultures and speak different languages. This is because cultures tend to associate relatively different meanings with words, sentences and gestures (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 2001; Elder-Vass, 2012). Therefore, the researcher investigated how the cultural background of individuals influences the ways they communicate and interpret the different forms of knowledge they exchange with others at the hiring stage.

Having considered the above assumptions, there was a parallel and more general question about how culture influences knowledge exchange at the hiring stage. The reason for this question was that it is part of the aim to investigate the influence of culture on knowledge exchange at all stages. By asking this question the researcher could look at the data with an open mind regardless of the assumptions made in the conceptual framework. This was important because assumptions made in the conceptual framework might not have been present in data. Thus, having this question in mind meant that the researcher was open to new insights that might not have been anticipated. Therefore, considering this question implied that the researcher needed to be open about the forms of knowledge that clients and consultants exchange at this stage, how this exchange of knowledge takes place, and how culture influences this exchange of knowledge.

As will be presented in various tables in this section, the data affirms that, at the hiring stage, clients and consultants exchange different forms of knowledge. Those forms of knowledge are related to clients' situations and expectations, and to consultants' superiority, suitability and expertise in the subject matter. The objective of this knowledge exchange process is the establishment of the client-consultant relationship. The data analysis suggests that the influence of culture on knowledge exchange at this stage can be seen through two components, namely *prior knowledge* and *power*. The language component did not appear to be influential at this stage. This was evident from the first

order of analysis where the language considerations were combined with the datasets of knowledge transfer methods which take place in the advice development stage.

The following figure 7 demonstrates the mains themes and codes through which the influence of culture on knowledge exchange at this stage is explained. Figure 7 is also presented in a form of table, in table (31).

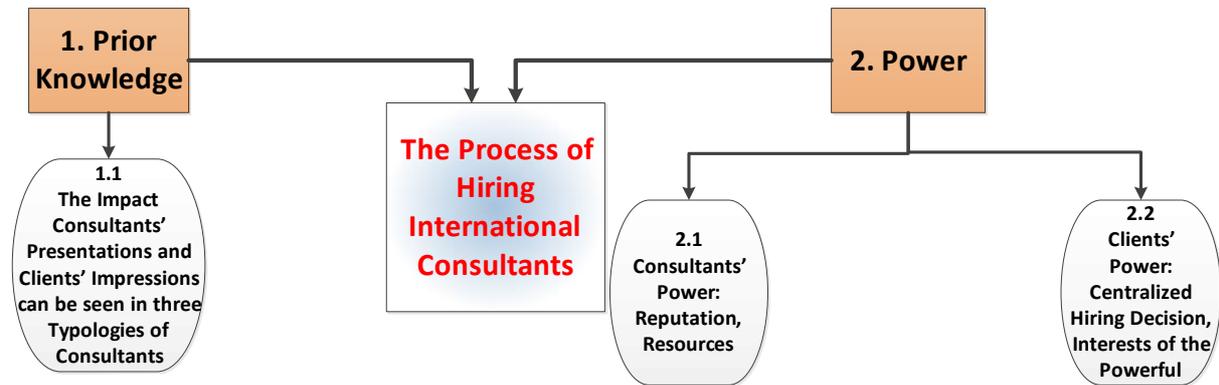


Figure 7: The Themes and Codes that Explain the Impact of Culture on Knowledge Exchange at the Hiring Stage

Table 29: The Themes and Codes that Explain the Impact of Culture on Knowledge Exchange at the Hiring Stage

Themes	Codes	Stage
1.1 Consultants' Prior Knowledge Determines the Extent to which they Develop Culturally-Appropriate Presentations	1. Prior Knowledge	The Process of Hiring International Consultants
2.1 Consultants' Power: Reputation, Resources	2. Power	
2.2 Clients' Power: Centralized Hiring Decision, Interests of the Powerful		

The Component of Prior Knowledge

The prior knowledge component was derived from the theme (Experience Facilitates Knowledge Exchange) identified in the culture category in the first order of analysis. The data categorized under this theme suggests that the longer the interactive experience, the better people understand each other. This experience is, in fact, a form of implicit

knowledge that people acquire about each other over time and through interpretive interactions. This experience is what we called 'prior knowledge' and constitutes a key theme in studying the influence of culture on knowledge exchange at the hiring stage. The stock of prior knowledge that people have about each other determines their ability to design and communicate presentations that are impressive and appreciated by the other side. Moreover, this prior knowledge determines the extent to which people can perform correct interpretations about the presentations they receive from others.

As the stock of prior knowledge determines the extent to which people are able to communicate impressive presentations and correctly interpret the presentations of others, three codes were listed to cover the themes of the stock of prior knowledge. These are: *limited stock of prior knowledge*, *considerable stock of inaccurate/negative prior knowledge*, and *considerable stock of accurate prior knowledge*. For instance, those with a considerable stock of inaccurate prior knowledge of Saudi culture are more likely to develop and communicate culturally-inappropriate presentations. On the contrary, those with a considerable stock of accurate prior knowledge of Saudi culture are more likely to develop and communicate culturally-appropriate presentations that leave a positive impression on Saudi clients and increase the chance of forming a business relationship.

As presented in table 32 of appendix B, different themes constitute every code. The three codes suggest that there are different stocks and levels of accuracy of prior knowledge that impact clients' impressions and, consequently, their decision to hire consultants.

The Component of Power

It was apparent during the first order of analysis that power seems to have a persistent impact at all stages of the consulting engagement. The first order of analysis revealed that, at the hiring stage, the clients' power as decision-makers driven by their personal interests and need to construct legitimacy for their views and objectives seems to be the only dominant power. The second order of analysis added more depth to the understanding of how clients' power is operative at this stage. The second order of analysis also revealed that this stage is not only subject to the clients' power and to decision makers driven by their personal interests and desire to construct legitimacy for their views. Rather, this stage is also subject to an embedded and overwhelming sense of power on the part of consultants. The data suggests that consultants feel overwhelmingly empowered by their organisation's resources and international experience, and this may lead consultants to rely completely on their personal international experience and organisational resources to impress any client from any culture.

This also means the hiring process is subject to manoeuvring between clients and consultants whereby clients try to use their decision-making power to increase their benefit in the contract, while consultants use their superiority and experience to maximise theirs.

Careful control on the other side's power features has a significant impact on the hiring process.

Thus, the dataset that deals with the impact of power at this stage was divided into two parts: one deals with clients' power, and the other with consultants' power. The dataset that deals with clients' power offers two codes. The first suggests that clients might be driven by self-centred decision-making, through which they seek to acquire personal benefits. These can range from hidden agenda such as implicit ego issues and showing off, to climbing the hierarchal ladder of power. The second code suggests that clients might be driven by their need to construct legitimacy for their views and decisions. They seek legitimacy that protects them from the shame of failure and the blame of stakeholders. It is important to highlight here that understanding the relationship between power, self-centred decision-making, legitimacy construction, and shame of failure would not had been achieved had the researcher not operated on a multidimensional basis in his second order of analysis.

Secondly, the dataset that deals with the consultants' power offers a single code that deals with the consultants' overwhelming sense of power. This code has been divided into two themes. The first suggests that consultants might be overwhelmed by the power and impact of their international experience on the clients' decision. This overwhelming sense of power might prevent consultants from recognising and acknowledging their clients' power, and this may lead to a negative reaction from clients. The second theme suggests that consultants might be overwhelmed by the power and impact of their organisational resources. This might prevent consultants from recognising and acknowledging their clients' power, and clients might not necessarily find these organisational resources culturally-appropriate. Identifying the impact of the implicit sense of power possessed by consultants would not have been achieved had the researcher not paid close attention to the excerpts, context and memos he previously made.

Table (33) in appendix B presents the codes of clients' power and consultants' power, along with the themes that constitute these findings.

6.6.2.2 The Second Stage: The Advice Development Stage

It was suggested in the conceptual framework chapter that, at this stage, all forms of knowledge (implicit and explicit, cultural and managerial) are exchanged by language (Sturdy et al., 2009). People are expected to interact and interpret signals, symbols and behaviours, and this results in continuous adjustments of key elements in their cognitive systems such as meanings, assumptions, expectations, images and impressions. The adjustment continues to take place as long as the interaction is ongoing (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). At this stage, clients and consultants are not only expected to adjust their

preliminary understandings, assumptions, images and expectations, but also, they are expected to challenge each other with new input. In this context, it is expected that clients will challenge their consultants' understanding and consideration of their situations or problems. Similarly, consultants are expected to challenge their clients about what they should do to solve the issue. This sort of challenge is expected to unleash the power component, whereby each party seeks to protect its interests and maximise its payoff from this relationship (Fincham 2002; Sturdy et al., 2009).

The data suggests that, at the advice development stage, the component of culture and power are operative. In terms of culture, the data suggests that there are explicit and implicit cultural elements that affect the interpretive interaction between clients and consultants, which, consequently, affect the development of culturally-conditioned advice. In terms of power, the data suggests that there are different power dynamics on the client side that affect the development of advice that addresses the interests of powerful members. It is suggested that the experience of international consultants determines their ability to recognise the implicit and explicit cultural and power elements, and to apply suitable corrective actions and develop culturally-conditioned advice to accommodate them. The following figure 8 demonstrates the mains themes and codes through which the influence of culture on advice development at this stage is explained. Figure 8 is also presented in a form of table, in table (34).

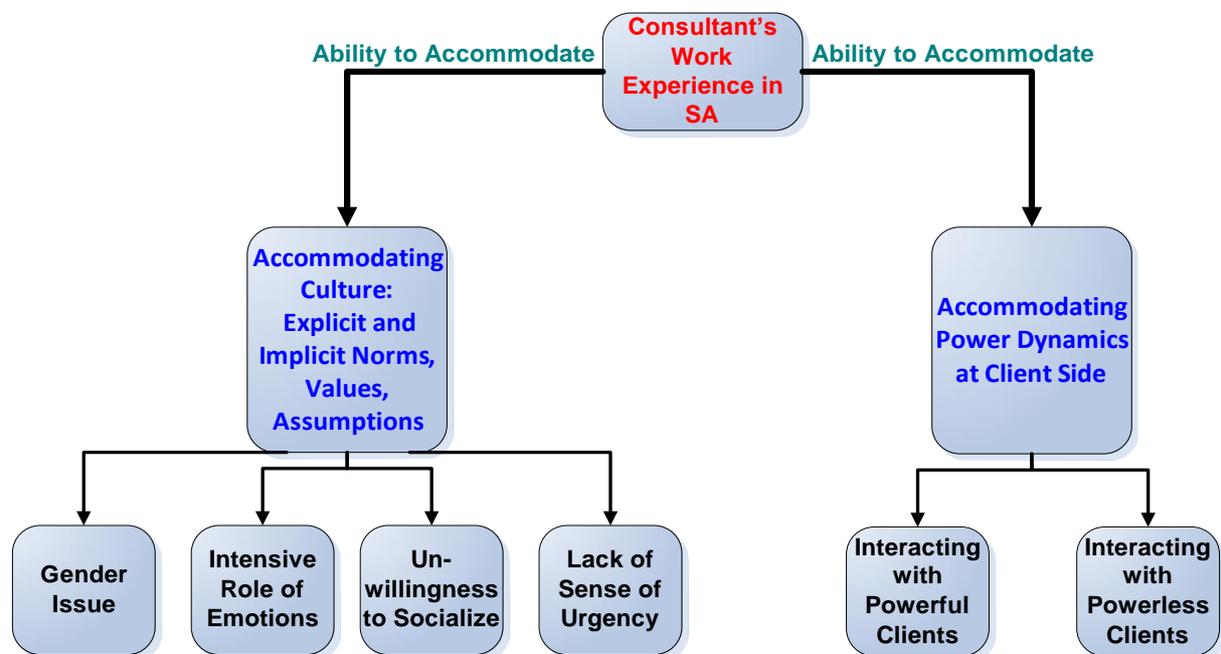


Figure 8: The Themes and Codes that Explain the Impact of Culture on Knowledge Exchange at the Advice Development Stage

Table 30: Themes and Codes that Explain the Impact of Culture on Knowledge Exchange at the Advice Development Stage

Themes	Codes	Impact	Stage
Gender Issue	Accommodating Culture: Explicit and Implicit Norms, Values, Assumptions	Consultants' Ability to Accommodate Culture ----- Experience is the Determining Factor	Advice Development Stage
Intensive Role of Emotions			
Un-willingness to socialize			
Lack of Sense of Urgency			
Interacting with Powerful Clients	Accommodating Power Dynamics at Client Side		
Interacting with Powerless Clients			

Accommodating Implicit and Explicit Cultural Elements

The data suggests that there are several implicit and explicit cultural elements that have proven to be challenging for people from other cultures to recognize and understand. It is suggested that the more experience consultants have, the more able they are to recognize and adapt their behaviour and advice to accommodate those cultural elements. The data suggests that there are four codes of cultural elements that seem to be challenging for international consultants operating in Saudi Arabia. Those cultural elements are related to the gender issue, the intensive role of emotions, un-willingness to socialize, and lack of sense of urgency. Each one of these codes is constituted of interrelated themes that offer insights from relatively different angles about the same element. For instance, the code of the gender issue is constituted of themes related to segregation, guardianship and caution in dealing with Saudi females. Table (35) in appendix B presents the main codes and the themes that constitute these findings.

Accommodating Power Dynamics on the Client Side

The data suggests that there are different power dynamics on the clients' side that seem to be challenging for international consultants who work in Saudi Arabia. The experience of consultants determines their ability to recognize and accommodate these power dynamics. The power dynamics can be related to the interaction of international consultants with two groups of clients: powerless and self-centered powerful clients. Therefore, the data has

been split according to these two groups whereby each group is considered as a code by itself.

In the context of interacting with powerless clients, the data suggests there are several distinguishing features that experienced international consultants are more able to recognize and accommodate. Firstly, most of the interaction takes place between international consultants and powerless clients from junior levels. Secondly, the feedback of powerless clients is governed by their desire to avoid conflict with higher management. In other words, junior clients seek to only share the knowledge that they believe is compatible with the interests and desires of higher management. Thirdly, because of their passive role, junior clients do not tend to be assertive about their feedback. Instead, they leave it for the consultant to verify their input with higher management.

In the context of interacting with powerful clients, the data suggests there are several distinguishing features that experienced international consultants are more able to recognize and accommodate. Firstly, there are conflicts that take place between powerful members, which means different interests need to be accommodated. Secondly, powerful clients may try to deviate the direction of the project in their favour. Thirdly, the interests of top management are central while consultants need to *lean* their advice to accommodate other interests. Table (36) in appendix B presents the codes, and the themes that constitute these findings.

6.6.2.3 The Third Stage: The Advice Implementation Stage

It was suggested in the conceptual framework chapter that after the interactive experience from which advice has been developed, clients and consultants are expected to have more understanding of each other's cultures. This means individuals will be more able to interact effectively in the future because the impact of culture on their interpretive interactions is reduced because of the knowledge they have developed about each other from previous experience.

Although data confirmed this assumption, having the research question in mind and being open to new insights from the data allowed further findings to emerge. The data suggested that regardless of the development of people's understanding about each other, culture seems to have a significant impact on advice implementation, which consequently influences the international dissemination of consulting knowledge. The data suggested that the implementation of the developed advice is subject to client reactions. Those reactions are related to two components, namely the different perceptions about which party is supposed to implement the advice, and the impact of power on advice approval and implementation. Figure 9 demonstrates the main codes that explain the main findings. Figure 9 is also presented in a form of table, in table (37).

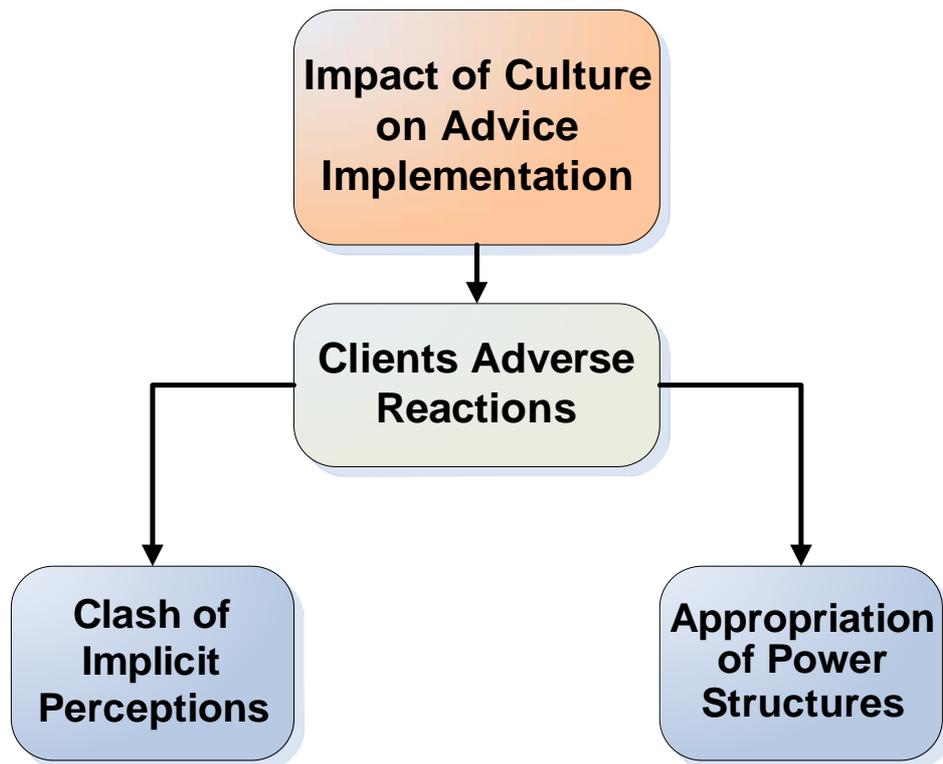


Figure 9: Themes and Codes that Explain the Impact of Culture at the Advice Implementation Stage

Table 31: Themes and Codes that Explain the Impact of Culture at the Advice Implementation Stage

Themes	Codes	Stage
Clash of Implicit Perceptions (CIP)	Client's Adverse Reactions (CAR)	Advice Implementation
Appropriation of Power Structures (APS)		

The Clash of Implicit Perceptions

In the context of the different perceptions of the relationship mode, the data suggested that, on the one hand, low-experienced Saudi clients tend to perceive their relationship with international consultants to be based on status. This perception leads clients to perceive consultants as doers, butlers or servants who are expected to expand their services beyond the scope agreed on in the contract. This perception by low-experienced clients results in clashes after the delivery of advice as they expect the consultant to implement it while the

consultant perceives implementation as an extra task not included in the agreed scope of work. On the other hand, experienced clients seem to perceive consultants as expert helpers who work with them to achieve a specific task. These experienced clients seem to know exactly what they need and, accordingly, honour the specific terms and scope of the contract. Consequently, clashes over who is to implement the delivered advice are less likely to occur with those clients. Thus, the data has been spilt into two codes; the first deals with low-experienced clients, while the other deals with experienced clients. Table (38) in appendix B presents the codes and themes and excerpts that constitute these findings.

Appropriation of Power Structures

In terms of the impact of power on advice approval and implementation, the data suggested there is a need for power appropriation in order for advice to be implemented smoothly. There are three forms of power impact that seem to affect advice implementation. The data has been split according to these forms of impact. Firstly, the code of hierarchal approvals suggests that, for approval, advice needs to go through a hierarchal chain of power, which may lead to delays or even a complete blocking of implementation. This is because of the different personal views and interests of those in the hierarchy.

Secondly, the code of central approvals suggests that for consulting advice ordered by top management, the change of the decision-maker who ordered it may lead to blockage or delays in approvals. This is because whenever the decision-maker is changed, the interests and needs of consulting advice are also changed. Therefore, new decision-makers are less likely to approve new advice for implementation if it does not meet their personal views or interests.

Thirdly, the code that deals with the interference of powerful members in advice implementation suggests that implementation is subject to the interference of powerful members who were not part of the approval process. These powerful members might explicitly ask for changes during implementation to gain personal interests, or they might run a propaganda campaign within the organisation to scare others off the outcome of the consulting advice. Table (39) in appendix B presents the codes and themes and excerpts that constitute these findings.

6.6.3 Third Order of Analysis: Selective Coding

The third order of analysis focused on the codes of the second order. The main focus of this analysis was to find the core code to which the main categories or codes can be related. According to Saunders et al. (2009) and Bryman and Bell (2011), finding the core code and relating it to the main categories allows the researcher to develop his grounded theory.

As demonstrated in table (40), the core code that has appeared in all stages of the consulting engagement was the consultants’ work experience. Consultants’ experience in a certain country allows them to operate more successfully during the three stages of the consulting engagement. In other words, it allows them to recognize and accommodate the impact of culture on their work. The code of ‘experience’ is related to every code identified in the second order of analysis. In fact, some of the second order codes are themselves a representation of experience. The following lines elaborate on how experience is central to manage the impact of culture on the consulting engagement at the three stages of the interaction.

Table 32: The Emergence of the Core Code from Axial Analysis Codes

Interaction Stage	Axial Analysis Codes	Core Code
The Hiring Stage	Impact of Prior Knowledge on Presentation	Experience
	Power Impact from both parties	
The Advice of Development Stage	Accommodating Culture as a System of Norms, Values, Assumption	
	Accommodating Power Dynamics at Clients Side	
The Advice Implementation Stage	Clash of Implicit perceptions about Implementation Task	
	Appropriation of Clients' Power Structures	

Firstly, at the hiring stage, consultants’ experience can be linked to the code of *prior knowledge* needed to develop a culturally-appropriate and attractive presentation. In fact, the code ‘prior knowledge’ is a form of experience. Also, experience can be related to the component of power. This is because it was evident that experienced consultants are more able to recognise their clients’ power and avoid being overwhelmed by their international exposure and organisational resources. Consequently, they are more able to accommodate the clients’ power.

Secondly, advice development stage, it was clear that consultants’ experience is central for the cultural conditioning of advice and behaviour. This is because it allows them to recognise and accommodate clients’ power dynamics and implicit cultural norms, values

and assumptions. Therefore, it was concluded that consultants' experience is crucial to perform sufficient cultural conditioning of behaviour and advice.

Thirdly, at the advice implementation stage, it was evident that consultants' experience allows them accommodate clients' adverse reactions to the advice implementation. This is because their experience allows them to recognise the different perceptions that their clients might have about responsibility for implementation, and the interference of powerful members during the implementation stage. Being able to recognise these perceptions and power interference and knowing how to accommodate them has a significant role in the likelihood of advice to be implemented.

Consequently, it can be concluded that consultants' experience plays a significant role in their ability to accommodate the impact of culture on their consulting engagement with clients from different cultures. This means consultants' experience plays a significant role in their ability to disseminate their consulting knowledge internationally. Therefore, the developed theory suggests that ***country-specific work experience plays a significant role in accommodating the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international clients and consultants.***

Summary

An interpretive approach was adopted for this study of the impact of culture on knowledge exchange between international clients and consultants. Interpretivists argue that international business and management research is too complex to be effectively addressed through positivist and objectivist approaches, and that the interpretive approach is more suitable for dealing with the subjectivity of knowledge, the different interpretations of rhetorical descriptions, and the content of knowledge-based products and services.

The interpretive approach is also most suitable to address key aspects of the client-consultant relationship such as complicated interpersonal relationships, culture and power boundaries, effective identification of 'hidden' power elements, and the interrelated variables of culture, language and knowledge.

The two flexible key intellectual positions offered by the interpretive approach, phenomenology and symbolic interaction, are considered to be crucial for understanding the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international clients and consultants.

Interpretivism recognizes that the role of the researcher in the interpretation process is dependent on the researcher's personal views about the world around him/her. It acknowledges that the researcher is part of the phenomenon under investigation, and tries to make sense of what is happening by recognising subjective realities and providing

interpretive explanations. In this research, the researcher and the social phenomenon under investigation are located within the same culture, making the researcher more capable of effective interpretation. However, this shared culture is also a potential source of bias that the researcher must be cautious of.

In the context of this research, there are two important considerations related to validity and reliability, namely differences between the world's cultures, and differences between the social contexts from which management issues emerge. Firstly, there exists the consideration that the world is comprised of different cultures that govern people's ways of thinking, and the meanings they give to symbols around them (Schein, 1992; Hofstede, 2010). This has led researchers (e.g. Ember and Ember, 2009; May, 2011) to question the generalisability of cross-cultural studies, which is a major validity concern. Secondly, because clients' issues stem from their own social contexts (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006; Scott, 2013), consulting projects are expected to be different from one context to another (Hofstede, 1999; Kipping, 1999; McKenna, 2006).

In order to overcome the issues of generalisability, the sample includes consultants and clients from different organisations and industries. This adds to the validity of the findings because similar findings from a sample that contains different contexts have a level of validity at a national level. In terms of reliability, the findings from these different contexts are still subject to the researcher's background with researchers from similar backgrounds more likely to produce the same results. However, the researcher has focused on contexts familiar to him such as clients in education, banking and transportation, and consultants who provide business and management advice. Researchers with the same background and understanding of these sectors are more likely to produce similar results.

Grounded theory strategy is helpful for research that seeks to predict and explain human behaviour. By adopting this strategy, theory is expected to develop from data gained by a sequence of observations. These data generate predictions that can be tested by further observations to either confirm or reject the developed theory. Testing theory by constantly referring to data leads to grounded theory being perceived as both an inductive and deductive approach within which theory is grounded in repeated reference to data.

An extensive literature review was conducted before data collection to add order and relevance to data, and enhance the researcher's understanding about the consulting work and its relation to knowledge and culture. The outcome of this literature review was a set of subjects that the researcher expected to be useful to gain more insights about the research area.

This then allowed the researcher to conduct an effective pilot study that allowed the researcher to verify his understanding about the key subjects, develop clearer relationships

between those subjects, and gain deeper insights from an empirical perspective. The pilot study was conducted before preparing for primary data collection with the aim of preparing the researcher to control his bias, and to use his understanding of the interviewees' culture to interpret what has been shared.

Following the pilot study, the researcher conducted a general conceptual review to identify the main concepts constituting the latest version of the research question and the relationship between them. Subsequently, four main concepts for investigation were derived from the conceptual study: culture, knowledge, power, and language.

After the conceptual study, the primary data collection was conducted within nine weeks. The researcher approached data collection with an open mind about what could be found, and used the emergent new data to generate ideas and points of discussions that could be either verified by other interviewees or used to gather new insights from other interviewees chosen according to the primary analysis of the emergent data including the pilot study.

Interviewing was selected as the main data collection technique for this project. Firstly, because this is qualitative research, interviewing is a key data collection technique. The flexibility of this method is attractive as it allows the researcher to conduct different interviews with different people at different times and spaces (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Secondly, the subject of this research (the influence of culture on knowledge exchange in the client-consultant relationship) is known to be interactive and interpretive. Culture, language, power and knowledge are all complex components. Consideration of language and culture is multi-dimensional since they are influential on the interviewing process as well as on the knowledge exchange interaction.

The semi-structured interviewing technique is suitable because grounded theory requires the researcher to define the scope of the interview in a semi-structured format and allows the interviewee to answer freely. Semi-structured interviews also allow the researcher the flexibility to add additional internal questions according to the emergent data.

The sampling was conducted according to three fundamental principles. Firstly, focus on both the client and consultant sides of the interaction. Secondly, focus on the characteristics of the individuals rather than those of their organisations. Thirdly, focus on English language speakers.

In order to find clients that match the three sampling principles it was necessary to identify which sectors were likely to offer the target clients. Ultimately, the semi-government sector was found to be the active in using the services of international consultancies. The consultant sample focused on consultants from the Americas and Europe for two main reasons. Firstly, the number of Western consultants operating in Saudi Arabia is much

higher than the number from consultants who come from other parts of the world. Secondly, Western consultants are expected to be more culturally different to Saudi clients than those from the Middle or Far East.

After data collection, the researcher became much clearer about the related subjects and main concerns that seem to concern clients and consultants. Therefore, before conducting any more data analysis, the researcher went back to the literature to identify a more specific research questions that he should try to respond to from the data.

For data analysis, the researcher has adopted the approach proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), which suggests three procedural stages to analyse qualitative data—namely, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Data analysis was conducted according to the above three stages, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. During these stages, the researcher did not use any data analysis software such as Nvivo but relied on Microsoft Word to read the transcripts, highlight excerpts, search for specific words and sentences, and organise the derived excerpts, themes, and codes into tables.

Chapter 7: Findings (The Hiring Stage)

Chapter 7

The Stage Before the Interaction: The Hiring Stage

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings concerning how culture exerts influence on the knowledge exchange interactions between Saudi clients and international consultants prior to the consulting engagement, namely at the hiring stage.

On the one hand, the international consultant can be seen as a salesperson who seeks to form a business relationship with a potential client. The consultant here is a representative of a consulting firm. The main job of the consultant is to look for consulting projects, submit bids and proposals, and engage in business negotiations that lead to winning a consulting contract.

This chapter shows that, at the hiring stage, knowledge exists in a state of vague beliefs that comprise one's interpretation of the culture, history and politics of the other party. The chapter presents typologies of consultants with different forms of exposure on the basis of their knowledge of the other culture. It is evident that consultants are actively engaged in trying to create connections between their own subjective experiences and those of the client in order to identify common ground. However, the chapter demonstrates that such effort is not always successful because prior beliefs are extended within one's interpretation and do not necessarily align with the client's expectations.

On the other hand, the client is the party with bargaining power. In the same way that international consultants use their experiences to interpret the culture of the client, clients also create biased accounts of Western business methods that they like to project on the prospective consultant. The data analysis shows that the interpretation of both parties is sustained through the communication of key messages that correlate with people's personal biases and expectations. Hence, culture can become an informative source for reducing uncertainty but also it can become a cause of misdirection and conflict. This is because both parties are heavily driven by their interpretation of how one's culture and experience relate to the business assignment and what needs to happen about it. This impact can be viewed in terms of two components: the component of prior knowledge that governs consultants' presentations, and the component of power that each party recognizes in the other side.

An important component of subjective interpretation is how prior knowledge is acquired and how it is used as an attractive mechanism in order to build legitimacy. The data collected supports the widely held understanding that Saudi Arabia is a country with strong traditions and religious practices (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 1993). The information asymmetries between clients and consultants appear to be greater than when clients and consultants share Western methods of working. Hence, the chapter identifies that the unconscious deployment and interpretation of prior knowledge is important for how early conclusions are produced about a country and its people. In many cases, consultants have more or less

information about the client. Inaccurate or poor understanding of the clients' culture increases the chances of communicating culturally inappropriate presentations that reflect negatively on the clients' impressions. Consequently, the successful and rapid formation of the business engagement is unlikely to happen.

The unconscious utilization of personal prior knowledge about the other side's culture remains a key theme that is not adequately recognized in the literature and yet is important for understanding how the business engagement is formed. Hence, it is argued that both parties engage in a creative role by eliciting personal experiences and basing upon these projections about the other party and how the business relationship will unfold. Moreover, it is suggested that the creative use and deployment of prior knowledge is influential but cannot be predicted, and remains subject to key events that have shaped the experience of the members who are taking part in the process of business engagement. Even though impression management remains a dominant theme discussed in the literature, the implicit impact of the unconscious deployment of the prior knowledge in consultants' presentations remains missing from the consultancy research.

Another important component to subjective interpretation is the extent to which people are able to recognize and correctly interpret the powerful features of others. The data collected support the assertion that power distance is relatively high in Saudi Arabia (Sabry, 2010; Hofstede et al., 2010) and that it exists in most social structures from small families to organizational structures (Sabry, 2010). This has resulted in a culture that operates around centralized decision-making, where the drivers might be different to those Western consultants are familiar with. For instance, the data suggests that while Western consultants might assume that decision-makers focus on decisions that lead to collective benefits, Saudi decision-makers are, in fact, more focused on decisions that allow them to gain more power and construct more legitimacy for their self-centred decisions. Hence, the chapter suggests that, although decision-makers need the powerful features of consultants, such as reputation and fashionable methods, to gain more power and legitimacy, international consultants remain challenged by their ability to recognize and correctly interpret the cultural elements that drive decision-making among their Saudi clients.

Therefore, it is suggested that recognition and understanding of the role of personal interests in the clients' decision allows international consultants to communicate the powerful features that empower decision-makers. For instance, the data suggests that consulting advice that offers more control is likely to be attractive to Saudi clients, while advice that removes control is unattractive. Although the impact of power on the formation of the client-consultant relationship is acknowledged in the literature, it is not yet known how cultural elements drive clients' power. Also, it is not yet known how the failure to recognize those cultural elements may reduce the effect of the consultants' powerful features on those clients.

In the context of the role of the clients' power on the hiring process, it is suggested that culture here seems to have a more apparent and determining impact on the process of hiring international consultants. This is because, it is evident from the data that the decision to hire consultants in Saudi Arabia is highly centralized and driven mainly by the personal interests of the powerful people at the top. The challenge here remains the ability of international consultants to recognize the clients' power dynamics that drive their decision-making and accordingly demonstrate those power elements that clients seek to obtain. The data indicate that the power dynamics on the client's side are mainly related to satisfying the interests of the powerful people at the top. For instance, clients can exert their formal power to enforce the hiring of reputable consultants to avoid blame in case of failure, despite recognition of the valid knowledge that can be obtained from un-reputed consultants. In this instance, the data shows that clients place more emphasis on the power of the consultants' reputation in order to construct legitimacy for their objectives. Similarly, since power distance is low in western cultures (Hofstede et al., 2010), international consultants may demonstrate their power by presenting their widely adopted fashionable methods that focus on distribution of command. For Saudi clients, as per the researcher's understanding of his own culture, such methods are culturally unacceptable because of the local cultural belief in the unity of command. Therefore, Saudi clients are unlikely to recognize the power of international consultants seeking to promote the use of such methods.

Thus, it can be argued that although the role of power in the client-consultant relationship has been highlighted in the literature, it is not yet understood how culture can be an informative source that enhances the use of power or how it can be a serious cause of misdirection and conflict. This means that unless international consultants understand the cultural elements that influence decision-makers, they might not be able to demonstrate the power elements that attract those clients.

Figure 10 offers a demonstration of the impact of these two components.



Figure 10: The Impact of Power and Prior Knowledge on the Process of Hiring International Consultants

7.2 The Influence of Prior Knowledge on the Process of Hiring International Consultants

The section suggests that international consultants have different stocks of prior knowledge about their new international clients. This prior knowledge seems to unconsciously govern the consultants' perceptions about their new clients. The key notion here is that these perceptions unconsciously drive the ways in which international consultants make presentations to new international clients to win a consulting contract. This means the extent to which consultants' can design and communicate culturally-appropriate presentations that result in positive impressions depends on the stock of prior knowledge they have about those clients.

This section begins by elaborating on what is meant by the concept of prior knowledge in this research. Then, it presents three typologies that explain how the different stocks of prior knowledge play a significant role on the ways in which consultants' presentations are made and interpreted.

7.2.1 What is Meant by Prior Knowledge

There are two types of prior knowledge that have been found to be important for this study: firstly, prior knowledge about the subject matter, and secondly, prior knowledge about the other side's culture.

Firstly, prior knowledge about the subject matter covers purely technical aspects such as Human Resources, project management, transformation and strategy. In other words, it is a type of knowledge that deals with specific business and managerial subjects from a positivist perspective that does not put much emphasis on the human factor. This type of knowledge is usually shared before clients and consultants are engaged in the negotiation phase. For consultants, this type of knowledge is related to their resources and expertise in the subject matter, and they tend to share this knowledge by promoting success stories or conducting formal marketing presentations on their methods. For clients, this type of knowledge is concerned with the extent to which they are aware of the subject. This determines the extent to which they can specify and justify their needs, scope and expectations. Clients tend to share this type of knowledge through RFPs (Request For Proposals). A Saudi client explained that this type of knowledge is important for the development of well-specified RFPs through which they assess and choose consultants:

“The ideal situation is that the RFP or the scope of work needs to be specified carefully by the client, submitted as open bidding, consultant will provide a proposal.”

Ideally, a well-specified RFP reflects a client who is knowledgeable about what is needed. In other words, without this type of knowledge, clients will not be able to develop a good RFP that allows them to assess their consultants' competence and suitability.

Secondly, prior knowledge about the other side's culture is concerned with the stock of knowledge that the individual has about a country and its people before he/she engages in an interactive relationship with individuals from that country. This type of prior knowledge can be explicit or implicit. Explicit knowledge is related to explicit information about the other side such as name, language, religion, and laws, while implicit knowledge relates to information that the individual unintentionally and accumulatively acquires over time. This knowledge is comprised of views and perceptions related to politics, history, ways of thinking and doing, and what is right and wrong. For instance, an international consultant responded with the following about his prior knowledge about Saudi Arabia and its people before he began working in the country:

"It would be probably very much what they say in the Western world. It's the country that's perceived as quite closed, with very strong beliefs (linked to the religion) with some issues about the gender relation."

The fact that this consultant begins his answer with a broad and vague source of information 'what they say in the Western World' implies that he is not exactly aware from where he acquired the information he is about to state. The rest of the response demonstrates implicitness and vagueness. This is because he used broad terms such as 'quite closed', 'strong beliefs', and 'some issues'. Not offering explicit insights about closeness, strength of beliefs, and the nature of the gender issues means that this person has an implicit type of knowledge that he/she cannot specifically and explicitly describe. However, what can be clearly perceived from the above response is that this consultant is describing a conservative culture.

Therefore, it can be suggested that this implicit prior knowledge can be acquired in unintentional and indirect ways. Indirect ways can be related to general sources of information such as TV news that presents random information about countries. In other words, information unintentionally slides into the recipient's mind because it is embedded in more general forms of knowledge. For instance, individuals might indirectly and unintentionally learn and unconsciously generalize that an entire country is dangerous on account of hearing news about terrorist attacks that took place in a small city in that country.

Moreover, because this implicit knowledge is possessed by individuals, it is purely subjective and depends on the socially constructed cognitive and emotional system of the individual. This implies that the derived meanings of that knowledge depend on interpretations made by his/her personal cognitive and emotional system. Thus, people may have different interpretations of what it means and how it can be used. Additionally, what makes this knowledge different from one person to another is that people are subject to different sources of information. For instance, while the previous excerpt described prior knowledge about Saudi Arabia's culture from a religious perspective, another response to the same question described it from an economic perspective:

"Rich, always welcome to spend money, sometimes ridiculous, especially when outside of the kingdom, not well-established outside the oil industry."

The difference between the two answers is related to the fact that every person responds according to the dominant perception he/she has derived from his/her stock of prior knowledge that has been processed according to his/her socially constructed cognitive and emotional system.

Therefore, it can be suggested that people may have different stocks of implicit prior knowledge that they have unintentionally acquired which remain active in their unconscious mode governing their perceptions, presentations and interpretations. Therefore, it can be concluded that this type of prior knowledge plays a significant but not necessarily apparent role in the ways people present themselves and interpret the presentations of others. In other words, the most important role of implicit prior knowledge is that it governs perception and, in turn, the ways that people give and interpret presentations during the negotiation process, which should lead to the consultants being hired. Therefore, it can be suggested that this type of knowledge becomes operative when people begin their negotiation in the hiring process at which point such presentations and interpretations seem to drive the symbolic interaction between clients and consultants. A Saudi client explained the process through which international consultants come to conduct their introductory presentations and discuss their suitability for the job with Saudi clients:

“When we need a consulting service, we search in the market about the best consulting firms in the areas we are interested in. Then, we share the RFP with those firms who are usually between six and seven firms. Those firms will bid by sending their proposals which will be analyzed by a committee formed for this project. This analysis is what we call ‘technical evaluation’ which filters the number of candidate firms for two or three firms. Those firms who passed the first ‘technical evaluation’ will be invited to a second evaluation where they interact directly with us by conducting presentations through which they share their expertise, their clients, similar projects they worked on in Saudi Arabia, the backgrounds and CVs of the individuals who are going to be part of the project. The outcome of the second technical evaluation will be passed to the contracting department for a legal and financial evaluation.”

The above explains that prior knowledge becomes operative during the second evaluation when international consultants conduct presentations explaining why they are suitable for the job. Clients, on the other hand, are expected to make sure that their interpretations of the consultants’ presentations are correct.

In conclusion, it is suggested that prior knowledge about the subject matter becomes operative at the very beginning of the hiring process. This is because it is the type of knowledge that clients need to develop their Requests For Proposals (RFPs) inviting consulting companies to bid. Also, it is the type of knowledge that consultants need to familiarize themselves with distinguished methods in a specific subject in order to increase their chances of being invited to bid on clients’ RFPs.

On the other hand, implicit prior knowledge about each party becomes operative when the symbolic interaction begins between clients and the potential consultants who responded to the RFP. Within this symbolic interaction, clients and consultants exchange deeper forms of knowledge related to the subject matter, experiences, cultural-awareness or any other

subject clients and consultants are interested to know more about. The effect of implicit prior knowledge during this symbolic interaction is that it governs the presentations and interpretations of those involved in the interaction. The outcome of this interaction determines whether the consultants will be hired or not.

7.2.2 The Implicit Impact of Consultants' Prior Knowledge on the Hiring Negotiation

In the case of international consultants entering the Saudi market, none of the interviewed consultants showed any thoughtful consideration of intentional learning about the culture of Saudi Arabia and its people before they began working in the country. Instead, their feedback showed that they have different stocks of implicit prior knowledge that vary in their intensity. Because this knowledge operates within the unconscious mode of the individuals (Goffman, 1959; Jacob and Kelly, 1987; Hassin et al, 2004), they might not be aware of the extent to which it influences how they present themselves. Since prior knowledge unconsciously governs the ways in which people present themselves to others (Goffman 1959; Jacob and Kelly, 1987; Marcus, 2009), this section elaborates on how the different stocks of international consultants' prior knowledge impact their presentations to international clients. This is where prior knowledge about culture can be either informative for culturally-appropriate presentations, or a cause of conflict and misdirection.

The implicit impact of different stocks of prior knowledge on consultants' presentations can be seen through three typologies.

Typology 1: International Consultants have Limited Stock of Prior Knowledge about the Country and its People

It is evident that some international consultants do not seem to have a considerable stock of prior knowledge about the country and its people before they begin their assignments. For instance, an American consultant declared that he did not have much knowledge about the Saudi culture and Saudis before he began working with them:

"I didn't know much detail about the culture or the people here before I traveled here."

Such lack of detail about the culture and people implies that international consultants may not pay any attention to the critical role of prior knowledge in their initial presentations and in the early interactions with new international clients. Instead, as described by another international consultant, learning about culture and its influence on interaction is through "trial by fire":

"It was basically just trial by fire as we say. I did not have a lot of time for preparation, I finished one project, I got a project here. I got the time enough to get a visa and then obviously read a few things about culture, but it didn't really provide much window for me."

The use of the phrase 'trial by fire' is a clear indicator that there is an unconscious belief in the importance of the prior knowledge at this stage. Although this consultant did not seem unduly troubled by the need to gain some knowledge about the country and its people before his arrival, describing his approach to learning as "trial by fire" implies that this

person believes that such learning is as important, sensitive, and as dangerous as being exposed to flames or guns. Yet, as demonstrated by the excerpts above, some international consultants, despite their unconscious beliefs, do not intend to learn more about the country and its people in order to make culturally appropriate presentations for the new international clients.

However, if the intention of these international consultants is to travel and instantly gain knowledge about the other side, then they run the risk of being subject to misinterpretations. The risk is that the consultants interpret the newly received knowledge about their clients through their socially constructed cognitive and emotional systems, meaning that their interpretations may not match reality. This implies that when people misinterpret the knowledge that is supposed to inspire their presentation, they are more likely to make inappropriate presentations. In other words, their misinterpretations may backfire on them.

Hence, we can conclude that the main impact of having a negligible stock of prior knowledge about the clients' culture may result in those unaware consultants communicating culturally-inappropriate presentations, which may reduce the chance of winning the consulting project. This is because these culturally-unaware consultants simply do not have the prior knowledge necessary to understand how their potential clients think and behave. Due to not having enough prior knowledge about the other side, consultants are unlikely to be able to correctly spot and understand what their potential clients might be interested in. Consequently, culturally-unaware consultants will struggle to find, develop and communicate presentations that leave positive impressions on their clients.

Typology 2: International Consultants have a Considerable Stock of Negative or Inaccurate Prior Knowledge about the Country and its People

It is evident that some international consultants seem to have a considerable stock of inaccurate prior knowledge about their clients and their countries. This section suggests that this typology seems to be most critical in the knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients at the hiring stage. This is because deploying inaccurate prior knowledge is highly likely to result in inappropriate presentations.

What makes this inaccurate prior knowledge even more critical is that because it has been unintentionally acquired and operates from the unconscious mode, individuals are not aware of its inaccuracy. In other words, because this prior knowledge operates from the unconscious mode, individuals may act as if their prior knowledge is taken for granted, which means that they have no intention of confirming their indirectly acquired knowledge before they offer a presentation. This means their only chance to learn about the inaccuracy of their prior knowledge is through negative feedback on presentations.

The data shows that there are two dominant false perceptions about Saudi Arabia and its people. Firstly, there are overestimated perceptions of wealth and backwardness that do not seem to be correct. The main problem is that those with incorrect prior knowledge are more likely to present themselves in a culturally inappropriate way.

Secondly, there is a negative perception about Saudi Arabia and its people related to terrorism and hatred of the west. The problem with this negative type of prior knowledge is that it has a double effect resulting from both the negativity and the inaccuracy. The negativity impacts motivation and willingness to make appropriate and creative presentations while the inaccuracy leads to culturally inappropriate presentations.

1. The Case of Inaccurate Prior Knowledge: The Overestimated Impression of Wealth and Backwardness

It is evident that there is inaccurate perception among international consultants that suggests that Saudi Arabia is a rich oil-producing county, which is not yet well developed. Therefore, there is easy money to be made with any sort of advice or method brought by international consultants from the developed world.

An international consultant from Spain explained:

“it’s going to be easy money ... everybody in Spain relates Saudi to the visits from the King and everybody knows that three hundred Mercedes that he brought and that three thousand people that always go with him.”

This excerpt explains how this consultant has unintentionally acquired implicit and unverified knowledge about Saudi Arabia and its people. This is evident from the broad reference of the source of his knowledge, which he describes as ‘everybody in Spain’. Also, using type and number of luxury cars brought by elite individuals to Spain makes vague evidence into a generalized conclusion of wealth. This perception has led him to believe that working in Saudi Arabia means that money can easily be made. In other words, he might think that he does not need to work hard or carefully design his presentation and plan his entry to the country in order to succeed.

Another international consultant adds backwardness to the image of wealth as an indication of how easy it is to make money in such a country:

“It is going to be easy money, my perception was that they were (the Saudis), you know, very low, not prepared, not educated.”

For this consultant, wealthy, backward, un-educated and unprepared clients was a recipe for an expensive and easy service. Another international consultant from Germany adds more explanation:

“Rich, always welcome to spend money, sometimes ridiculous, especially when outside of the kingdom, not well-established outside the oil industry in regards of corporate readiness and international marketplace.”

These false perceptions that associate wealth with a basic level of development give some consultants the impression that little effort is needed to present an attractive image to such backward wealthy clients. In other words, consultants who have this perception are unlikely to design their presentations carefully and creatively in ways that attract those specific clients, perhaps because they feel that any presentation that suggests classiness or sophisticated added value is satisfactory. Moreover, since this backward client happens to be wealthy, then big money can be claimed.

Thus, it can be suggested that inaccurate perceptions may result in inappropriate presentations. The impact would be a negative impression on clients. This means that clients may choose not to hire consultants who have made inappropriate presentations that show that they do not have accurate perceptions about them.

In fact, in the case of Saudi Arabia, the impact might be even more critical. This is because clients appear to know that their potential consultants have inaccurate perceptions about them. For instance, they seem to be aware that consultants conclude that there is 'easy money' to be made from them. In this context, a Saudi client stated that he is aware that international consultants primarily target consulting projects that come under a 'royal decree':

"But they found that it's the royal decree it's all that they are after. . ."

The distinctive feature of the royal decrees is that they have declared budgets that have been allocated by the king or his deputies to advice on government initiatives. What makes these royal decrees attractive to international consultants is the fact that there are many government initiatives with substantial budgets. International consultants think it is easy to get assigned and paid by simply re-selling work that has been prepared for other clients from other countries. A Saudi client explained his awareness of the consultants' tactic to copy and paste advice:

"Just putting something copy-paste from the resource of information somewhere else and just change some words just to make it applicable with our culture is not consultant work."

So, evidently, clients seem to be aware of and unhappy with this copy-paste tactic. This is a risky approach by consultants because not all Saudi clients are naïve and easy to deal with to the extent that they simply release payments for consulting work that does not suit them, or has simply been copied from previous projects. This kind of inaccurate knowledge is hazardous because while consultants do not seem to be conscious or aware of it and its impact, clients seem to be clear and unhappy about it. Consequently, these clients are expected to be critical about their selection and judgement of consultants. One such client who has long experience with international consultants described his way of choosing the right consultant:

"I do my due diligence to understand the culture he's coming from, his background, experience. Especially the work experience, this the most important aspect of engagement with them."

This excerpt suggests that clients are not naïve entities that fall for any sort of classy or sophisticated presentation made by consultants. Rather, clients tend to be more critical to the extent that they know the nature of the prior knowledge that governs consultants' perceptions and drives their presentations.

Thus, the impact of inaccurate prior knowledge about the country and its people on consultants' presentations cannot be underestimated. Those who present themselves in an inappropriate manner expose their inaccurate understanding which cannot be corrected

effectively and quickly. Consequently, clients might feel that those with inaccurate prior knowledge will find it challenging to understand the local issues and consequently construct effective advice and are, therefore, unlikely to be hired.

In other words, clients are concerned with the fact that international consultants may come to work in Saudi Arabia with Saudi nationals without having accurate knowledge of the culture and the people. Their concerns stem from the fact that international consultants might not understand or might under-estimate the reality of the clients' issues. This is a rational conclusion because the reality of these problems can be related to the clients' ways of thinking and doing, which are highly influenced by the local culture. If consultants are unable to recognize and interpret the causes of the problems due to lack of understanding of their clients' culture they are unlikely to be able offer effective advice. In this way, clients become suspicious about the ability of international consultants to offer advice that is applicable to their issues.

2. The Case of Negative Inaccurate Prior Knowledge

It is important to highlight the existence and impact of negative impressions about a country like Saudi Arabia. This is because this issue does not seem to be explicitly acknowledged in either in the business research or in the personal client-consultant relationship in Saudi Arabia.

On the one hand, in the business research, it is imperative to begin to acknowledge the impact of the negative portrayal of Saudi Arabia internationally, and the influence of this on the international business. It cannot be denied that international media channels have managed to draw a negative image of Saudi Arabia since the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11, 2001. This image has associated Saudi Arabia and its people with terrorism. From the researcher's experience, it is widely held that this portrayal has left negative impressions among foreigners who might not be able to offer thoughtful explanations about their causes. This because the implicit prior knowledge that resulted in such a negative impression was indirectly and unintentionally acquired, and remains in their subconscious. This means they might not be able to recognize or explain the nature of this negative perception, or be able to deal with it in a constructive way.

On the other hand, in the client-consultant relationship, it is imperative to begin to explicitly acknowledge this issue. This is because these relationships are purely business that require a certain level of diplomacy, which dictates that consultants might prefer not to share or discuss their negative perceptions about their clients to maintain a healthy and a productive relationship. Alternately, consultants might find '*trial by fire*' to be their best approach in such cases.

The primary data shows that this negative prior knowledge does exist and it does impose a negative impact. An international consultant from Ireland stated that the prior knowledge he had about Saudi Arabia and its people was 'quite negative':

"Any perceptions I would have would have been quite negative."

Although this interviewee did not have much to say about the nature of the negative impression he had, other than that it was unintentionally acquired over time from the TV

news that most people are subject to, his feedback offered an early indication as to the existence and criticality of this issue. This issue was explicitly explained by an American consultant who seemed to have more intense perception of negativity than the Irish consultant. The American consultant explained:

“What distinctly sticks out of my mind is that I was working with an Egyptian firm . . . they didn't quite tell me they were sending me to Saudi Arabia to the very last minute. And because they needed that I wouldn't be so thrilled about the concept, because actually when I first came here, my first reaction was that I am going to be killed . . . like, “Oh, my God, are you sending me there? They are going to kill me, what is going on?” . . . I had a concern for my safety, that would be the first thing . . . This mainly, the region was in turmoil, people weren't happy with us and as an American.”

In addition to acknowledgement of the existence of negative prior knowledge, this excerpt offers a great insight about its impact, namely the fear and anxiety this consultant had before his relocation. A person who does not feel safe cannot be expected to design and communicate creative and attractive presentations for his/her new clients, nor to be motivated to work in a country where he fears for his/her life. Another international consultant from Argentina offered a more explicit explanation of the impact of such negative prior knowledge:

“One goes with caution. . . that means that spontaneity is usually not the way you approach things here. . . It affects your life here. Working as part of your life here. So yes, it does get affected. The friendships you are going to establish with locals gets affected. . . It clearly impacts anybody's motivation to be working with these clients and in this place. Because that's not only the client it's also the environment. In the environment many things that we take for granted in the countries we come from are not here.”

This excerpt offers more reasons why people may feel less motivated to operate in a country about which they have negative prior knowledge. Negative prior knowledge causes people to feel uncomfortable in the ways they interact with others, and they can be expected to be cautious, formal, lacking in spontaneity, and reluctant to socialize. All these factors affect the life and well-being of the individual which results in less motivation to operate. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that unmotivated consultants are unlikely to demonstrate attractive presentations. Even if those presentations happen to be culturally-appropriate, unmotivated individuals are likely to look reserved, uncomfortable or scared - undisguisable feelings that can be clearly detected by others.

However, the Irish and American consultants confirmed that their initially negative views “completely” changed after living in Saudi Arabia for many years. This means the implicit prior knowledge is not always accurate. But, it is also important to highlight that it may be extremely intense to the extent that it can never be corrected or changed. This is evident in the case of the consultant from Argentina. Although this consultant was interviewed in Saudi Arabia while he was working there, his attitude and intense negative feelings seemed to be overwhelming to the point that the researcher did not feel comfortable asking more

questions that may have angered the interviewee or reduced his motivation to give more feedback. The researcher learnt later that the Argentinean consultant had to resign from his firm when his manager refused to relocate him to another country. One of the firm's partners mentioned that the consultant was never comfortable and could not manage to correct old perceptions.

Typology 3: International Consultants have a Considerable Stock of Accurate Prior knowledge about Clients' Country and its People

It is evident that there are international consultants who have a considerable stock of correct cultural knowledge about Saudis. This has evidently helped them win several projects because it has equipped them to give creative presentations that allowed them to bond quickly with their clients. One of the common effective approaches suggests that showing cultural similarities allows people to relate and bond quickly with each other. A Spanish consultant explained that this type of presentation helps him relate to his clients during the introduction period:

"I tend to present myself by saying that I'm Spanish and we have certain similarities, even looks, words, so I tend to be more of a diplomat . . . if I'm Spanish I can relate more."

In the same context of bonding, sharing similarities and understanding, another Spanish consultant offered a deeper view about his use of the common cultural ground between Arabs and Spanish people:

"I present myself as a person that lives in the region and that is from Spain and that has Arab origin, because that's true. I have Arab origin because pretty obviously, you cannot take pictures of me with recording machine, but my father comes from Andalusia, Andalusia had a huge influence of the Arab world, therefore we have a lot of values and culture and cultural elements in Spanish culture based or coming from the Arab world."

A Romanian consultant working for one of the largest Western consulting firms offered a more explicit view about the influence of sharing cultural similarities on winning a consulting project:

"Romania is Latin people, so we are close to Italy, I am not representative of Romania either, I am darker than a normal Romanian, let's say. But we are closer to Italian or Spanish or Mediterranean area, and we have also some Turkish influence, because Romania was under Turkish occupation for like four hundred years or so and more, four hundred and fifty. So, we have like Oriental influence. You were also under Turkish occupation (Saudis), so there are some similarities I guess, between our cultures. I think it matters, when I arrived at the airport people talked to me in Arabic and they were all surprised that I wasn't speaking Arabic. The people have dealt with me, like my client counterpart, which you know very well, I think it was mainly because we share the same value, we share the same passion for what we do."

None of those consultants appear to have had clear instructions from their organizations to use this approach to make the client feel closer or more related. Instead, based on the above excerpts, it seems that the tendency to show common cultural backgrounds is mainly driven by their personal assumptions, stemming from their personal way of thinking, and, in turn, driven by their cultures.

Apparently, these international consultants are aware that their cultural backgrounds may help them bond and relate more to their clients. This is apparent from the details and length of feedback each interviewee offered. The attention and passion these consultants seem to put into this approach is a clear indication as to how effective and important they find it. This is clear from the detailed cultural elements that they thoughtfully presented such as demonstrating historical relations and physical looks.

In fact, as indicated by the above excerpt, their use of cultural similarities to bond with their clients seems to stem from the fact that they know there is a common cultural value between Arabic and Latin culture that emphasizes the emotional side of relationships. The effect of emotions on the formation of relationships in both cultures has been confirmed by an Argentinean consultant who explained:

“I think Latin Americans, or Latins in general, and Arabs stand to be quite intense and passionate and emotional to a large extent. There is strong value given to hospitality and to friendship and to family values.”

Because these international consultants have accurate prior knowledge about their clients, it is easier for them to design and communicate the bonding presentations that attract new clients. The essence of the attraction is that showing similarities is a social way of bonding and developing close ties with the other side, who might feel better understood by those who are similar to him/her. Consequently, both parties expect to have a smoother and more understandable interaction. This is a logical conclusion driven by the fact that people may prefer not to interact with others who do not understand their ways of thinking and feeling, especially the implicit meanings that cannot be easily articulated and understood.

Thus, it can be concluded that the more accurate the prior knowledge about the clients' culture is, the more likely consultants can communicate attractive presentations that result in positive impressions among clients who are more likely to agree to form the consulting relationship. It is rational to assume that those who possess a considerable stock of accurate prior knowledge about the other side are likely to make attractive presentations that result in the client being more motivated to establish a relationship. This is because people feel that they can bond and relate to those who think or even look like them (Schakett et al., 2011).

7.3 The Impact of Clients' and Consultants' Power on the Hiring process

It is acknowledged in the literature that consultants may be empowered by their knowledge (Foucault, 1980; Townley, 1993; Fincham, 2002; Heizmann, 2011) and by their image as fashion setters. This is assumed to leave clients with an impression of quality and superiority (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Jung and Keiser, 2012). However, consultants are still vulnerable to clients' power to hire/reject them (Fincham, 2002). This section suggests that despite clients' apparent power in decision-making, consultants still wield influence, although this may be reduced if they do not understand the cultural forces that drive clients' decisions. These forces may be related to cultural issues that impact on the decision-making of the powerful, such as the prioritising of personal interests, or the desire to avoid failure. Understanding these cultural forces allows consultants to demonstrate the powerful features that address the interests and concerns of the powerful. On the contrary, not understanding them might lead them to demonstrate features that are either unrecognised or unappreciated by the clients. In short, while clients may need consultants' reputations and resources, consultants might struggle to demonstrate their powers in ways that can be recognised and appreciated.

The challenge here is not only about who has more power over the other. Rather, it is about how power is presented by consultants and interpreted by clients. In other words, how international consultants demonstrate power elements that match the clients' interests. For instance, in an environment where the power distance is high, consultants should offer fashionable methods that give more control to those in power.

Although the literature acknowledges the existence and impact of this type of power, it is not clear how it might become overwhelming to the extent that consultants are unable to recognize or undermine the power dynamics that drive the client's decision. Although consultants expect to impress clients with the power elements they demonstrate (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Jung and Keiser, 2012), they might fail to recognize that the power dynamics that impact clients' decision may render their own power obsolete. This is because consultants need to demonstrate the type of powers that hold sway with the power dynamics on the client's side. For instance, the data suggest that international consultants in Saudi Arabia will have little success demonstrating power by presenting widely adopted fashionable methods that focus on distribution of command in the work place because powerful Saudi individuals always seek to gain more control over command.

This section elaborates firstly on client typologies that explain how individualistic culture and fear of failure among decision makers impact the central decision-making. Secondly, it elaborates on how lack of awareness of these typologies on the part of the consultants may reduce the power effect of their experience and resources. In short, the focus is on how international consultants may recognise the cultural factors that drive the clients' decision. despite their international experience and resources of their organisation. Two typologies

based on the type of power that prevents consultants recognising the forces that drive the clients' decision will be presented.

7.3.1 Centralized Approach to Hiring International Consultants

It was suggested in the introduction to this chapter that international consultants need to recognize the power dynamics that drive clients' decisions to hire them. In Saudi Arabia, the centralized decision-making approach seems to be the most dominant. The impact of culture can be seen in how specific cultural elements drive the decision to hire consultants in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this section elaborates on two typologies that seem to be common in the Saudi environment. Firstly, the data suggest that there is a deep individualistic sense among some decision-makers that prioritizes their personal interests and objectives, and is central to the hiring of international consultants. Secondly, the data indicate that there is a cultural element related to shame in failure and blame avoidance, which results in decision-makers becoming unwilling to take risks. Instead, they focus on constructing legitimacy by hiring, for instance, the most popular or prestigious to avoid blame in case of failure. This means decision-makers from this typology seek to hire consultants who can offer a legitimate shield against blame in case of failure despite the consultants' ability or suitability to solve the problem at hand. Those decision-makers feel that reputation, local success stories and standardized methods are the types of shields they are looking for. Therefore, this section suggests that it is important for international consultants to recognize and accommodate these two typologies in their presentation of power.

Typology 1: Self-Centred Decision Makers

It is evident from the data that some Saudi decision-makers have personal interests or hidden agendas that do not seem to be declared. For instance, royal decrees or the initiatives of high-ranking officials do not usually offer clarification about what led to their issuance. These hidden agendas seem to be disclosed even from middle management and junior staff who are the actual players in the client-consultant relationship. In other words, decision-makers hire consultants to serve a hidden agenda that does not seem to be clear to the consultants themselves, nor to the junior staff who are tasked with communicating the knowledge that serves their top management's goals. A junior Saudi client stated:

"In top management, sometimes they will just ask for an international consultant, sometimes they will ask for special firm, and specific. Why? They have their own reasons."

This excerpt indicates that there is complete submission to the wishes of top management to the extent that reasons cannot be questioned. This is because power distance in Saudi Arabia is very high and subordinates cannot discuss the will of the powerful. Although this might not be limited to Saudi Arabian organisations, it seems to be evident that the high power distance has a serious impact on consulting projects in Saudi Arabia. This distance is evident in most social structures such as in family, where the ultimate unquestioned decision-maker is usually the father, in school, where it is the principal, and in government, where it is the King. The junior Saudi client showed with his tone and body language as well as his feedback that he is completely powerless to know why his top management hires

consultants, and what exactly he is expected to do with them. This means that understanding the hidden agenda might be impossible in some cases.

If the decision-makers are not open about the real reasons that drive their decisions, then how are junior clients and international consultants expected to uncover those reasons, and to what extent is this expected of them? In other words, the main issue with the hidden agenda at the hiring stage is that if consultants do not know the reasons why they are hired, they are unlikely to develop presentations that impress and satisfy the agenda of top management. Having a hidden agenda that serves personal goals may not make any sense to international consultants who come from western cultures that do not place much emphasis on the personal interests of the top and powerful. Therefore, in Saudi Arabia this issue seems to be recognized only by those who have considerable experience with Saudi clients. This is a great indicator as to how difficult it is for international consultants to notice and understand the role of hidden agendas in decision-making. An international consultant who has long experience in the region stated:

“I need to do whatever is needed to understand them. Do I always understand them entirely, question mark, because certain things are not discussed openly, to understand maybe a political or personal hidden agenda. I think there are three things, usually, that you need to understand from your client. One is what they want. The other one is what they need, and the other one is what is his hidden agenda. When the three of them are aligned, it's excellent. When what they want, and they need are not aligned, it can come to a bad plan, right? But the most difficult part is hidden one they because it's not so evident.”

Although this consultant had only five months' experience in Saudi Arabia, he had six years in Dubai, Qatar and Kuwait. This regional experience gave him a reasonable expectation of how his experience in Saudi Arabia would be. Therefore, although he knew that there would be an issue with a hidden agenda among his Saudi clients, the main challenge was his ability to understand what it was.

Another international consultant who had around nine years of experience with Saudi clients gave more detailed feedback about this issue:

“I believe it's a lack of honesty. That's what I think it is. There's basically three main factors, I think, you need to look at. One is power, the other one is ego, third one is money. not all of them, but a lot of people in power positions or so-called power positions are so egocentric, are so directed towards themselves that it is very difficult, and sometimes nearly impossible to work with them.”

The long experience of this international consultant with Saudi clients led him to realize that the hidden agenda is an issue of ego among decision makers. This raises the question about the conflict that may arise when consultants and junior clients are torn between what needs to be done to solve the problem, and what top management actually wants to accomplish.

It is notable that the interests of the top and powerful in Saudi Arabia seem to be more important than tackling issues and solving problems that do not result in more power for this group. In other words, the data suggests that decision-makers care more about their

personal short-term interests than the interests and goals of their organizations. This was confirmed by both international consultants and junior Saudi clients. Two international consultants stated:

"In most of the cases if not all, people were just looking to, you know, upgrade their own position without really looking at the overall real benefit for the organization in the end."

"My experience is that most of the people I work with were looking for hierarchy in an individual way, and showing off in an individual way. It's funny because everybody was like, "I did this.""

Two other junior Saudi clients stated:

"That's my point again is having international consultants, is that due to that power of those people - either top management or whatever - they try to make their consultants do what they want them to do, instead of having the consultants' input or point of view."

"A general manager wants to design solutions that make him look good, help him to maybe progress in his career, more than really tackling the project and solving it."

These confirmations from both sides suggest that contrary to what may appear rational, emphasis should not always be on the actual issue for which consultants are hired. Rather, consultants should concentrate on the interests of the top and powerful who are going to make the decision. This means that in their demonstration of power, international consultants should emphasize how their powerful features would help the top and powerful to achieve their interests.

Typology 2: Decision-Makers focused on Constructing Legitimacy and Avoiding Blame

This previously presented excerpt adds significant input to this typology:

"In top management, sometimes they will just ask for an international consultant, sometimes they will ask for special firm, and specific. Why? They have their own reasons."

The fact that top management seeks to hire a specific firm implies that there is something particular about it that top management wants. The analysis suggests that there is a typology of decision-makers who care more about constructing legitimacy than tackling real issues. Therefore, they tend to hire international consultancies. This is because these firms offer at least one powerful feature that helps those decision-makers legitimize their actions. The first feature is that, as per the researcher's understanding of his own national culture, there is a national impression of superiority that gives more credibility to Western firms. The second feature is that some of these firms are highly reputable with success stories, and fashionable methods. Clients believe that use of these features allows them to construct legitimacy and develop a shield against blame in case of failure.

In the context of the superiority of the Western consulting firms, Saudi clients stated:

“They really look highly at them. They think: ‘They are North American consultants, genius proposals will come from them’, even if as I said, the same idea is said many times by our hospital (staff).”

“I get proposals from an international consultation firm and a local one and they are very close in terms of the commercial proposal - by default you will select the international. Why? Because you will assume they are better.”

Although the second excerpt did not specify Western consulting firms, it was clear that is what was meant by ‘international firms’ because this was what was focused on during the interview, and also because the Saudi market is dominated by Western consulting firms. Both excerpts confirm that there is a broad national impression about the superiority of these firms. This is clear from the fact that people pay more attention and attribute more value to the suggestions made by ‘North American consultants’, even if similar suggestions are made by locals. Also, the same point is clear in the second excerpt when the interviewee uses the phrase ‘by default’ to explain how choosing an international firm over a local one is almost taken for granted. All this is a strong indication as to how the way Western firms are regarded allows clients to use them to construct legitimacy. This local impression that gives more credibility and legitimacy to international consultancies seems to be silent but also very effective. This is because some clients have an inexplicable ‘default’ belief in international consultancies that leads them to choose to hire them over local ones.

In the context of hiring international firms for their reputations, success stories and fashionable methods, a Saudi client mentioned that the top management may hire a specific international consulting firm because they have a reputation from their engagement with another local client.

“. . . a lot of success here is based on you know X company engaged with that firm, and you know they had come up with a vision, and you know they start to see the value of their engagement.”

This type of reputation and those success stories seem to be more important to top management than the ability of firms to produce effective advice that deals with a real problem. In other words, clients might decide to hire a specific firm because of its reputation and success stories, not because it is more suitable for the job.

This is because top management is focused more on establishing legitimacy than solving problems. The legitimacy here is not only about justifying the pursuit of specific objectives but about clients’ desire to avoid blame in case of failure. If clients happen to have reputable consultants advising them and executing plans, then they are absolved of responsibility for any failure. In other words, clients may seek to use the power of the consultants as a shield from blame in case of failure. A Saudi client explicitly states this:

“(if) such well-known consultants have been behind it, so you’re ok, nobody will blame you in the future. This is a problem again, it’s not their problem, it is our problem. But again, they exploit that and it becomes the norm when conducting work here.”

Thus, it is rational to suggest that, for top management, the firm’s previous engagements with other government organizations and the fame of self-claimed added value is enough to legitimize hiring that firm. Top management in Saudi Arabia uses this technique because they assume hiring a consulting firm with such a reputation makes them look as if they have exerted sufficient effort to fix the problem at hand. The effort expended here is mainly to show that top management has done enough due-diligence on the firm, and can be proven by its name or its successes in the local market. Consequently, in the case of failure, clients believe they can argue that the causes are out of their hands.

Interestingly, junior Saudi clients, such as the one who shared the above excerpt, seem to be aware of this issue and admit that this is the norm, and that it is a national issue. Additionally, they believe it is a *problem* that international consultants make every effort to exploit. The challenge for international consultants here remains their ability to present their power in ways that meet the legitimacy needs of the clients.

7.3.2 The Impact of the Consultants’ Overwhelming Sense of Power

The overwhelming sense of power among international consultants who have worked in Saudi Arabia has been classified into two typologies. Consultants seem to be overwhelmingly empowered firstly by their long international experience and secondly, by their organizational resources. The main conclusion of this sub-section is that international consultants’ sense of power can be overwhelming to the extent that they might feel too confident that their reputations, success stories, fashionable methods, and organizational resources give them the position and legitimacy to fit any job with any client. This overwhelming sense of power may lead consultants to ignore the influential typologies of power among their new clients. Failure to recognise those typologies may reduce the powers of consultants and render them obsolete.

Typology 1: Consultants are Overwhelmed by the Power of their International Experience

It is evident that international consultants with long international experience have the impression that since they have succeeded in different countries around the world, Saudi Arabia should not be any different. An international consultant stated:

“I have traveled to some 76 countries already. So, going in to Saudi was, it is a country, it’s not a big deal ... it is another country, another place to work and it wasn’t a major deal... moving into a different area was not a difficult thing for me.”

For this consultant, his experience resulted in confidence in his ability to work in any country. This is an overwhelming sense of power that unconsciously led this consultant to

believe that working in a culturally different country “was not a major deal” and should not be ‘difficult’ for him. Accordingly, an international consultant who takes the power of experience for granted, cannot be not expected to pay any attention to cultural elements on the client’s side that might reduce the effect of his power of experience.

In fact, because the above excerpt was spoken spontaneously, without knowledge that the focus of the research is the influence of culture on the work of consultants like him, the consultant replied without connecting the power of his experience with the culture of the country in which he operates. His demonstration of power in the above excerpt could be very similar to the way he demonstrates power to Saudi clients. In other words, this consultant might think that stating the length of his international experience will impress clients and motivate them to hire him. In reality, clients might not always be impressed by this kind of general demonstration of power. Instead, they might want to see someone who is attentive to and appreciative of the uniqueness of their culture and environment.

In other words, clients might be more impressed by someone who makes them feel special by acknowledging how different they are from the 76 other countries that he has visited. In this context, a Saudi client stated:

“They come with this understanding that, you know, ‘I did it all around the world, why I would fail in a place like Saudi Arabia’!”

This excerpt shows clients are aware and conscious of the power that seems to overwhelm international consultants, and, therefore, can be expected to be less influenced by this power. This was evident in the phrase ‘I did it all around the world, why would I fail in a place like Saudi Arabia’, which implies a generalized view about the world’s cultures and without a considerable attention to differences that make each culture unique. This excerpt shows an embedded disappointment among clients in the ways in which international consultants demonstrate their power of experience, which seems to be incomplete. For this client, the power of the experience is not enough. He wants to learn more about why such an international experience would make this consultant more suitable for the job. For instance, the international consultant might explain how his/her awareness about other cultures gave him/her an early understanding about the Saudi culture. If the consultant happened to work in a Latin country, he/she might mention that Saudi and Latin cultures seem to share similarities. Or, he/she might explain some similarities and differences between the cultures already worked in and what he/she expects to deal with in Saudi Arabia. In other words, clients want to see more specific attention to their culture and an appreciation of how it could be different from other. This would show that the consultants are aware that the culture of their clients could be different, and that they intend to use their long international experience to understand it, and to adapt their work accordingly.

Moreover, understanding of the client culture will not only allow consultants to enhance their use of their power of experience, it will also allow them to recognize the power

dynamics that drive decision-making on the client's side. Therefore, it can be *concluded* from the above analysis that international consultants should not rely overwhelmingly on their experience to convince clients of their suitability for the job. Instead, they should be more aware and explicitly acknowledge the uniqueness of the culture within which they intend work. Then, they can present their power in ways that acknowledge the clients' culture and power dynamics.

Typology 2: Consultants are Overwhelmed by the Power of their Organizational Resources

As well as feeling overwhelmingly empowered by their long international experience, international consultants who come from big consulting firms seem to rely on the power of their organizational resources and competitive features such as reputations, fashionable methods, success stories and size of knowledge systems. An international consultant from one of the most distinguished international consulting firms, known for its strategy solutions stated:

"I am lucky in the sense that (company name) as an organization is the global leader in the strategy implementation and has one of the most regarding methodologies for strategy implementation and strategy management. So, our best practice worldwide is recognized . . . I would say they are applicable all over the world because they have been applied all over the world."

This international consultant seemed to be very confident that the globally well-known name and practice will impress and work for any client in the world. It is apparent that he is overwhelmingly confident that his advice can be applied in any environment, in any culture. This strong declaration seems to be too confident and risky. This is because unless this consultant knows all cultures in the world, he is not able to make such a remark and give this premature judgment of the applicability of the company's advice. At the end of the day, the clients will decide if the key features of the advice presented are really applicable or not.

Another international consultant who has worked for one of the well-known international consulting firms stated:

"(Company name) definitely lies on knowledge, sits on a huge mountain of knowledge. It's sort of like the Internet, the Google. You have terabytes and terabytes of information which you could not possibly process in a single lifetime."

This consultant seemed to be confident that their massive knowledge system, which he described as 'Google', is a powerful feature that is expected to impress any client. Although clients might be impressed by the size of this knowledge system, the lack of indication as to how this system might be able to offer knowledge that is useful for Saudi clients specifically is another aspect of how overwhelming this sense of power is.

People are expected to be more impressed when they know that these huge knowledge systems add values to certain cultures. This was clear from an off-record discussion with one

of the Saudi clients about the differences between knowledge systems at business schools in Europe and Northern American. The main argument was that European business schools are more suitable for Saudi students because they have more cases that deal with Saudi Arabia, and the Middle East in general. Moreover, the faculty in these schools usually has more exposure to the Middle East than those who teach at American schools where most of their cases deal with North and South America, and some European links. This gives the students more chance to use relevant cases in their studies. The moral of this story is that despite the size of the knowledge system, the effect on clients would be more powerful if it had valuable and relevant output to offer to clients from specific cultures. Therefore, it can be concluded that from this story that it is important for international consultants who empower themselves with organizational resources to explain how these can be valuable to specific clients.

In conclusion, international consultants who feel overwhelmingly empowered by their long international experience and organizational resources should more careful about the ways in which their power demonstrations are made. They should be more specific about how their powerful features can be valuable to clients from specific cultures. For instance, international consultants can explain explicitly how their massive knowledge systems allow them to use inputs and insights from previous international projects to accommodate cultural constraints specific for the country in which they are currently working. Making general impressions related to international applicability of advice as in the first excerpt, or related to the size of existing knowledge systems without acknowledging the uniqueness of the current culture and showing a considerable attention to its difference might reflect negatively on the clients' impression.

7.4 Summary

This section suggests that the process of hiring international consultants in Saudi Arabia is influenced by prior knowledge and power. Firstly, it has been established that prior knowledge has a significant impact on the ways in which international consultants present themselves to new culturally-different clients. International consultants have been categorized into three typologies depending on the stock of prior knowledge they have about the culture of their clients. Each typology suggests a specific impact on the ways in which presentations are made, which results in different impressions among clients.

The first typology deals with international consultants who have a limited stock of prior knowledge about the country and its people. It has been concluded that the main impact of this is that consultants may give presentations that reduce their chances of winning the project. This is because culturally unaware consultants simply do not have the prior knowledge necessary to understand how their potential clients think or behave. Without such knowledge, consultants are unlikely to be able to correctly identify or understand what their potential clients might be interested in. Consequently, they will struggle to find, develop and communicate presentations that leave positive impressions among their clients.

The second typology deals with international consultants who have a considerable stock of inaccurate prior knowledge about the country and its people. This section suggests that this typology seems to be the more critical in terms of knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients at the hiring stage. This is because deploying inaccurate prior knowledge is highly likely to result in inappropriate presentations. Moreover, there is evidence that inaccurate prior knowledge could be negative, which means that it has a double effect resulting from negativity as well as inaccuracy.

Nevertheless, it has been concluded that inaccurate prior knowledge is likely to result in presentations that may give a negative impression to clients. Additionally, if the inaccurate prior knowledge happens to be negative, then it is likely to result in a low level of motivation among international consultants. This is likely to be reflected in their presentations, which adds to client's negative impression about the suitability of the consultant.

The third typology deals with international consultants who have a considerable stock of accurate prior knowledge about the country and its people. It has been concluded that the more accurate the prior knowledge about the clients' culture, the more likely consultants can communicate attractive presentations that result in positive impressions among clients. Accordingly, clients agree to form the consulting relationship. It is rational to assume that those who possess a considerable stock of accurate prior knowledge about the other side are likely to make attractive presentations that result in clients' motivation to establish a relationship. This is because people feel that they can bond and relate to those who know and appreciate their culture, and way of thinking and behaving (Schakett et al., 2011).

Secondly, in the context of the impact of power, it has been established that it plays a significant role in the hiring process. This is because the decision to hire consultants is highly centralized in Saudi Arabia. This approach is driven purely by cultural elements through which clients can be categorized into two typologies. The firstly deals with powerful clients who have a great sense of individualism, whereby their personal interests and goals seem to be more important than the collective or organizational goal. The challenge for international consultants with this typology is the ability to recognize this centralized approach and uncover the real hidden interests and goals driving it.

The second typology deals with clients who are concerned about constructing legitimacy for their decision to hire consultants. These clients are driven by their desire to avoid blame and protect themselves from the shame of failure, which seems to be an influential cultural issue that will emerge more clearly in the next chapter. The goal of constructing legitimacy has resulted in clients focusing on those who can offer them the needed shield against blame. The types of shields those clients are looking for can be reputations, fashionable methods or success stories. Those who can offer such shields are likely to be preferred over those who have expertise only. The challenge for international consultants with this typology is the ability to recognize this need for legitimacy, and to communicate the right components for its construction.

Nevertheless, although these typologies of Saudi clients seem to be crucial for the consultant hiring process, international consultants seem to be overwhelmed by the power of their experience, reputation and organizational resources to the extent that they might not be able to recognize the above client typologies. Failure to recognize the cultural elements that drive the clients' centralized decision may result in significantly reduced chances of international consultants being hired.

However, international consultants who are overwhelmed by this sense of power can be categorized into two interrelated typologies. The first deals with those who are overwhelmed by the power of their long international experience. International consultants who belong to this typology believe that their long experience allows them to work with any type of clients from any culture. In other words, they have lost their ability to differentiate between the cultures that govern the thinking, behaviour and interests of their new international clients. Consequently, they do not put any emphasis on understanding the cultural elements that drive their clients' decisions. This overwhelming sense of power among consultants seems to be known to clients, leaving consultants exposed. This implies that the power of confidence that stems from long experience will not be appreciated by clients if the uniqueness of their culture is not specifically acknowledged.

The second typology deals with those who are overwhelmed by the power of their organizational resources. International consultants who belong to this typology believe that their organizational resources such as reputation, fashionable methods and success stories

allow them to gain the needed legitimacy to attract any client from any culture. Those international consultants with this overwhelming sense of power are unlikely to recognize the cultural elements that drive clients' decisions. Consequently, they are unlikely to demonstrate their powerful features in ways that can be appreciated by international clients from different cultures.

Nonetheless, the above typologies can, indeed, overlap whereby the international consultant can be overwhelmed by his/her international experience as well as his/her organizational resources. Those who belong to both typologies may be more overwhelmed than those who lack either long experience or organizational resources.

Chapter 8: Findings (The Advice Development Stage)

Chapter 8

The Stage During the Interaction: The Advice Development Stage

Introduction

This chapter follows on from the different typologies that were introduced in the previous chapter regarding consultants and their different stocks of prior knowledge about clients and their cultures. The previous chapter argued that consultants are exposed to different degrees of knowledge, and that they are actively engaged in interpreting their own exposure to Saudi culture.

This chapter identifies that the extent to which knowledge is accommodated in the interaction between clients and consultants is dependent on the demonstration of the ongoing development of cultural *corrective actions* that emerge from the consultants' level of work experience. It also identifies that the main catalyst responsible for how knowledge is eventually accommodated by consultants and clients is *cultural conditioning*. This term seeks to capture the mechanism by which consultants seek to demonstrate instrumentality in the way they manage the business relationship over time. Eventually, the presence or absence of suitable corrective actions can lead to successful or unsuccessful demonstrations of cultural conditioning.

Analysis of the primary data demonstrates that how consultants utilise their experience of client culture depends on the level of their experience. As the following figure 11 illustrates, corrective actions can be conceptualised as a medium for cultural conditioning. Hence, corrective actions seek to theorize on the ongoing process by which the specifics of the business relationship are tackled in the process of the interaction. Cultural conditioning seeks to capture the overall degree to which knowledge is eventually accommodated by the client. However, this is not a static event that occurs at a single point in time. Rather, it is an emergent event that happens through over time in the ongoing process by which the two parties identify and negotiate their interests and ideas. The analysis shows that consultants take the initiative to identify the client's actions and reactions in order to achieve the desired level of conditioning over time.

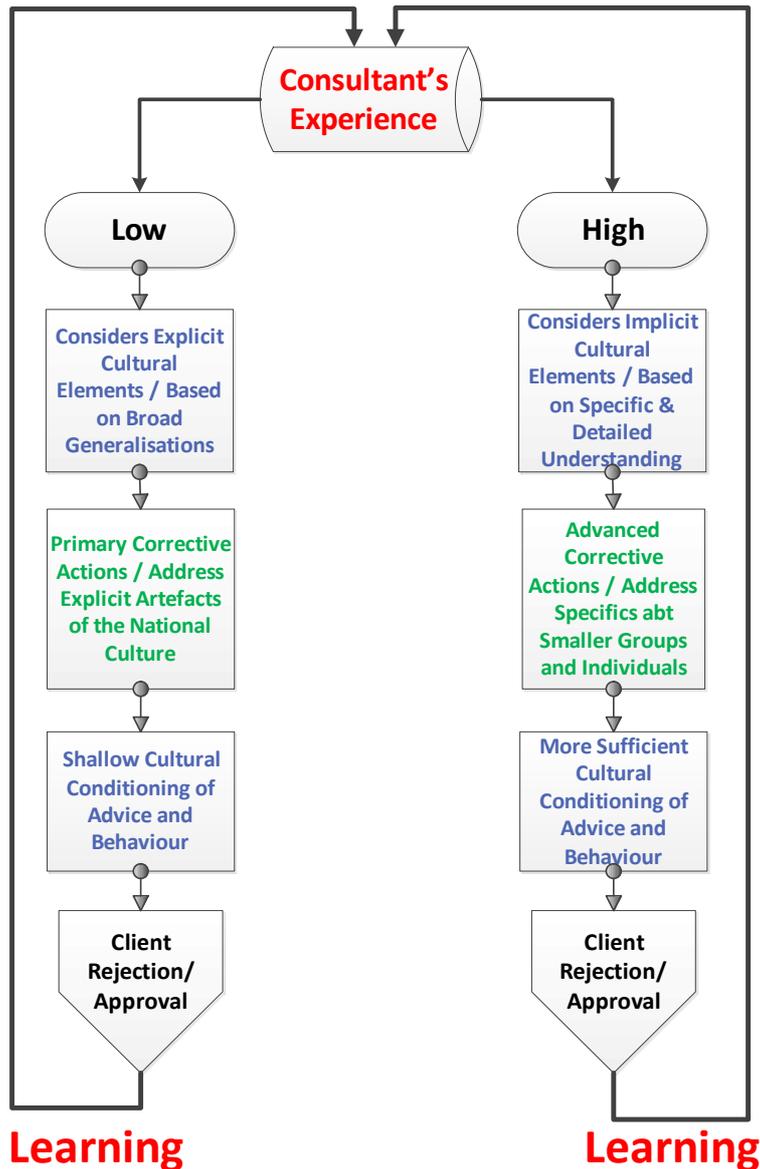


Figure 11: Impact of Experience on Patterns of Behaviour

As Figure 11 illustrates, the low or high stock of experience leads to two patterns of behaviour. If there is a low stock of experience, attention is paid to the client culture as an explicit system of values and beliefs that can be generalised. Thus, the consultant develops a greater association with norms that can be generalised across all clients from that culture. This behaviour indicates a link between the high level of uncertainty and the consultants' tendency to appropriate the uncertainty through generalization. The thesis proposes that this is a coping mechanism by which consultants seek to reduce information asymmetries and uncertainty.

In the case of more experienced consultants, the analysis indicates that a different coping strategy is employed. In particular, consultants seek to deploy corrective strategies according to the idiosyncrasy of the specific client. The idiosyncrasy of the client refers to how an individual client or a small group of clients think and behave. This means the

consultant pays specific attention to the socially-constructed cognitive and emotional system of the individual client or a small group of individuals with whom she/he is engaged. Although individuals might share vast common ground with their national and organisational cultures, there are specific implicit and explicit differences that distinguish individuals from the generalised cultural norms and values known in the wider environment. In other words, although national and organisational cultures may offer general understanding about how individuals may think and behave, there are specific idiosyncrasies that cannot be discovered without understanding of the implicit values and norms that distinguish individuals of the same culture from each other. This understanding cannot be obtained without a considerable stock of experience gained among people from that environment. Thus, instead of generalising culture as a generalised system of beliefs, the analysis shows that consultants should pay greater attention to deeper cultural specifics such as power relations, personal interests and personal ways of thinking. Different cases are used to illustrate how consultants believe that they are able to overcome formal job roles by having access to specific client members who might not be directly involved in the business assignment but who can exert decision-making power over the process.

The overall conceptual implication of this analysis is that the client-consultant relationship is a dynamic and fluid process of development that eventually reaches a state of 'conditioning'. The extent to which cultural conditioning is successful depends on the deployment of prior corrective practices with which some level of alignment has been reached between the two parties. The extent to which suitable corrective actions are deployed depends on the level of experience consultants have in their clients' environment.

The chapter begins by demonstrating the analysis that supports the above propositions, and then offers a thorough discussion that theorises the main implications. The structure of the following section is demonstrated in figure 12.

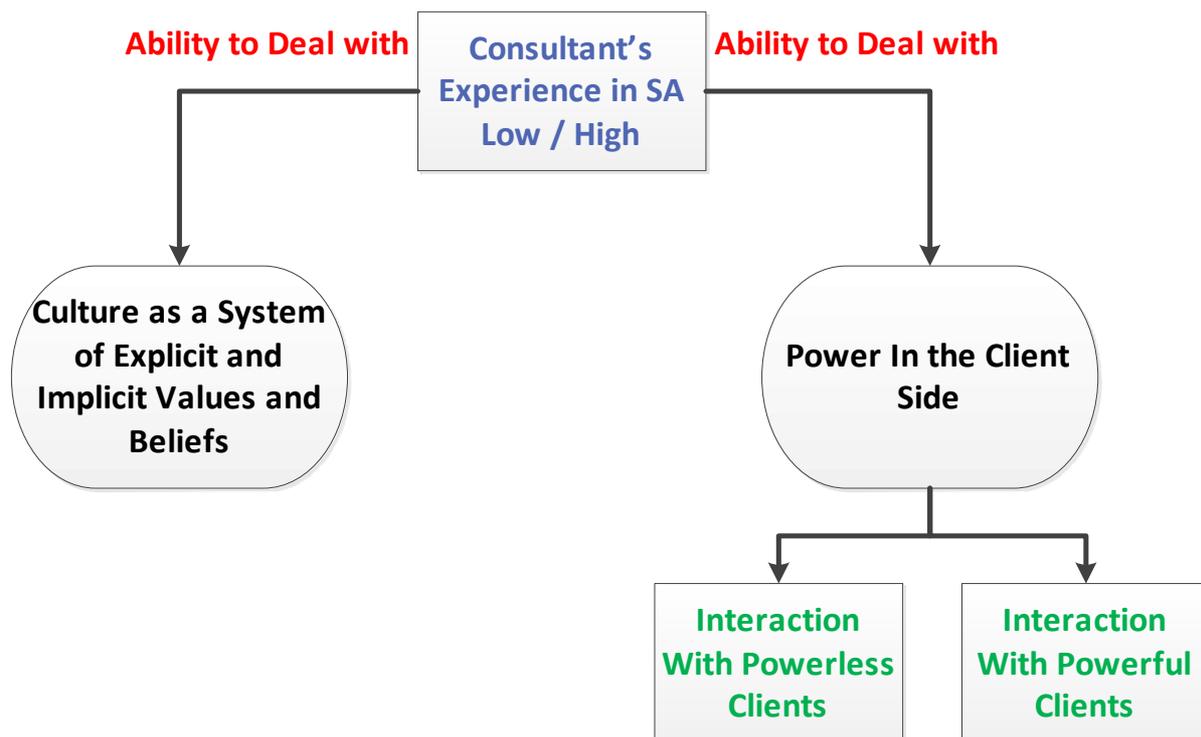


Figure 12: Structure of Chapter 8

8.2 The Role of Consultants' Experience in Their Cultural Conditioning of Behaviour and Advice: The Ability to Address Explicit and Implicit Cultural Elements

This section examines how experience of working with different clients affects how consultants utilize their knowledge about the clients' culture. Utilization of consultants' knowledge can be seen in the extent to which they are perceived to culturally condition their behaviour and advice. Therefore, the discussion will focus on how experienced and low-experienced international consultants deal with the implicit and explicit cultural values and beliefs during the stage of the consulting interaction in which advice is developed. The outcome of the discussion will make clear that the more experience international consultants have with their clients, the more likely their behaviour and advice is to be sufficiently culturally conditioned. This is because the more experience international consultants have, the more able they are to recognize and accommodate implicit cultural norms, values and assumptions.

Demonstrating compliance against clients' implicit and explicit cultural values and beliefs is discussed in the analysis under four main elements: the gender issue, the role of emotions in Saudi culture, the un-willingness to socialize, and the lack of urgency.

The data shows that international consultants vary in their ability to recognize cultural values and beliefs, and in their ability to deploy corrective actions that result in sufficient cultural conditioning. The variation here is derived from the different levels of experience of

those consultants. The following four sub-sections will discuss each of the above cultural elements and how consultants vary in their recognition of those elements and the corrective actions they deploy to culturally condition their behaviour and advice.

The discussion in each of the following sub-sections will begin firstly by describing each cultural element and its impact. Secondly, it will identify how low-experienced consultants view those cultural elements and the corrective action they tend to take to deal with them. Thirdly, it will identify how experienced consultants view the cultural elements and how they carefully deploy suitable corrective actions for every specific situation and client, or a specific group of clients. In other words, the discussion will take a comparative form to distinguish the difference between experienced and low-experienced international consultants in the extent to which they culturally condition their behaviour and advice.

8.2.1 The Gender issues

Baki (2004) argues that women in Saudi Arabia seem to have a different situation than the women in other parts of the world. This can be seen in their dress code, such as wearing veils, and rights, such as the right to drive a car or travel without permission from a guardian. Also, women in Saudi Arabia are restricted from mixing with men in public or work places. Therefore, there are designated entrances for women in buildings and buses, and segregated work spaces. Therefore, according to (Almunajidd, 1997), the situation of the Saudi women is a distinctive subject in the media as well as the academic literature. Thus, this chapter begins with a discussion of the ability of consultants to recognize and accommodate implicit and explicit cultural aspects in relation to the gender issue in Saudi Arabia. The following figure 13 illustrates the structure of this section.

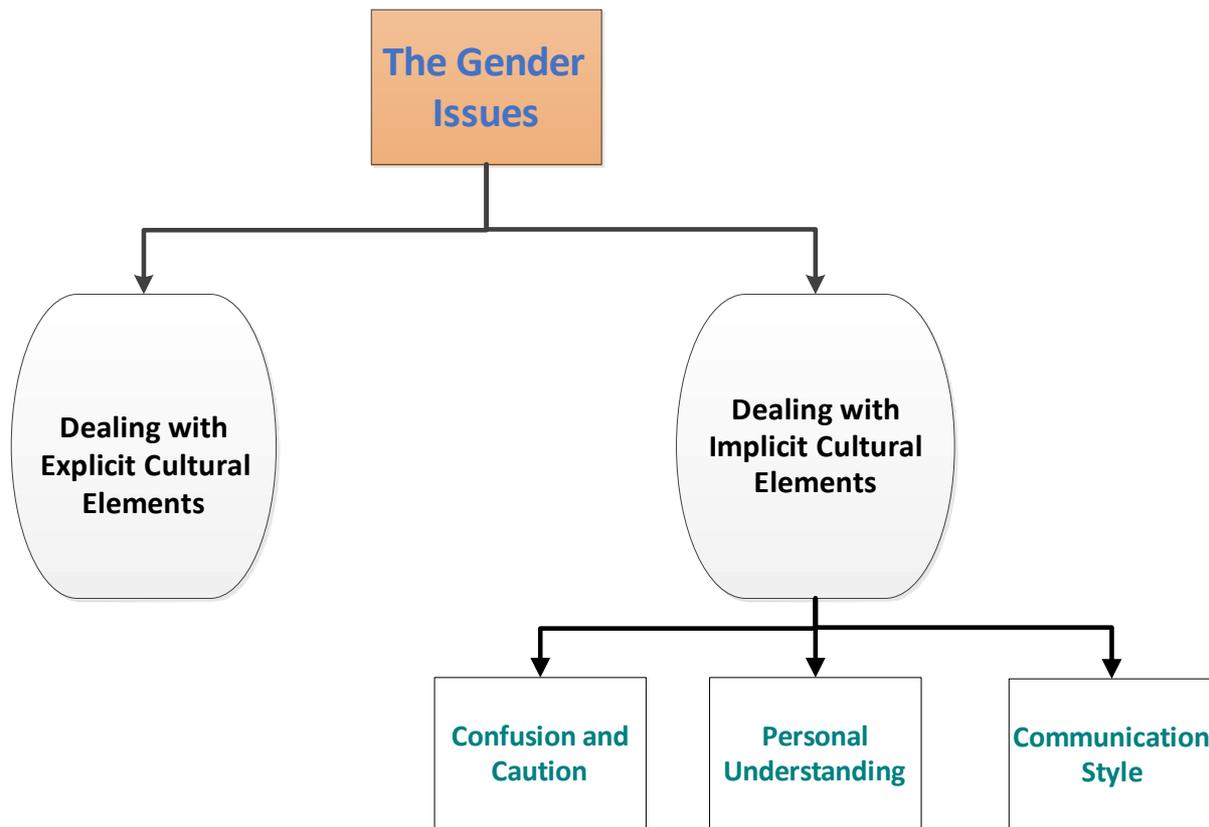


Figure 13: Structure of Section of Gender Issues

The reason for beginning the discussion with a presentation of the gender issue in Saudi Arabia is that this it has an explicit as well as an implicit aspect. Firstly, the explicit aspect deals with the formal segregation of males and females in the country. This aspect is considered explicit because there is a clear law that governs it in Saudi Arabia. Secondly, the implicit aspect deals with the implicit cultural norms that govern the ways in which Saudi females dress, interact, work, speak and greet others, which may be foreign to varying degrees among international consultants. This implicit aspect does not appear to be truly understandable to those who come from cultures that put a great emphasis on gender equality. Therefore, starting the discussion by elaborating on the gender issue allows us to bring rich comparative arguments that make clear the differences between the corrective actions for cultural conditioning deployed by experienced international consultants, and those deployed by low-experienced consultants.

The Cultural Conditioning of Low-Experienced Consultants: Focus on Explicit Cultural Elements

In the context of explicit segregation between males and females in Saudi Arabia, there is a law that dictates that men and women cannot mix in the workplace. Therefore, workplaces tend to be separate with men and women accommodated in different sections. This is applied in schools and universities with male-only and female-only campuses; in restaurants

where there are sections for men, and those for women and families; and in hospitals where there are separate wards for female and male patients. Segregation between men and women can be found almost everywhere in Saudi Arabia; even in big family parties such as weddings, women and men are hosted in two different venues with different activities. This seems to be something Saudi Arabia is known for. (Almunajidd, 1997; Baki, 2004).

Although this is an explicit cultural element in Saudi Arabia (Almunajidd, 1997; Baki, 2004), international consultants with low level experience seem to struggle with this issue. Although they might be able to recognize it because it is clearly apparent, and the country is known for it, the struggle stems from the fact that they may not understand the extent to which this segregation is effective or the cultural objectives and meaning behind its application. Saudi clients shared their experiences of British consultants working with them on their first assignments in Saudi Arabia:

“The British company, (sent) us school transportation (options) ... they thought to throw the boys and girls (in together) . . . to use the same bus, which is not happening in Saudi.”

“They gave us one solution to have a bus assembly point for the girls The starting point would be at 5 o'clock in the morning. Our culture does not allow the girls to walk alone in the road to the assembly point.”

“The male and female issue in Saudi and the segregation between them ... now the country is more open, to be honest with you, not like before, but still we have this business problem. (A) small example - one of the consultants coming from UK to do quality assurance for the exam that we are doing. They request us put a camera on each PC while the students do the exam. And all the females rejected this so the project was stopped.”

The first and second excerpts were shared by a Saudi client who explained his struggle with low-experienced British consultants who had provided culturally inappropriate advice. This client works for a government-owned company that specialises in providing supportive services to the public education sector. This client's struggle with the British consultants stemmed from the fact that they were not able to culturally condition their advice to accommodate the cultural conditions of females in Saudi Arabia.

In the first excerpt, the consultant had not culturally conditioned his advice to accommodate the cultural constraint that segregates males from females in Saudi Arabia. Although the consultant might have recognised that such segregation exists, he might not have understood the extent to which it is applied, which is implicit and subjective. The consultant may have thought that segregation takes place between adults only, but not children. This may be spontaneous and unconscious western thinking. However, the rejection of his culturally inappropriate advice would force him to apply a chain of corrective actions through which he can culturally condition his advice to be culturally appropriate.

The first corrective action to take was to correct his understanding about the extent to which segregation is applied, and that children are included in gender-based segregation. A second corrective action would aim to generate culturally conditioned advice that segregates children. The clients' reaction would contribute to the consultant's experience. This means the consultant would be more able to recognise such cultural elements and culturally condition his/her advice to accommodate them.

In the second excerpt, the consultant was challenged with another less explicit gender issue namely that his lack of prior knowledge meant he did not know that females, especially children, should be always accompanied by male family members. Therefore, his advice that suggests allocating assembly points for buses to which female students should walk alone at five o'clock in the morning was rejected. The main challenge this consultant faces is his ability to understand the extent to which protection of female children is operative. In other words, the fact that some explicit cultural elements have implicit extensions may reduce the ability of outsiders to fully understand their extent of their application. Moreover, the ability to understand the implicit extensions of explicit cultural elements is subject to the consultants' own experience, as well as own culture. For instance, in the context of assembling girls at 5 o'clock in the morning, there is a hidden cultural value that stems from a very protective attitude toward females meaning they should always be accompanied and never be subject to any sort of discomfort or danger such as walking long distances in the street, especially early in the mornings where roads are quiet. For an international consultant who comes from one of Europe's big cities, walking in the streets in the early morning is normal. This is because working hours, the infrastructure, and the ways in which cities are designed have resulted in a life style that encourages people to wake up early, so they can walk to their workplace or bus/train station. Accordingly, for an international consultant who is used to this life style, suggesting such an option is uncontroversial. But, for Saudis, this is not normal and triggers the sense of protection they have for their female children who should be segregated from male children and always guarded until they become someone else's responsibility, such as teachers or drivers. The challenge that international consultants face in such a scenario is that their interpretation and appreciation of the Saudi culture in this regard may vary, and it is entirely subject to their experience and socially constructed cognitive and emotional systems.

Rejection of the consultant's advice would push him to apply a corrective action to his understanding about the situation of females in the country, then apply another set of corrective actions to culturally condition his advice in a way that accommodates this cultural issue. The corrective actions would need to deal with the issue of walking alone in the street, and the timing of the assembly. Accommodating these two issues would result in new advice that is more culturally-conditioned. Nevertheless, these clients' reactions contribute to the consultants' experience whereby they become more able to recognise implicit cultural elements and apply appropriate corrective actions that lead to sufficient cultural conditioning.

The third excerpt was shared by a Saudi client who also works for a government-owned company that provides supportive services to training programs run by the Ministry of Labour. The client explains the culturally inappropriate advice that his British consultants offered. According to this client, the consultant suggested putting a camera on each PC to record the exams of the female students. The rejection came from the students themselves who did not accept being filmed because in Saudi culture females believe that they are entitled to a high level of privacy including their own space and covering with veils in public. Filming the exam activity was perceived as an invasion of their privacy and unacceptable. The female students were against the exam being conducted in such a way, which resulted in the consulting project being 'stopped'.

The fact that the rejection came from the Saudi users of the technology and not from the Saudi client who sponsored the project has serious implications about the ability of consultants to recognise and accommodate cultural elements such as female privacy. Although some cultural elements may be perceived as explicit to some people, they may be implicit or imperceptible to others. For instance, although the above client is a Saudi national born and raised in the country, he did not realise that the advice offered would be deemed culturally-inappropriate by the end-users. This might be because the client is a male who did not understand how female users might perceive this solution. More importantly, if the Saudi client is not able to recognise this cultural element, then a low-experienced consultant is also likely not to notice it. Nevertheless, both the male Saudi client and the international consultant are likely to learn that such solutions cannot be applied in the future, and therefore alternative solutions should be offered.

It appears from the above examples that the less explicit the cultural element is, the greater the challenge for low-experienced consultants to recognise and accommodate it. Consequently, it is important to highlight here that because low-experienced international consultants are expected to be challenged by explicit cultural values and beliefs, the corrective actions on their personal understanding and on their adaptation of their advice will be limited to the level at which those explicit cultural elements are apparent. In other words, low-experienced consultants are not expected to be creative or considerate in the construction of their advice to the extent that they offer deeper cultural conditioning to address less explicit cultural values and beliefs. Therefore, their cultural conditioning is expected to address the explicit cultural values and beliefs only. This will become clearer when we discuss the implicit cultural elements and the corrective actions that experienced consultants take to address them in their cultural conditioning practices.

These two excerpts explain how people with such low experience and shallow prior knowledge perform primary corrective actions to culturally condition their understanding and adapt their advice to accommodate this cultural element. This happens whenever they receive a reaction from their clients that suggest their advice is culturally inappropriate. In

other words, they apply instant corrective actions according to the reaction they receive. This can be clearly seen in both excerpts.

The Cultural Conditioning of Experienced and Low-Experienced Consultants: a Focus on Implicit Cultural Elements

The previous sub-section demonstrated how recognising and understanding explicit cultural elements is challenging for low-experienced consultants. The less explicit the cultural element, the less able the consultant is to recognise and understand it. This means the consultant's ability to apply suitable corrective actions is dependent on the extent to which he recognises and understands the explicit cultural element. If this is challenging for low-experienced consultants, implicit cultural elements pose even more of a challenge.

This sub-section focuses on implicit cultural elements to elaborate on the challenge that consultants are expected to face. This will allow for a clearer explanation of how a consultant's experience plays a crucial role in his ability to recognise and understand implicit cultural elements, and consequently apply suitable corrective actions that lead to sufficient cultural conditioning.

This sub-section begins by elaborating on the implicit cultural elements related to the situation of Saudi women. Then, using one of the insightful excerpts, it analyses three key insights that show the difference between experienced and low-experienced international consultants in their ability to recognise and deal with implicit cultural elements. A Saudi female client shared an insightful view about the unique situation of the Saudi women:

“As a Saudi female, it's kind of different. I mean this situation of the female in Saudi Arabia, it's kind of like special, I would say. It's not something that they commonly see in other regions of the world. They wouldn't know the way of greeting a Saudi female, how it's going to be. It's different from one to another. The way we dress, the way we look, the way we... it's just, it has a special thing around it.”

The above excerpt offers a clear indication about the extent to which the situation of Saudi women is implicit and hard to understand for outsiders. Describing the situation as 'special' and not 'commonly' seen in other parts of the world indicates a level of uniqueness that requires careful attention to be fully understood. This Saudi client offers an example of the ways of greeting, which seem to be different to other parts of the world. According to Hassanain (1994), what makes this even more challenging is the fact that there are implicit cultural elements that govern the ways in which Saudi women are greeted. For instance: it is culturally-inappropriate for most women to shake hands with a man, it is important for both sides to avoid eye contact while greeting, and it is important to keep enough distance between men and women while greeting.

Moreover, the interviewee indicates that the ways Saudi women dress are unique, which adds another implicit angle that deals with the cultural meaning of the dress code, and the cultural protocols imposed. In terms of dress code, Saudi women are known for wearing a black cloak, headscarf or even Burqaa or Niqab that covers most of the face apart from the eyes. This dress style imposes implicit cultural protocols related to how interaction with these women takes place. In fact, there are some traditional ways that govern the interaction between men and Saudi women. Because this dress sends messages related to modesty, men are expected to be conservative in their interaction and conversations should always be formal and straight to the point. Moreover, women are not expected to stop and talk about any subjects that are not related to business. If there is a need to discuss a business-related matter, the discussion should be arranged for a certain time and place. So, meeting and greeting spontaneously in places such as 'corridors' are not considered to be appropriate and might feel and be seen as awkward if they happen. This is all part of the conservative culture that seems to dominate the entire country. The key conclusion from this insight is to establish that there are implicit cultural norms that are not easy to recognise or understand, yet they play a crucial role in the interaction between international consultants and Saudi female clients. The same Saudi female client continued to explain how these implicit cultural norms govern interactions between Saudi women and international consultants with different levels of experience:

They {low-experienced consultants} were worried about the way they would deal with us. Because it's at the end (of the day), it's not only the traditions, it's also the personal way of the female character. Some of them would agree on things some others will not. Some of them will not really be open and speaking with strangers, especially men ... (they) cannot go (and) get coffee together ... I would think they would be worried and kind of cautious. They might be not used to (that) and that would make them kind (of) confused, especially at the first impression. Later on, I feel that this would just be ... it will disappear."

With me, it's never lasting for long. They would be cautious at the beginning and then things will just change. So, just assure them that this will never be a constraint when it comes ... and we are also a community that is kind of like led by a lot of traditions. So, I just make sure to make them know that this is not influencing the work environment ... Or try to understand more about the place I'm working in. Not necessarily talk about business. Sometimes you need to just socialize in a way just to make that consultant understand you more. And then they serve you better that you want.

This needs to be defined as a risk, it's a communication risk. You know what I mean? I cannot reach you if something happened, or I cannot really interact with you normally if I see you (in the) corridor just to tell you something or just to talk to you. So, I think that it should be highlighted as a risk with the international consultant. I can see it as a risk because it will delay the communication ... it will delay a lot of things; the way people interact with each other would affect the overall outcome."

The above excerpt offers three *interrelated* key insights that will be discussed and supported by more feedback about experienced and low-experienced international consultants. Firstly, it suggests that new consultants who have a low level of experience in the country are expected to be 'worried', 'cautious', and 'confused'. Secondly, it suggests that there is a need for consultants to understand their clients on a personal level, which was clear from the statement "*Sometimes you need to just socialize in a way just to make that consultant understand you more. And then they serve you better*". Thirdly, dealing with Saudi females is a '*communication risk*', which implies that there are certain ways of communicating that should be applied when international consultants deal with Saudi females. These insights indicate the difference between experienced and less experienced consultants in terms of how they understand and deal with the situation of females in Saudi Arabia.

Firstly, in the context of international consultants with a low level of experience in Saudi Arabia being 'worried', 'cautious', and 'confused', those consultants might come with prior knowledge that portrays Saudi female as extremely conservative, difficult to interact with because of the face cover, shy and guarded because they cannot be approached without prior permission. Moreover, this prior knowledge may include some negative information from the international media such women's rights, inequality and oppression, which uses the case of Saudi females as an example. This knowledge would make inexperienced consultants 'worried', 'confused', and 'cautious' to the extent that an international consultant described his careful interaction with Saudi females as '*stepping on egg shells*', as an indication as to how careful and cautious he is. Such inexperienced international consultants may not recognise that Saudi females differ on a personal level or consider the possibility that the generalised image may not be representative of all Saudi women. Therefore, inexperienced consultants are subject to the negative impact of being 'worried', 'cautious', and 'confused', which increases the communication risk by slowing down the interaction.

Moreover, the struggle with this generalised image and the feelings it creates is expected to be greater when it is confirmed by conservative females who might deliberately try to avoid interacting with international consultants as long as they feel there is no need for it. An international consultant stated that this behaviour, along with the way Saudi women dress, results in rejection and discomfort:

"Especially in formal working space, the veil, it creates a huge barrier, it brings a lot of (bad perceptions) for westerners. It creates a lot of rejection in our inner values. At least for me it creates ... It's the matter of some of the fears or some of the underlying values about gender equality between and especially with the Burqa."

The above excerpt shows that if the consultant has a generalized image about the female individuals he interacts with, then he is likely to feel rejected and worried. In other words, unless this he is reassured by the female client that dealing with her should not be any different than dealing with a regular client, he is likely to struggle with this barrier along

with negative feelings of rejection, and conflict with his values. This implies that inexperienced consultants are unlikely to be motivated to interact with individuals about whom they have such feelings. Therefore, the progress and quality of knowledge exchange is likely to be low.

However, experienced international consultants do not seem to be concerned by this issue. In fact, they tend to mention it as a normal way of communication that they are used to. Experienced international consultants stated:

“The conversation that we would have with Saudi females, we are purely professional”

“I have seen some these experiences. Some very shy females who (are) highly protected (by) the family and because of that they have difficulties to communicate with me as a foreign man. The others are extremely open-minded, communicated in all the way, are doing jokes etc. I have both. And what I recognize quite often (is that) the females are more passionate about things than the males, maybe the males are sometimes more lazy than females.”

The experienced consultant in the first excerpt, who has over seventeen years of experience in Saudi Arabia, did not seem to be triggered by any concerns related to interacting with Saudi females. This was clear because the researcher had to repeat the question in a different way, so it would make sense to him. However, his reply was clear that interactions with Saudi females should be professional. The use of the word ‘professional’ here is an indication that no personal or non-business-related discussions can take place with Saudi females. Clearly, this consultant’s experience has led him to overcome this challenge to the extent that he may not even consider it to be a challenge any more.

The second excerpt from another experienced consultant shows that his experience allows him to understand the implicit cause of the conservative ways in which Saudi females interact. More importantly, this consultant’s experience seems to allow him to differentiate between degrees of conservatism in Saudi females, which implies a personal understanding of his female clients.

Secondly, in the context of the need for consultants to understand their clients on a personal level, experienced international consultants seem to have a great deal of input to share about their understanding of the differences between Saudi females. This means that they have overcome the issue of not being able to understand how to interact with Saudi females. In fact, they shared details that suggest they are able to deal with Saudi females according to their groups, which they know how to classify. In other words, they seem to understand the implicit differences between Saudi women. For instance:

“I do work with Saudi women, I have the good fortune of one my customers that is the most ... I want to say the right thing ... most dependable, most reliable, one of the ones that if I need something I can ask her and she will get it done, because I’ve had better experience with her than her male counterparts. So, I do work with her quite frequently. I’m actually

just starting a part aspect of the project where I am working with her more and her team, and her team is entirely women.”

“I think, again, Saudi females (are) a very big group. (There are) very traditional Saudi females, (and) very western Saudi females. In this spectrum you have everything. Obviously, there’s an element of communication, not being in the same room, not being able to spend the same time together. Here (in) communication there is communication that (involves) a lot of touching and you can’t touch women (in Saudi), that makes it different. Male communication’s completely different from female.”

The first excerpt suggests that experienced international consultants are able to overcome the generalized image about Saudi females and offer a specific example about a specific female client. This implies that the experience of this international consultant has allowed him to culturally condition his understanding so that his views become personal rather than national. In other words, he has culturally conditioned his interaction to accommodate the personal nature of his Saudi female client.

The second excerpt was shared by an experienced Spanish consultant who had spent six years in the Gulf region. The excerpt shows a great understanding of the differences between female groups in Saudi Arabia. The fact that he understands that there are many Saudi females who do not fall under the umbrella that portrays all Saudi women as conservative and difficult to deal with is an important understanding that cannot be gained without experience. Thus, this consultant is likely to culturally condition his interaction in ways that accommodate the cultural constraints of every female group to achieve a smooth and efficient interaction.

Thirdly, the suggestion that dealing with Saudi females is a ‘*communication risk*’ implies that there are certain ways of communicating that should be applied when international consultants deal with Saudi females. Experienced international consultants seem to be aware of the best ways of reducing this communication risk. For instance, the above experienced Spanish consultant explained how he manages to include the input of female members in a male-oriented environment:

“Usually, non-female friendly environments make the presence of senior female executives from the client, or female consultants from the consulting firm, very rare. So, the whole environment becomes very male oriented with little female PoV (Point of View) introduced. If a case like the one you propose was faced, the obvious answer would be to prepare the meeting in advance and incorporate the female comments into the narrative without mentioning the source to avoid biased reactions.”

The deep understanding of the situation of females in Saudi Arabia gained by this experienced consultant from his six-year experience in the region, allowed him to recognize that there are important inputs/views that can be contributed by female members in a male-oriented environment that might be missed in certain situations. Therefore, he believes the best approach is to include these views by holding a meeting in advance

without the presence of the male members. Moreover, he seems to have a deep understanding about potential conflict that might lead to bias or reflect negatively on the female members, and therefore he would anonymize their input. This creative corrective action stems from great confidence supported by rich experience that elegantly and smartly address implicit details.

Corrective actions extend from the cultural conditioning of the consultants' behaviour to the that of their suggested advice. In terms of the advice, experienced consultants are expected to be more able to overcome cultural conflicts and deliver solutions that suit the clients' cultural needs. For instance, an experienced consultant who has strong views against any form of discrimination especially against women stated:

"I am very much against discrimination of any form against women. Against any sort of discrimination ...Typically what happens if there are such issues (suggesting segregation between men and women in the consulting advice), the client will typically tell me. You'll come and tell something, and they will say, "Okay, this one, I don't think it's working because we cannot have the woman being the manager for this." I say, "Okay, It's ridiculous, you know that." He says, "Yes, okay, whatever, I don't necessarily agree, but it will do more here and so on, so let's do this." I say, "Okay, let's do it your way, it's your project at the end (of the day). Let's say, I am not preparing in advance, I am accepting whatever (the) client wants. Unless it's (something) absurdly really ridiculous which I think it's against (the) best interests of the client."

It is clear from the above that the experienced consultant has learnt that the best corrective action to be taken when clients ask for input that conflict with his values and beliefs is just to offer what has been requested. In other words, despite the cultural conflict, the experienced consultant will accept the cultural constraints that have been requested by the client. However, there seems to be a limit to the cultural constraints that consultants are willing to accept.

Another experienced international consultant who worked in Saudi Arabia for seventeen years shared his experience of culturally conditioning his advice for Saudi clients:

"When I built (company's structure) we were sort of... the 'Mutawaas' (religious police) were around. It was pretty hectic in the streets, but they didn't come to the offices. So, what we did is we created an office, but we created a woman's area and man's area. But we also had a sort of a shared area. And after I left, I think it was two years ... the Mutawee arrived one day."

In the above excerpt, the consultant describes his experience in developing an internal environment structure for a new workplace that allows all employees to interact more quickly and easily in a government-owned company that employs males and females to offer creative online payment methods. The example shows how the long experience of this consultant allowed him to be creative in the way he addressed cultural and legal constraints that dictate males and females should be segregated while offering a shared space that

allows employees to meet and interact legally and comfortably. If an inexperienced consultant was handling this situation, he/she might be puzzled by the extent to which such a constraint is effective, and the best possible ways to tackle it. An inexperienced consultant might not understand why there is segregation and might become angry on knowing that outside parties such as the religious police might interfere with his/her work. This suggests that cultural constraints require self-control and the ability to culturally condition the suggested advice. If consultants allow these cultural constraints to affect their emotional states, then they might become unable to offer appropriate advice.

8.2.2 The Role of Emotions in the Saudi Culture

This is an implicit cultural element that is not expected to be recognized by low-experienced consultants. Therefore, the discussion about the corrective actions and cultural conditioning in relation to this cultural element will focus on the input received from clients and experienced consultants. However, an example of the inability of low-experienced consultants to deploy culturally-appropriate corrective actions will be presented. This example shows how difficult it is for low-experienced international consultants to recognize and understand cultural elements related to the role of emotions in Saudi culture, and how, consequently, they are unable to recognize the corrective actions necessary to deal with these untestable cultural elements.

The critical role of emotions in social interactions in Saudi Arabia has been admitted repeatedly by clients, and noticed by international consultants. A Saudi client stated that the Saudi culture is an 'emotional culture':

"I believe our culture is an emotional culture and I'm not sure about other cultures, but I believe (they are) less emotional in their culture than our culture. If there are emotions in the equation, of course it will affect it [the interaction]"

Although this client acknowledges that emotions exist in other cultures, the fact that their distinctive role in Saudi culture is admitted to means that it has more force and impact than in other cultures. Knowledge exchange interactions are not immune from the influence of emotions in the Saudi culture. The most apparent influence of emotions is that people put more emphasis on them when they communicate issues, criticize, or present new solutions that may undermine or disrespect others. A Saudi client explained that:

"We hate criticism, so if you find a consultant that is very tough and honest, usually he will be cast out. They don't want to work with them, they want to work with somebody (who) will do it [the consulting task] in a very delicate way, and that affects the way you really can have transfer of knowledge between cultures, especially between Saudis and others."

The use of the word 'delicate' implies that issues must be unveiled to clients in a highly sensitive manner to avoid triggering negative emotions that may jeopardise the whole consulting activity. Thus, it is suggested that delicacy should be a distinctive feature in the corrective actions consultants deploy to culturally condition their interactions.

This is a fundamental consideration because the failure to use such 'delicate' ways of communicating may jeopardise the entire consulting project. An international consultant shared an example of an incident with a low-experienced consultant who did not pay attention to the sensitive role of emotions in his interaction with Saudi clients:

"Either (he) has been too firm and then he has found his exit visa waiting for him, because somebody didn't like that. Because it doesn't take much in the Government context, as I said, that deep culture, to offend somebody. It really is very easy to do that, you don't have to say much, you can just have an opinion and suddenly, "Who do you think you are? You're the guy who has dropped this opinion." I don't think like that. And then, you are done for the rest of your life. You will never fix your relationship with that person."

This consultant offers clear indicators to how fragile client-consultant relationships in Saudi Arabia are. This is clear in the phrase *'it doesn't take much in the Government context, as I said, that deep culture, to offend somebody. It really is very easy to do that, you don't have to say much, you can just have an opinion'*. The impact of such a high level of emotional sensitivity to criticism can be so severe as to jeopardise the entire consulting project. This is clear from the fact that the consultants might end up being deported or having a permanently broken relationship with some clients if their approach is not 'delicate' enough.

This is a challenging cultural issue for those who come from the West with limited or no experience in the Saudi environment because the role of emotions in business relationships in the Western world seems to be minimal. An international consultant explained that Westerners can find it hard to pick up on the subtle role of emotions:

"So those are kinds of things that can be quite subtle to Westerners"

The claim that Western consultants are not sensitive to the subtle role of emotions in the Saudi culture might be explained by the fact that emotions in business environments in Western cultures are not as intense and apparent as they are in Saudi culture. Therefore, low-experienced consultants may spontaneously share criticism that may lead to embarrassment or loss of face for a powerful Saudi client. There is no way for the low-experienced consultant to know about the role of emotions or need for a delicate face-saving approach until he/she is subject to an emotional reaction. The problem is the possibility that the reaction might lead to the termination of the contract.

Moreover, accommodating the element of emotion might be challenging for some international consultants, not because they struggle with recognizing and understanding the role of emotions in their interaction, but because the corrective actions that they need to take to accommodate the emotions might conflict with their own cultures. For instance, an international consultant explains how this may require western consultants to lie:

"(In the west), you would just say: 'Sorry but this person is not performing. I was supposed to receive A, B and C.' Here (in Saudi Arabia) you don't say it, because maybe sometimes you need to lie to save face."

The notion that people in Saudi Arabia would rather lie than unveil a critical truth that may lead to the loss of face for someone indicates that international consultants may need to perform corrective actions that may conflict with their own beliefs and values. This is another cultural conflict that touches fundamental cultural values in Saudi Arabia; while it is acceptable in certain cultures (such as the Saudi Arabian culture) to lie to someone to preserve their emotions, in other cultures this is unacceptable despite the intentions that drive the behaviour. However, these are the situations that distinguish experienced and low-experienced consultants. For instance, while the immediate reaction of the low-experienced consultant might be an absolute refusal to lie, perhaps leading to a negative reaction from the client, experienced consultants might use diplomatic corrective actions through which they avoid lying and preserve emotions.

In fact, experienced international consultants seem to be fully aware of the sensitive role of emotions in their interaction with Saudi clients. Therefore, experienced international consultants seem to be explicit about this issue in Saudi Arabia. Two such consultants offered rich input that reflects their deep and explicit understanding about the role of emotions and sensitivity to criticism in their interactions with Saudi clients:

"You never ever talk down to somebody, and also you never raise (an) issue that could leave the person ... give him a bad (name), give him the feeling amongst their colleagues that they have done badly. You never do that."

"It's very difficult in the Saudi culture to say, "I made a mistake." The other (thing) that I was saying about, losing face. It's disrespectful to tell somebody that they haven't performed. It's often a very circuitous way, you have to go through the back and somebody else needs to say it, or you have to camouflage and assign that person to another project so that you don't have to tell them that they have a failure in the current one."

In the first excerpt, the affirmative input that stresses the importance of not 'talking down' or raising issues that lead to a loss of face are important corrective actions that consultants should follow when they interact with Saudi clients.

The second excerpt affirms the same - that the consultants should be careful in the ways they unveil mistakes. In other words, consultants need to develop diplomatic approaches to raise issue and highlight mistakes to protect the emotions of their clients. For instance, people can be made aware of their mistakes by personal and private discussions. Other ways of saving face might include communicating issues indirectly through other people or mediators.

However, the role of emotions is not only limited to the cultural conditioning of the interaction style or the ways in which consultants communicate and unveil critical issues to their clients. In fact, it extends to the cultural conditioning of perceptions that people may

have to the application of certain advice that might harm the feelings of others. For instance, an international consultant shared the following example:

"There is a strong sense of feelings. I remember a couple of meetings with a very senior guy and he was asking about how is he going to feel. And we like, you're running a business. And even recently we were doing a reorganization of this company, and there are two guys who are old, they are 60, they are probably looking forward to retiring, and the owner is a very young guy. He said, "How are they going to feel if I communicate with [the old employees to terminate their contracts]?" And I was like, "This is a business, if you have to do (it) you have to do (it) ... But yeah, he was very concerned about his feelings."

This excerpt explains how experienced consultants recognise the cultural elements that drive their clients' behaviour. For the above client, the manager was not willing to apply the changes that his consulting was suggesting because he was concerned about the feelings of his employee. Therefore, the consultant's corrective action to overcome this issue was to guide his client step by step in order to successfully apply the suggested advice. It is clear that this experienced consultant was able to understand the emotional reaction of his young client. In the Saudi culture, dealing with elders is sensitive and, in some situations, might become awkward and disrespectful when younger people command older ones. Therefore, this client was reluctant and concerned about the feelings of the older employee who was receiving an order from a younger person.

However, this consultant did not seem to be willing to change his advice just because the client felt it was inappropriate in terms of emotions. Instead, the experienced consultant chose to make a personal effort to shift his client from an emotional mode to a more logical one. Although recognising and understanding the cultural driver of communication with elders is a great challenge for foreigners, the corrective action taken was a creative approach that required long experience. This experience allows foreign individuals to understand the implicit drivers of some cultural behaviour, and generate corrective actions that deal with them.

On the other hand, it is highly unlikely that an inexperienced consultant will recognise the extent to which emotions govern this client's behaviour. Therefore, he/she might not be able to find other ways to apply the advice such as making a personal effort to convince the client that the survival of work is more critical than such emotional barriers. This may be because the low-experienced consultant is acting in logical mode as a Westerner and a consultant, while the client is in emotional mode. Thus, with two such different modes in play, reluctance and delays can be expected until the emotional side develops enough courage to operate logically. Therefore, the consultant's experience plays a significant role in such a situation as the recognition and correct interpretation of an emotional barrier, and the implementation of the necessary corrective actions both have a significant impact on the efficiency and smoothness of the interaction.

8.2.3 The Unwillingness to Socialize

Unwillingness to socialize is another implicit cultural element that emerges from the emotional culture. It is evident from the data that there is a cultural struggle between clients and consultants in their efforts to balance their social relations. On the one hand, the client is concerned with maintaining a business relationship that does not expose them to the emotional influence of personal relationships. On the other hand, the consultant's goal is to develop personal relationships in order to develop trust, which they believe is important for their work. So, the struggle is between a party that avoids developing a personal relationship and another that seeks to develop one.

From the clients' perspective, Saudi clients stated that:

"We are emotional. So, when the consultant going from a professional mode to a friendship mode then we'd be flexible with him. Even when he's not delivering exactly what we need we can accept it ... we accept incomplete deliverables because he's our friend, so we have emotions with him."

"Making such thing (socialising) with him would make it go from the professional more to the social. And I am your friend and you cannot attack me in the meeting, you cannot send me tough emails. And if you send him (a) tough email then he will come to your office and say, "What's wrong? Let's discuss with lunch" and these things and try to sort these things this way. Ok, but if you are tough with them from the beginning they will respect you and they will think one hundred times before they send you an email or garbage to you."

These two excerpts clearly show that Saudi clients believe socialising triggers their emotional side, which they fear may impact their judgment of the offered service, or their ability to approve/reject the offered work. In other words, they may find it difficult to criticize or reject the work of someone they consider to be their friend, which means they are entitled to special, soft treatment. This is clear in the first excerpt where the client was concerned about changing the mode of the relationship from professional to friendship mode because the client would become 'flexible' with the consultant. Being flexible for these emotional clients implies accepting incomplete deliverables because they cannot hurt the feelings of their new friends by rejecting them.

The second excerpt offers the same insight that transforming the relationship from professional friendship mode would make the client less firm with the consultants whereby they cannot be free or open about what they might find unacceptable. In other words, clients believe that the friendship mode makes them less free to communicate their concerns about the consultant's work .

From the international consultant's perspective, socialising with clients is critical for the development of trust. Therefore, when it comes to Saudi clients, the socialisation mission is more challenging than with other international clients. This challenge requires experience that allows the consultant to recognise that Saudis do not socialise, and to correctly

interpret the reasons for this. The failure to recognise and understand such a cultural barrier may result in catastrophic consequences. An experienced international consultant described his experience in this regard:

“For us, especially as consultants, part of our success is developing trusting relationships with clients, and that has been a challenge for me, obviously, being a Westerner. I have many clients I’ve worked with across many international boundaries. I will go with them for dinner and we will have events, things like this. I’ve been here (in Saudi Arabia) for two years I have yet to experience that. So, I think that’s been a bit of a challenge too ... I think that ... in this culture they don’t separate their social lives so much between work and personal, so their friends are their colleagues, but that’s limited to the [...] locals, that they’re working with. If you are international, you still an outsider.”

The above excerpt confirms that consultants struggle to socialise with their Saudi clients. This consultant shared his experience with a tone of disappointment because was not able to socialise with his Saudi clients as he used to with others. This is clear in the phrase ‘*I have many clients I’ve worked with across may international boundaries. I will go with them for dinner and we will have events, things like this. I’ve been here (In Saudi Arabia) for two years I have yet to experience that.*’ This consultant’s experience allowed him to recognise this issue and correctly interpret its reasons. This was clear in his description of the cultural driver of this behaviour in the phrase ‘*in this culture they don’t separate their social lives so much between work and personal*’. Also, the fact that the consultant is an international individual resulted in his clients to perceiving him as an outsider, which made his desire to socialise even more challenging. However, the fact that his experience allowed him to recognise and understand this cultural element made him more able to respect his client’s boundaries and culturally condition his interaction to respect them.

In fact, the data suggests that international consultants should not be persistent in their efforts to socialise with Saudi clients, and make sure their personal space is respected. Any attempt to enforce socialisation may back fire on consultants who are not aware of the sensitivity of this issue. For instance, a Saudi client stated:

“For example, (one of the world’s largest and most prestigious firms) invited the whole team to Dubai. Just to try to make things easier for them.”

This client shared this as an example of the great disgrace felt toward that firm and its representatives. This was noticeable in his tone and facial expressions. Although the consulting organization might have wanted to show the new clients their impressive headquarters and meet them in a different place where they would have more time to understand each other, the client’s perception of this approach was not positive. This is because there is a general perception among Saudis that such trips are like bribes whereby clients are flown on business class tickets and put up in luxury hotels. Culturally, clients might feel cheap or as if their friendship is easy to buy. Such a classic way of socializing might be acceptable in sectors such as banking and professional services but with Saudis it is a taboo that can be recognized with experience.

8.2.4 The Lack of Urgency

It is evident that there is a lack of urgency among Saudi clients. This is another implicit cultural element that can be frustrating to those who have not been exposed to it before. This has been admitted to by Saudi clients as a cultural issue and highlighted by international consultants as challenging and possibly frustrating. A Saudi client stated:

“Usually they (the international consultants) work to deadlines and strict timelines and we like to have it the ‘Inshallah’ (God’s will) way - so we’ll do it next Sunday, but you know what? If I couldn’t make it on Sunday, let’s have it on Thursday.”

The use of the work (In Sha Allah), which means ‘god willing’, can mean anything in Saudi Arabia, ranging from ‘this is definitely happening’ to ‘I will think about it’ to ‘it will never happen’. In other words, it means that something ‘will’, ‘may’, or ‘is not going to’ happen, depending on the current situation and subsequent events. This means there is a flexible view of the value of time and when things should be done. Therefore, the interviewee states that it means ‘if I couldn’t make it on Sunday, let’s have it on Thursday’. This attitude towards time has a definite impact on the interactions between international consultants and Saudi clients. For instance, one of the serious impacts declared by an experienced Spanish consultant was the fact that meetings with Saudi clients extend to unnecessary subjects and consequently take longer than anticipated. He stated:

“That’s why meetings can extend and extend, and people are comfortable, explain and then from here to another point ... that’s where the Spanish piece of me brings an advantage to the table. There’s also British that get anxious with the timing and I don’t do that.”

This excerpt clearly explains how frustrating this behaviour might be to British consultants who might feel ‘anxious’ about their clients’ sense of time. This is understandable because of the accurate timekeeping that British people pride themselves on. Therefore, this Spanish consultant expected British consultants to be displeased with this attitude, implying that conflict is more likely to happen. However, this Spanish consultant had around six years of experience along with a cultural background that makes the Saudi sense of time less strange to him, and this made him more able to absorb the frustration than others. In other words, his common cultural ground with Saudis and his long experience allowed him to culturally condition his attitude to accept this lack of urgency.

Nonetheless, this is a cultural issue that cannot be fixed during the consulting project. Therefore, if international consultants want to succeed, they need to learn how to deal with those who lack a sense of urgency in their work. An international consultant, who has a considerable stock of experience with Saudis explains how he absorbs this behaviour and the corrective actions he applies to work around it:

“I think another piece (of the difficulty is) their (lack of) respect for punctuality, some cultures are very respectful for punctuality and here I find that that’s not the case, especially for early start meetings. But that has been something that also was a big challenge, trying to get all people into meetings so you can get done on time. I think you have to first learn

flexibility, then you start to learn to schedule around these types of things, you learn the best time when people will be available or best time for meetings. And then you deal with (it). And still there are challenges that we have with getting people in time. Part of that is some of the people we deal with, they are extremely busy, so their time is valuable so you have to be respectful of that. But then, you just have to be persistent about (it)."

This excerpt suggests that there are certain corrective actions that consultants need to apply in order to overcome this issue. Firstly, they need to learn how to be 'flexible'. Secondly, they need to learn how to schedule their meetings at times that suit their clients' agendas and priorities. Thirdly, they need to learn how to use their time in case of cancellations. Such corrective actions prepare the consultant to deal with the low level of urgency among his/her clients, and result from long experience of dealing with this cultural element. Therefore, it is to be expected that inexperienced consultants are unlikely to be as tolerant of the lack of urgency as experienced ones. In other words, inexperienced international consultants are more likely to be frustrated or angry because of the clients' lack of urgency which they may perceive as disrespectful. On the contrary, experienced consultants are more likely to prepare themselves for the fact that clients may allocate a much lower level of urgency than their consultants by culturally conditioning their perception and behaviour to work around this fact by learning how to utilise their time with those clients in cases such as no-show in meetings or last minute cancellations.

In conclusion, it is evident that the more experience international consultants have of their clients, the more capable they are of performing sufficient cultural conditioning of their behaviour and advice.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the above analysis that the experience of international consultants plays a significant role in the extent to which they can deploy suitable corrective actions to achieve sufficient cultural conditioning of their behaviour and advice. The emphasis on the cultural conditioning of both behaviour and advice is because consultants need to culturally condition their behaviour to avoid cultural conflicts in their interaction style. Without culturally appropriate behaviour, consultants run the risk of damaging their relationship with the client. Moreover, unhealthy relationships are unlikely to result in sufficient cultural conditioning of the ultimate advice.

On the one hand, it is evident that international consultants with a low level of experience are likely to deploy corrective actions that deal with explicit, broad and generalized cultural elements. This means that the cultural conditioning of the behaviour and advice is likely to be both general and broad, and unlikely to address less explicit cultural elements which may render the broad cultural conditioning obsolete. For instance, at the beginning, the British consultants failed to recognize or understand the extent to which segregation between males and females was applied. Although segregation between males and females is considered an explicit cultural element, the 'green' British consultants missed the fact that it

applies to children as well as adults. Moreover, with regards to the cultural conditioning of behaviour, the famous consulting firm that invited its clients to Dubai may have been operating on the basis that Saudis are hospitable people - something that is known about Arabs and the Bedouin culture in particular. However, while the consultants believed an invitation to Dubai would be an effective social gathering, the clients saw it as unacceptable and insulting practice. Although the firm may have been under the impression that the client's culture encourages invitations to big welcoming parties for newcomers, they failed to recognize that there is another less explicit cultural element that forces Saudis to avoid social relationships with those who provide professional business services to them. Consequently, clients were not happy and felt insulted by the invitation. Hence, general cultural conditioning of advice and behaviour by those who have a low level of experience is likely to be poor and problematic.

On the other hand, it is evident that international consultants with a considerable stock of experience are more able to recognize, understand and apply suitable corrective actions to implicit cultural elements. This is because their experience has exposed them to many explicit and implicit cultural challenges through which they have developed a more detailed understanding about the implicit meanings of cultural artefacts, values, beliefs, and even basic assumptions. This deep knowledge allows them to understand people from a personal level to the extent that they can recognize the idiosyncrasies of individuals from the same culture. For instance, the experienced consultant was exceptionally able to recognize the different groups of Saudi females. It is evident from the analysed data that this understanding and the ability to classify female clients into those groups is implicit knowledge that could not have been obtained without being exposed to those different groups. This exposure is likely to have been strange and confusing at the beginning. This struggle pushes consultants to learn about the implicit meanings of cultural challenges and become experts over time.

Therefore, it can be concluded that experience plays a significant role on the deployment of suitable corrective actions that address the implicit details of the cultural elements. This increases the sufficiency of the cultural conditioning of advice and behaviour. Moreover, this experience cannot be obtained without previous struggle and exposure to implicit cultural challenges from which consultants learn more about their clients' culture.

8.3 The Role of Consultants' Experience in the Cultural Conditioning of their Behaviour and Advice: From the Perspective of Accommodating Clients' Power Dynamics

This section suggests that the impact of power on the cultural conditioning of advice is more apparent than the impact of culture as a system of values and beliefs. The impact of power on the advice construction can be discussed in relation to two typologies of clients, namely powerless and powerful clients.

Although the decision to hire consultants is made by top management, the interaction takes place mainly between international consultants and junior powerless staff/clients, and to some extent between international consultants and powerful members from the client side. In this hierarchical interaction, junior clients become like terminals that only deliver the knowledge that serves the interests of higher management. International consultants interact with higher management when they need to clarify input from the powerless members. The conclusion here is that the more experience consultants have, the more capable they become of recognizing that junior clients share only the knowledge that higher management wants them to share. In other words, the experienced consultant will know the extent to which powerless clients are able to give constructive feedback. Moreover, the more experience those consultants have, the more able they become of locating the sources of power and understanding the extent to which powerful members delegate their tasks to powerless clients.

Therefore, it is suggested that experienced consultants know how to save time and effort by contacting powerful members when needed, rather than spending precious time trying to get constructive feedback about critical issues from non-decision makers. This method used by experienced international consultants to gain and verify knowledge from their clients can be regarded as cultural conditioning of the interaction style. Also, recognizing and evaluating power sources and accordingly accommodating their interests can be regarded as cultural conditioning of the consulting advice. The following analysis will elaborate on this conclusion as demonstrated in figure 14:

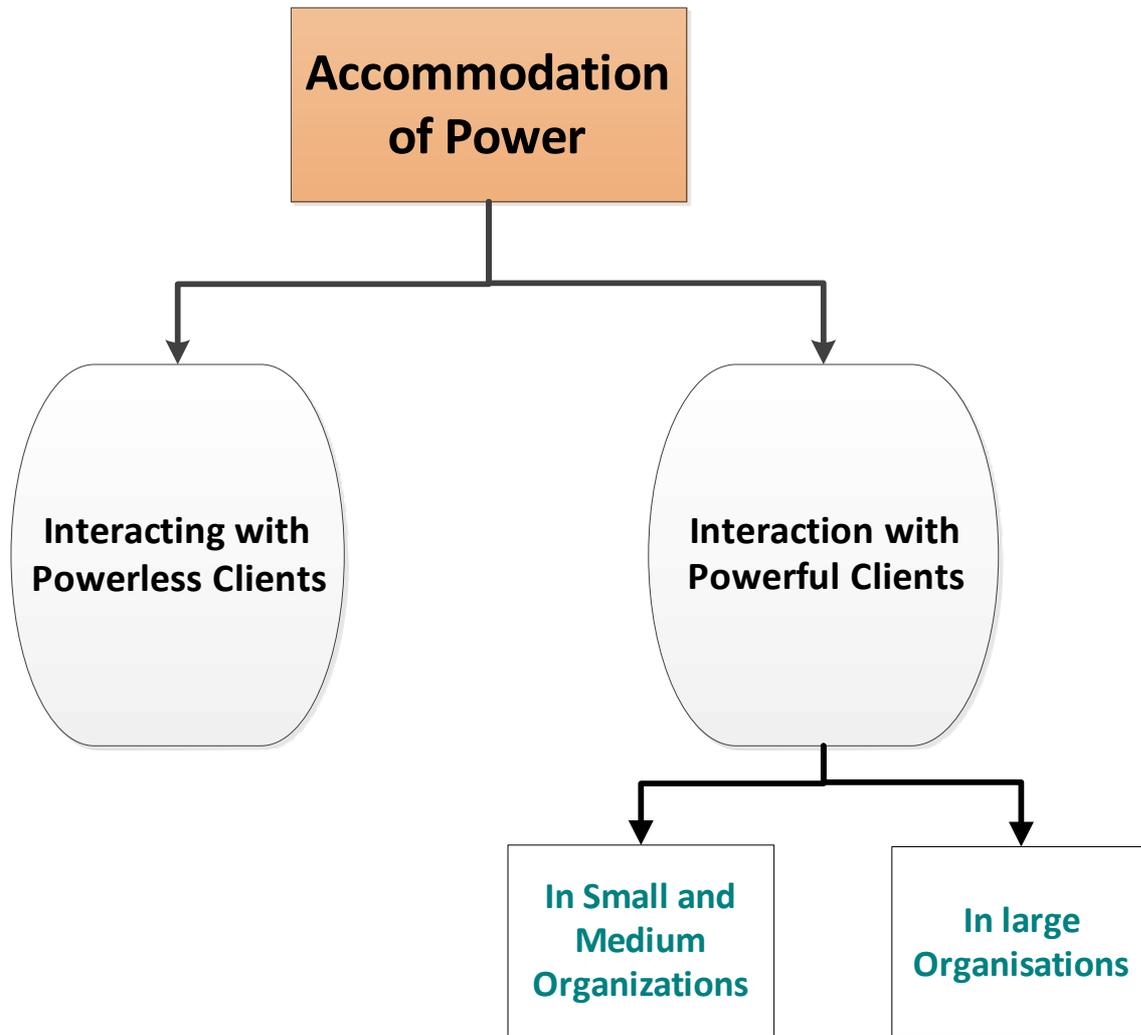


Figure 14: Accommodation of Clients' Power Dynamics

The following two sub-sections discuss how experienced and inexperienced consultants deal with two typologies of clients, namely powerless clients and powerful clients.

Typology 1: Interacting with Junior Powerless Clients

The fact that junior clients are powerless terminals that share the types of knowledge that match the interests of the higher management has been highlighted by several consultants and clients. An international consultant explained:

“They (top management) want to delegate that down to people that are not responsible. I think, certainly (not) so in Western cultures, the managers want to be more informed, they want to be more involved about making decisions. But (in Saudi Arabia) it's kind of a flip side here and, even though the managers don't want to get involved, there is a sense of delegation.”

The sense of ‘delegation’ and the desire of higher management to not to ‘get involved’ in the interaction with international consultants is a clear indication that there is a separation

between those who decide which direction the project should take and those who are more involved in exchanging the knowledge needed to steer the project in this direction. Moreover, the fact this is a 'flipped' approach is an indication that international consultants are not used to this method, which appears to be contrary to how they interact with their western clients.

This can be a significant cultural barrier for those with a low level of experience who do not understand how power results in delegation to people who have no power. Moreover, those with low experience are unlikely to understand that powerless clients are only permitted to share the knowledge that higher management wants them to, despite what they believe should be done. In other words, low-experienced clients are unlikely to recognise or understand that the junior clients with whom they interact are not permitted to offer any personal views or instant decisions about what needs to be done. In fact, they are just terminals that deliver the knowledge that they perceive serves top management's interests and objectives, regardless of their personal views and interests. A Saudi client stated:

"If it's on my level, I have to say what I think in a way that doesn't conflict with top management. I try to say it in a nice way but if they still insist on it, we will do it the way they (the top management) like."

"If the middle management didn't understand the actual need from that project from the top management [...] he still responsible (the consultant) - he's the one that's accountable for that delivery. This is his problem."

This first excerpt explains that although junior clients might have views that they find important to the consulting project, they will choose to tone these down and tone up the views that match the interests of the top management to avoid conflict. This is a clear indication of the role of power on the type of knowledge junior clients are willing to share with their consultants. The junior clients' attitude implies that they do not have a sense of ownership or responsibility toward the consulting project. This implication is more apparent in the second excerpt.

It is apparent from the second excerpt that junior clients truly see themselves as terminals that deliver the inputs that suit the interests of the higher management while it is the consultant's job to seek clarifications and verification from higher management. In other words, junior clients are not willing to put further effort into the project by clarifying 'needs' and objectives. This is because of the great distance between those who set the direction of the project and those who exchange the knowledge needed to progress in that direction.

This is clear from the fact that the interests of top management are communicated through 'middle management' to the junior staff who are involved in the interaction with the consultant. This means that there is a significant distance between those who provide the requirements and those who share the knowledge that contributes to the construction of advice that addresses those requirements. Any misunderstanding of these requirements will

result in confusion among consultants, which junior clients are unable or unwilling to explain. In fact, powerless clients believe that it is the consultant who is 'responsible' for clearing up misunderstandings because he is 'accountable' for the deliverables to the top management.

This affirms the passive role of terminal clients and affirms the challenge that international consultants need to deal with. Low-experienced international consultants who are used to a western way of interacting are unlikely to recognize the above role of power. Instead, they might be puzzled and waste precious time with a client who has nothing more to offer and end up being lost or stuck.

Even for international consultants with a considerable stock of experience, this approach does not seem to be easy for consultants who need to know exactly what needs to be done. An international consultant explained this struggle:

"It's very difficult to get feedback or influence from the bottom for two reasons. One, because it doesn't work ... Secondly, because it's usually very high hierarchical, it's too much of, "Okay that's what my boss said."

"So, even though the manager doesn't want to get involved, the employee doesn't want to take the decision. We end up in a lot of paralysis, because you have one that's scared to make a decision, you have another that doesn't want to make a decision, so you are stuck. It has been a huge challenge for us actually."

The first excerpt affirms that there is a difficulty in interacting with powerless clients, which stems from the fact that they are powerless individuals who have no opinion on what is happening. This means it is not practical to seek their feedback about what should be done or how the project should proceed. This was explicitly stated in the phrase "it does not work". The fact that this consultant believes that getting feedback from the bottom "does not work" implies that the personal beliefs of junior clients about what should be done is not really important. Instead, it is all about what the top management believes about what should be done. More importantly, it is obvious that this is a puzzling situation for international consultants because they are interacting with those who do not seem to be able to share constructive 'feedback' while those in charge are passive or hard to reach because of the hierarchy.

In the second excerpt, the use of the word 'paralysis' is, indeed, accurate in conveying the challenge that international consultants face when they interact with powerless junior clients. This is because, on the one hand, this powerless client is either 'scared' to share any more knowledge that may lead to an outcome that does not accommodate the top management's interests. Or, the powerless member is simply unwilling to make a decision that sets a clear direction for the consultant.

This adds extra load to the job of the consultant, who requires a deep understanding of the local use of power and its impact on the type and quality of knowledge they receive from

the junior clients with whom they interact. In other words, consultants need a considerable stock of experience that allows them to understand how power impacts the type of knowledge they receive from junior clients. The previous two excerpts are from two international consultants with two years of experience in Saudi Arabia that allowed them to understand the cultural impact of power.

Nevertheless, even Saudi clients assert that those who have considerable experience are more capable of performing efficient and smooth interactions. Saudi clients stated that:

“The one who is not certain ... will know his way to clarify things from the top management or even from the head of the company”

“ If he’s brilliant (the consultant) and he knows, he’ll actually try to get to the top management himself so that he can interact with him, bypassing his sponsor ... But, it depends on how the consultant and management are working.”

These two excerpts offer clear indications that consultants need a considerable level of experience to ‘know’ that trying to get constructive feedback from junior clients is a waste of time. Instead, they should aim to the higher management to clarify misunderstandings. This is evident in the first excerpt when the client stated that the consultant should ‘know’ his way of clarifying things. This knowledge cannot be obtained without experience. This evidence is clearer in the second excerpt when the client associates the consultant’s ‘brilliance’ with ‘knowing’ how to bypass less powerful members in the middle and interact directly with top management. All these examples of ‘knowing’ how to work around unclear situations and reach out to top management are indirect references to the consultant’s experience. This experience allows consultants to recognize how power influences knowledge sharing and guides them to interact with the right people. In other words, those with considerable experience ‘know’ their way to top management where they can bypass less powerful members who cannot offer the feedback needed to progress the project.

The knowledge of experienced international consultants allows them to evaluate the input and requirements based on the power influence of their sources. Also, this knowledge allows consultants to identify and communicate directly with the people who have interest and power to steer the consulting project in such a way as to avoid any conflicts that might appear at any stage. It is evident that international consultants who have a considerable stock of experience about the impact of power in Saudi Arabia seem more able to understand the importance of locating and evaluating the sources of power within their client organisations. Saudi clients affirmed that:

“Yes, they are good at noticing who’s in charge to give them the right attention that he needs for each meeting. And this is really something interesting, they’re really good at it. I don’t know how they do it, but they can spot it.”

“Those consultants know how the powers and politics work, so they would come to you ready and just enforcing ideas.”

“Usually, as I said, with any consultancy project, they are introduced formally to the client’s side stakeholders. So, they would know, for example, who is the CEO or who is the executive directors and they actually will do an analysis of the stakeholders - who they need to meet with, and so on. So, when they go to meet with anyone, they know who is this person and they know what kind of power this person has, so they address it accordingly. If they are doing it with the CEO, they will talk to him because they know he’s the decision maker. If they were able to convince this person, everything will be easy for them. Because, as you said, because of the power and the authority - talking to a decision maker is not like talking to someone just to collect some data.”

“They sneak in into the organisation, they evaluate the management who they will deal with, they know who is the decision maker, they know who will actually affect the business in the organisation. From that perspective, they start dealing and deciding (whether) you are a worthy client or not.”

This is clear evidence that the more experience international consultants have, the more efficient and smooth interactions they are expected to have. This is evident in all the above excerpts which refer to experienced international consultants who know how power impacts their work in Saudi Arabia. The first excerpt affirms that experienced consultants are ‘good at noticing who is in charge’ which is a clear indication that consultants understand the impact of power and seek to know who is more influential. The second excerpt affirms that they know the impact of power and ‘politics’ as well, which adds to their ability to deal with power to the extent that they can ‘enforce ideas’. The third excerpt offers confirmation that experienced international consultants are capable of ‘analysing’ and evaluating the powers of the stakeholders to prioritise their interests accordingly. Furthermore, the last excerpt adds further confirmation that consultants evaluate the powers that affect their work to decide who is worth attention.

In conclusion, it is suggested that power has a significant influence on the knowledge shared by junior clients. This requires consultants to be knowledgeable about the powerless role of the junior client as well as the ways that interests and requirements are correctly delivered and verified. ‘Green’ international consultants are not expected to be knowledgeable about this power impact or the best ways of dealing with it. Only those with a considerable stock of experience are likely to know how power impacts knowledge sharing, and the best ways to deal with it. Therefore, those with a considerable stock of experience are more likely to be able to culturally condition their ways of gaining and verifying input. Consequently, they are more likely to be able to culturally condition their ultimate advice to accommodate the interests of the powerful.

Typology 2: Interacting with Powerful Clients

International consultants seem to be faced with a greater challenge when they interact with higher management to clarify things and understand more about the direction they are expected to take. This is because they are challenged by different and conflicting interests of powerful members in higher management. The forthcoming data indicates that there is a

battle of power between powerful members from the top and middle management levels. This battle rotates around the fact that powerful members seek to make personal gains by steering the outcome of the consulting project in their favour.

Put differently, the data suggests that there is a strong sense of individualism among powerful members whereby every member seeks to make personal gains from the consulting project. This requires consultants to be able to locate the power sources and evaluate their impact to avoid conflicts. In other words, international consultants and consulting projects are likely to be subject to a great deal of manipulation by powerful members, which may jeopardize the entire project. Hence, this section suggests that the more experience international consultants have about locating power sources and assessing their weight, the more capable they become of prioritizing interests and producing advice that accommodates the interests of the powerful.

The above conclusion can be discussed in relation to two types of projects among which the battle of interests between powerful members seems to make a significant impact on the consultants' job. Firstly, there are small and medium sized projects sponsored by small and medium sized organisations where the top management closely monitors the progress of the project. Secondly, there are major projects sponsored by large organisations where the top management's involvement takes place only at the very beginning when the project is launched, and at the very end when consulting deliverables are presented. Although there is a battle of interests and a level of manipulation in both types of project, the involvement of the top management seems to set a limit for manipulation. This is because consultants are more likely to reach top management in small and medium sized projects, while it is almost impossible to reach them when the project is large.

The Sense of Individualism and Level of Manipulation in Small and Medium Sized Projects

Saudi clients stated:

"Well, you know we can get on the subject that we discussed with five, six stakeholders, however no one will be able to make that decision, they will be probably conflicting with each other. And I think this is also one of the probable key challenges for any firm that may come to any organisation because you (referring to the interviewer as a consultant) will sit with their heads, with the directors, and when you give some business and mix that with others who's working the same organisation and have different vision of what have been proposed, and if both have a big conflict that is not really addressed properly."

"Because they have the power, they will have their say in the project because they have this power. Unfortunately, as you know, when a project gets started and we submit the data, we start building and testing. They come at the end or before the end and say, 'This is not going to work, we need it to be done this way', and it's going to cause delays and problems."

"Oh, yes, (making a lot of exceptions in the development of processes) is our problem from the beginning. That the exceptions have become more than the norms ... So, it's like by using their power, their connections, things happen ... The consultant comes and tells you "This is the way

out, you have to have your services listed and you have to follow a certain way of managing your incident,” let's say that. And following certain KPIs with our users. And we put them down, we start working and people would come and say: “you know, this can't be applied on me”, “you know I need to personally go and offer my services to someone without going through your incident management service like request from that way that everyone is supposed to go through ... “I will now look more powerful”, “I wanna build my connections”, “I wanna build my way out through this.” Then, things get corrupted.”

The above excerpts were made by Saudi junior clients who happened to be interacting with international consultants to perform tasks set by top management. These junior clients were disappointed because their jobs become more difficult when powerful individuals begin interfering with the development of the project, which is supposed to address the objectives of top management. It is apparent from the study and these three excerpts that there is a great sense of individualism among powerful members who care more about their personal gains than collective or organisational objectives. Therefore, they will seek to exercise their power to steer the outcome in their favour.

This is evident in the first excerpt that explains that it is difficult for powerful individuals to agree on the specifics of the ultimate outcome, and therefore they end up in conflict whenever the consultant proposes a solution. The second excerpt confirms the same issue, which can be seen in the phrase ‘this is not going to work, we need it to be done this way.’ This could be evidence for the great sense of individualism among powerful members; although they have not been part of the interaction, and do not know why or how certain advice has been given, they choose to explicitly ask for changes. This means that despite the suitability of the advice for the collective use, there are personal reasons that drive their change of orders. This conclusion is made even more explicit in the third excerpt by the use of the phrases ‘I will now look more powerful’, ‘I wanna build my connections’ and ‘I wanna build my way out through this.’ All these phrases suggest that powerful individuals have a great sense of individualism that drives them to manipulate the project to make personal gains of power, connections or experience that make them more attractive for other job opportunities.

However, the above excerpts are made by junior clients who work for medium sized semi-governmental organisations where higher management closely monitors the progress and outcome of the consulting project. This sets a limit to the interference of powerful individuals because the consultants can reach out to top management to address the ultimate interests that will be enforced on everyone in the organisation. The only difference between experienced and low-experienced consultants in this instance is that experienced ones are more likely to recognise and understand the sense of individualism and assess the level of manipulation imposed by different powerful members. On the contrary, low-experienced consultants might feel lost, confused or tired from trying to please all the powerful members who might have conflicting interests.

In fact, for low-experienced consultants, such a use of power might be shocking and completely un-understandable. This is because those western consultants come from environments that have a significantly lower power distance and powerful people are mainly focused on collective gains. So, if international consultants do not have enough experience that allows them to recognise the existence of high power distance and understand the ways by which power is used in Saudi Arabia, they might end up in a great confusion trying to address conflicting interests. More discussion and evidence will be presented in the next section which discusses conclusive implications of experience on the knowledge exchange and production process.

The Impact of Power in Large Projects

The main issue with large projects is that they have general ideas or 'visions' with broad objectives rather than explicit goals with clear outcomes. This issue makes them subject to different interpretations by different stakeholders which increase the level of manipulation by different powerful members. Additionally, the sponsors of these visions are high-ranking officials who cannot be reached by consultants. This means that those un-clear goals are subject to the interpretations of the powerful members beneath the top management who might manipulate those projects to gain personal benefits.

A Saudi client stated:

"We are suffering ... I understand that because (the middle management) gives promises to someone else (top management). He doesn't want to break his promise and say, 'Well, I could not because your scope of work or your command was not clear'. No one dares to say that to the decision maker. Once I give you a date, I will keep this. I will give this promise; I will keep this promise. That's why (there is) the problem."

This excerpt explains a critical impact of power and the ways it is used. This is a national issue that can be found in most social structures in Saudi society whereby the wishes of powerful members must be accommodated. This can be seen in the above excerpt. Firstly, it affirms that the wishes and interests of top management must be addressed even if they appear to not be viable or realistic. This is evident in the use of the phrase 'No one dares to say that to the decision maker'. This serious cultural element in Saudi Arabia places such emphasis on the wishes and interests of those who have significant power that they cannot be discussed or negotiated. Instead, they should simply be carried out. This puts great pressure on clients with less power, and puts consultants in a difficult position trying to address such unrealistic wishes and interests. This is challenging because clients will force consultants to take a certain direction although consultants know that things cannot be solved in that way. Additionally, even if consultants feel that the scope of work is achievable, they might need more time than has been allocated. Both situations lead to great pressure, and impact the quality of the work.

The main issue here is that the top management usually gives a general idea about what they expect to be done and leave the rest to the interpretation of middle management. This leads middle management to exercise its power to manipulate the consulting project in ways that result in advice that seems to address the general goal of the top management in terms of its rhetorical description and main components, but in content that is damaged or serves the interests of middle management. This is a national cultural issue related to the significant role of power in society.

Moreover, unlike less powerful clients, international consultants cannot be assumed to blindly follow the instructions of powerful members. This is because consultants care about their reputation and may not respond to powerful members' requests if they lead them to deliver inappropriate, damaged or corrupted advice that reflects negatively on their reputation and image. Therefore, it seems that experienced consultants tend to deploy some diplomacy to protect their reputation and address the interests of their clients. Saudi clients explained how experienced international consultants behave in such cases:

"Well, the international consultants, of course, will follow the lead of the man of power. If I am the man of power, his work will be affected by the direction I am giving."

"I realise with my experience of consultants that work within Saudi Arabia, they want to see which direction you want to go with and they try to lean it for you and put it in their words and documents. Because there is a culture in Saudi Arabia 'let's go with the decision maker.'"

The use of the word 'direction' in the first excerpt suggests that consultants broadly obey the interests of the top and powerful by offering advice with a certain slant. This means the exact structure or content of the advice is developed by the consultant while the clients offer the main direction or field under which the advice is categorized. For instance, the client might request advice that grants more power to the board of directors. This means the consultant is expected to deliver appropriate advice that addresses this interest without being involved in what could be regarded as corruption. In other words, it cannot be expected that the consultant will deliver advice that unreasonably empowers a certain individual if he/she could be held accountable for corruption. Such diplomacy is made clearer in the second excerpt. The use of the word 'lean' here implies that consultants try to deliver advice that accommodates both sides - that of top management, as well as what they believe should be done.

Conclusively, it can be suggested that the more experience international consultants have about culture and the impact of power, the more likely they are to be able to play the politics and accommodate the role of power. On the contrary, consultants with low-experience might expose themselves to the manipulation of powerful members who might take advantage of their legitimacy and advice.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the above analysis that the experience of international consultants plays a significant role in the extent to which they recognize the role of power in knowledge exchange and advice production with Saudi clients. The more experience international consultants have, the more capable they are of deploying suitable corrective actions and playing the politics in such a way that allows them to verify input and accommodate the interests of powerful members.

This is evident in the ways international consultants interact with two typologies of clients, namely powerless clients and powerful clients. Firstly, in the context of interacting with powerless clients, it is evident that experienced consultants are more able to recognise that junior clients are either unable or unwilling to offer any 'constructive' feedback that the consultant might need to understand the situation and offer relevant advice. Instead, junior clients are expected to work as terminals that deliver the knowledge that is perceived to suit the interests and objectives of higher management. Therefore, it is evident that experienced consultants are more likely to recognise this sort of delegation and deploy suitable corrective actions. The suitable corrective action with junior clients is to stop encouraging them to clarify or share more knowledge, and aim directly to higher management for clarifications. On the contrary, international consultants with low experience are likely to be stuck with those who cannot offer constructive feedback, not knowing that they should seek clarification from higher management. This means that precious time and effort, which is crucial for consulting projects, will be wasted.

Secondly, in the context of interacting with powerful clients, it is evident that experienced international consultants are more capable of recognising that there is a high sense of individualism and manipulation among powerful clients. Moreover, the experience of those consultants allows them to locate power sources and assess the weight and importance of their interests. Consequently, experienced international consultants are more able to play the politics and condition their interaction and advice to accommodate the interests of the powerful members according to their position and influence. On the contrary, international consultants with a low level of experience are more likely to be vulnerable to the manipulation of powerful members who tend to gain more personal interests. This is because they might find the role of power in the Saudi environment to be very alien and nonsensical since they come from environments with significantly lower power distances.

8.4 The Overall Implications of the Consultants' Experience on the Cultural Conditioning of Behaviour and Advice

The overall conclusion of this analysis is the theorisation between three qualities. First, the prior stock of individual experience about the national culture, and the initiative to reduce information asymmetries prior to the engagement. Second, the deployment of corrective actions that take place in the midst of the interaction and depends on the client reactions that cannot be anticipated prior to the engagement. Third, the extent to which the consultant's corrective practices are believed to correspond to the idiosyncrasies of the client demonstrates a degree of cultural conditioning. In other words, the experience with individuals plays a significant role in the type of the corrective actions that lead to cultural conditioning specifically for an individual and his/her group.

The thesis identifies different methods by which cultural conditioning is achieved. Such a phenomenon provides new insights about the utilisation of a stock of experience and knowledge. For instance, since decision-making power is an important element in Saudi national culture, the consultants' adaptation and manipulation of already existing practices is how conditioning is reached.

The following sub-sections elaborate on the theorisation between the above stated three qualities.

1. The Role of Prior Experience on the Reduction of Information Asymmetries between Clients and Consultants

It has been demonstrated that this prior knowledge comes at two levels, depending on the stock of experience that the international consultant has. In the case of consultants with a low level of experience, their prior knowledge is expected to be related to explicit cultural values and beliefs from which they derive broad generalisations. This level of prior knowledge deals with the national cultural values, constrains, implicit meanings of artifacts, politics, social relations and social structures. Hence, this knowledge allows them to reduce the information asymmetry to the level of explicit cultural beliefs and values, or to the level of cultural artefacts, as explained by Schein (2006). This means that these consultants will not be able to reduce the information asymmetry to the extent that implicit cultural beliefs and values are recognised, understood and addressed. This means that the cultural conditioning of behaviour and advice is expected to remain broad since it addresses explicit cultural elements only. Moreover, this implies that low-experienced consultants are likely to be challenged whenever less explicit cultural elements appear. This is evident in the case of British consultants who did not understand the extent to which segregation between males and females should be applied.

In the case of experienced international consultants, the prior knowledge they seem to have appears to be related to explicit and implicit cultural beliefs and values from which experienced consultants can derive specific understandings about the idiosyncrasies of the

client as individuals and as groups. This is clear from the fact that experienced consultants in Saudi Arabia were able to classify Saudi females into different groups, and shared specific examples that showed great understanding of female individuals. This means that these experienced consultants are more capable of significantly reducing the information asymmetries with their clients. This makes them more able to address specific and implicit cultural elements, which makes their cultural conditioning more sufficient.

This does not mean the emphasis should be put entirely on prior knowledge at a personal level only. Rather, both levels should be present and work together to achieve sufficient cultural conditioning. Although the consultant will be working with individual clients, whose personal way of thinking is important, to produce the necessary advice, they should also consider the more general culture of the organization and country in which the advice will be applied. This consideration becomes more critical when the applied advice deals with other stakeholders, who are not part of the interaction. This conclusion is evident from the data; an international consultant explained the need for both levels of knowledge, the national and the personal:

"I need to because, again Ahmed might have a different mindset and the way of working and behaving than Suleiman. And Suleiman might be more influential than Saleh. I need to understand that, I can only understand that at one insight to talk with them and understand it and then also to get advice on the one insight from my team members who are also dealing with them. Plus, eventually, then also with other people in the organization, that is key, otherwise I would be lost. I would maybe phrase it in that way: culture gives you an overall umbrella, gives you an overall direction, which way each individual (is) going in regards of behaviour etc. It is up to each individual. Culture gives you a way, but how you proceed the way can be different from individuum (individual) to individuum (individual) and I need to deal with both dimensions."

This consultant has over fifteen years of international experience and five years of experience in Saudi Arabia. This experience allows him to offer this lengthy and insightful feedback. The way he describes the relationship between the two levels of knowledge shows a person who is experienced in the way he interacts with international individuals, and the considerations he possesses to perform sufficient cultural conditioning for this advice. This can be seen from his simple description of national culture as 'an overall umbrella' that gives 'an overall direction', while knowledge about the person gives specific direction on how to deal with the specific person. This means that both levels of knowledge should be deployed together to reach a balanced and focused reduction of information asymmetry, which consequently leads to sufficient cultural conditioning.

2. The Deployment of Corrective Action Takes place in the Midst of the Interaction and Depends on the Clients' Reactions

It is suggested that the only way for international consultant to develop a deep knowledge about their clients that allows them to deploy suitable corrective actions is through

interaction. This is because implicit cultural issues cannot be discovered until they are raised as such by clients. In other words, consultants have no way to recognize and understand implicit cultural elements without a clear rejection or request for corrections from the client's side. This is evident in the case of the British consultant who offered advice that did not consider the segregation of male and female children. The consultant would not have known about this implicit extension of the explicit cultural element had the client not come back with an objection and clarifications. Therefore, it is suggested that the knowledge consultants acquire through the cultural struggle and challenges they face with their international clients is vital, and cannot be obtained otherwise. In this context, a Saudi client stated:

"Some consultants spend a lot of time here and they understand the culture very well. Some of the consultants just came here for the first time and for them it was very difficult to adapt to the culture. In my experience, the well-experienced that has had several projects here, it will make it easier for them and for us to communicate and to understand each other."

This excerpt highlights several important characteristics of the vital knowledge consultants acquire cumulatively about their clients. Firstly, it is an implicit type of knowledge because it is acquired by 'experience' that requires 'a lot of time' and actual work on 'several projects'.

Secondly, it allows consultants to 'adapt' more easily to the local culture, which means they become more capable of understanding situations that need to be dealt with. This means that they become more careful about the corrective actions they take, which will depend on the specific situation in hand. This is because those who can understand the reality of situations are more likely to deploy suitable corrective actions to deal with them. Thirdly, it makes 'communication' with the clients 'easier'. Easier communication implies that successful communication of ideas is achieved quickly and smoothly. If not, communication is likely to be difficult and time-consuming. This is evident in the discussion about the inability of international consultants to understand that junior clients are not expected to offer constructive feedback. This lack of understanding may result in the consultant spending precious time trying to get feedback from clients who might be unable or unwilling to share it.

Thus, it can be concluded that knowledge about implicit cultural elements can be developed from the experience of being involved in different interpretive interactions. This is because there is an expected struggle in the interpretive interactions between individuals who come from different cultural backgrounds. This struggle pressures people to learn about each other's ways of thinking and behaving in their efforts to understand each other's input. This is simply socially constructed knowledge resulting from the interpretive interaction. Therefore, this chapter suggests that the more experience international consultants have, the more likely they are to be able to perform suitable corrective actions that result in sufficient cultural conditioning of their behaviour and advice, and vice versa.

3. The more Idiosyncratic Knowledge the Consultant has about the Client, the more Sufficient the Cultural Conditioning of the Consultant's Behaviour and Advice

This interpersonal knowledge that consultants gain from experience determines the extent to which the advice is culturally conditioned to address the implicit cultural elements of individuals and groups. This is because it is related to the ways in which the individual thinks and behaves. It is also because individuals from the same national culture, the same organizational culture, or even the same family may have different ways of thinking and behaving which can be discovered only through interactions. This results from the fact that people are subject to different experiences that contribute to the social construction of their cognitive and emotional systems. Therefore, clients and consultants agree that the more knowledge they have about each other as individuals, the more likely corrective actions suitable for those particular individuals are applied to achieve a sufficient cultural conditioning for that particular client-consultant relationship. In this context, international consultants stated:

"I would say it's always about the person. I think you cannot work with the culture. I think you work with the person."

"The person you have to understand, to be able to communicate obviously. And to help him or her."

Saudi clients stated:

"I think the type of job is very intellectual, you need to have access to the mind. If you are close to him, if you understand him -because the job usually has a very limited time, a job that will take less than 3 months, 90 days, that's it. He comes, he gives you whatever you need, and he leaves. It's a very short period of time to have access to mind or his abilities. So, once you develop this relationship, you will get better results. He will take his job more seriously if he respects your mind"

"When you like work with people from US they're not all the same. So, it's different than the person from the team that you are working with."

"Each individual is different from the other, so you can have someone who is a Western graduate who doesn't think (like one) So, I think the individual himself plays a big role in how he deals with people, not based on culture."

"Eventually it's the individual who is actually part of the consultation firm involved in that exercise or that project that you are running. It's all about the individual who you are talking to."

"Try to understand the mind of the guy in front of me directly, regardless of whatever his culture he is. I try to."

“if you have great experience or long experience with this consultant, this misunderstanding ... is minimal. But, usually misunderstandings happen when both sides don’t understand or recently work together. It happens at all levels.”

All the above excerpts emphasize the importance of knowing the person. This is because *‘each individual is different from the other.’* Therefore, it is important to know how the specific person thinks and behaves. This can be seen in the reference to the ‘mind’ of the individual with whom the interpretive interaction is taking place. It can be concluded that the use of the word ‘mind’ in the singular is a reference to the individual’s unique and socially constructed cognitive and emotional system, which is influenced by different experiences and cultures. Also, describing the consulting work as ‘intellectual’ adds more justification for the need to understand how each individual thinks. This is because unless these parties understand how the ‘mind’ thinks, their intellectual interaction and interpretation of each other’s input is unlikely to construct an applicable solution. Hence, people need to understand how the other person thinks and behaves as an individual, not only what his national culture generally suggests. This understanding of how the individual thinks allows the consultant to recognize and understand implicit cultural elements but also recognize and assess the power and hidden agenda of the individual. This deep knowledge allows the consultant to realize a more sufficient cultural conditioning that addresses specific details.

Chapter 9: Findings (The Advice Implementation Stage)

Chapter 9

The Stage After the Interaction: The Advice Implementation Stage

9.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed how cultural conditioning can shape consulting advice. Consulting advice is defined by a consultant's personal cultural experiences, and is only as effective as his/her ability to culturally condition it to accommodate a client's explicit and implicit cultural norms, values, and constraints.

However, the ultimate goal of the consulting process is not to produce culturally conditioned advice that addresses all the requirements. Rather, it is to produce advice that can be consumed or implemented to reflect added value (Kubr, 2002; Haas and Hansen, 2005; Wright and Kwon, 2006; Werr and Perner, 2007). The added value may be for both clients and consultants. For clients, the expected outcome of the consulting activity is the perceived resolution of their situation (Kubr, 2002; Werr and Perner, 2007). For consultants, the expected outcome is the international dissemination of their methods and tools to enhance their position in the market as fashion-setters or disseminators of distinctive knowledge (Wright and Kwon, 2006). Therefore, if the consulting activity does not give added value, it is because clients' issues may not have been resolved, or because the consultants have not disseminated their knowledge effectively.

The analysis indicates that, even if the consulting advice addresses all the requirements and accommodates the cultural constraints, it does not have added value unless it is implemented. Implementation of the advice depends on why the consultants were hired. If they were hired to offer an external view of an internal issue, then the advice would be implemented as an external opinion that supports decision-making (Yaniv and Kleinberger, 2000). If they were hired to identify or fix problems that require action, then the advice must be implemented for the change to take place (Wright and Kwon, 2006). The data collected offers insights about consulting projects that deal with change. Therefore, clients and consultants in this study refer to the post-advice stage as the implementation stage. Although consulting advice can be used to make decisions, the focus of this research is on examining its full implementation—adding value.

9.2 the Impact of Culture on Advice Implementation: Clients Adverse Reaction (CAR)

This section conceptualises the impact of culture on the implementation of consulting advice. It suggests that, in Saudi Arabia, the implementation of advice is subject to Clients' Adverse Reactions (CAR). This term seeks to capture *the different cultural perceptions and power dynamics* on the client side that impact the implementation of the consulting advice. Two types of Clients' Adverse Reactions that impact the implementation of advice have been identified. The first type is the 'Clash of Implicit Perceptions' (CIP): the different perceptions clients and consultants have about responsibility for implementation. This clash

appears to stem from fundamental cultural differences related to hierarchical relationships of workers and employers. While Western cultures establish contractual relationships in which the worker is expected to deliver only what has been specified in the contract (Dolgin, 1990; and Vlieger (2012), Arab cultures establish relationships with workers based on status (Sabry, 2010). This means the worker is expected to consider the contract as a framework rather than a binding agreement and is expected to deliver tasks that are not explicitly stated in the contract, but that are expected of him due to his relative low status in relation to the employer. Employers and workers may have different perceptions about the mode of their relationship, and this implies that they may also have different expectations about the scope of their rights and responsibilities. In terms of the relationship between clients and consultants, this creates a clash: consultants operating in a contractual mode with a stated responsibility for implementation versus clients operating in status mode, expecting consultants to implement advice even if they are not contractually obligated to do so.

The data capturing the experience of clients and consultants in Saudi Arabia reveals the importance of explicitly stating the scope of work. More specifically, the data shows that consultants' prior experiences allow them to tailor the consulting process to accommodate any implicit perceptions about the scope of the work and responsibility for future tasks. If consulting is not culturally conditioned in this manner, the structure and process of advice implementation are unlikely to be agreed on prior to the contracting, leaving consultants and clients with incorrect assumptions, and stagnating the consulting process. Implementation requires allocation of resources such as money, time and staff. If they are not explicitly allocated from the beginning, clashes between clients and consultants will occur. Therefore, this chapter suggests that the cultural conditioning of the consulting process determines the extent to which advice is implemented.

The second type of CAR is 'Appropriation of Power Structures' (APS), which concerns the self-centred and multi-levelled power members on the client side that may block, delay or interfere with the implementation of advice. Those powerful members seek to appropriate approval of consulting advice and/or implementation of advice to protect or gain personal interests. Specifically, powerful members may use their formal powers to delay or block the approval of advice; other powerful members from different ranks and locations who have no way to influence the approval of advice may seek to block its implementation or alter the change process. Such behaviour seems to stem from a cultural background that allows powerful members to enjoy privileges and perks, and this creates a context for the mis-use of power. Therefore, this chapter suggests that the appropriation of power structures determines the extent to which advice is implemented. The following figure 15 demonstrates the structure of this chapter:

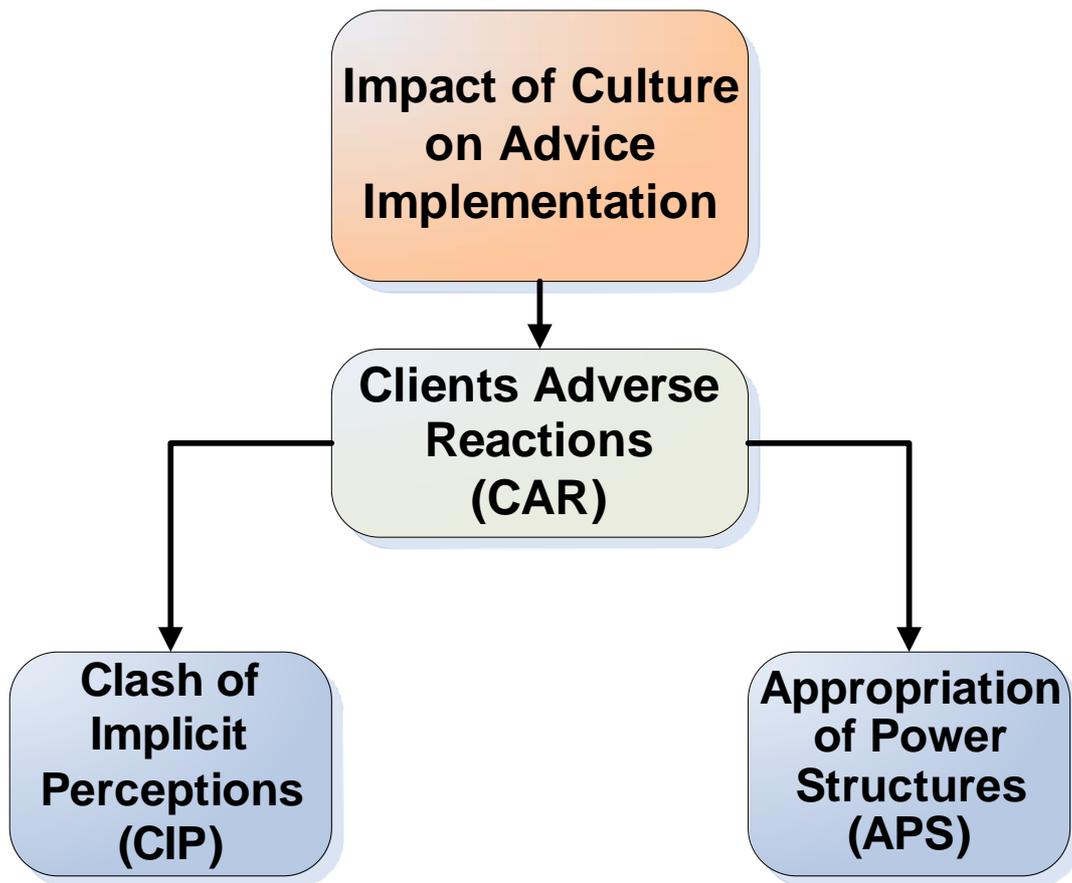


Figure 15: Structure of Chapter 9

9.2.1 Clash of Implicit Perceptions (CIP)

The data suggests that, because of the clashing Western and Arabic perspectives about workers' positions and expected responsibilities, the consulting process is likely to endure a period of stagnation after the advice is given, which might lead to problematic implementation. Western cultures seem to view the relationship between employer and worker as a contract, in which the scope and expectations for work are explicitly stated, and are expected to be followed. Arab cultures seem to view the relationship between employers and workers in terms of the status of the employer. Those who adopt status-based relationships perceive contracts as frameworks for general expectations rather than binding agreements with specific a scope and expectations. Therefore, those who have this perception are likely to assume that it is the norm for the worker to perform tasks that are not specifically stated in the contract. Thus, when employers and workers come from different cultures with different perceptions about the mode of their relationship, clashes about the scope of work and expectations are likely to take place. When this occurs, process

stagnation is likely to follow. In the case of consulting work in Saudi Arabia, these clashes seem to be over who is responsible for implementation.

This section begins by highlighting the issues of different perceptions, the cultural drivers of these perceptions, and the impact on the implementation of advice, and the consulting process. It proposes two typologies of Saudi client-consultant relationships that explain how the clash over responsibility takes place.

9.2.1.1 Different perceptions of responsibility for implementation

Clients and consultants have different perceptions about who is responsible for the implementation of advice. While Saudi clients seem to perceive that implementation is the consultants' responsibility, consultants perceive that it is separate and independent of the consulting mission. Consultants perceive that implementation is a separate task that needs to be addressed and agreed on prior to the engagement. International consultants stated:

"I think one of the differences that I've seen here in Saudi is that the Saudi clients typically want you to do most of the work ... they want you to not only provide the consulting, but they want you to be the operator as well. They want you to do the work as opposed to, for example, different cultures, specifically the US. My experience in South America as well as Europe has been that they more want you to consult and then move out of the way and let them do the work. They are trying to get you to help to better their operation, improve their operation, as opposed to here where consultant is really also an extension of the team. They want you to be not just to consult."

"There are many clients. The consultant cannot do the job of the clients and that is something clients need to understand. Consultants can help you, but you have to do your part of the work. And the magic solution that the consultant does something and it's solved is sometimes in (the) imagination of many clients. It's not true. And the Western world has learned that, so consultants are very useful, but you need teams inside that are able to transform what consultants are giving into tangible value."

"That was one of the things I had struggled with for years in Saudi Arabia because the Western companies - and I think that's a real difference between Western companies and Saudi companies - is that (in) the Western companies, the majority of people, in terms of being able to absorb information, do something with it and whatever, is generally higher than what I've seen in Saudi Arabia. It's a development stage I think."

Each one of the above three excerpts suggests that there are different perceptions about the responsibility for implementation among Saudi clients and international consultants. The first excerpt clearly states that Saudi clients look at the consultant as someone who provides the advice and 'operates' it. This is clear from the phrase *"they want you to not*

only provide the consulting, but they want you to be the operator as well." The consultant in this excerpt offers a comparison from his experience about how Americans, Europeans and South Africans differ from Saudis in their perceptions about the responsibility for implementation. While the former wants the consultant to offer the advice and *"then move out of the way and let them do the work"*, Saudi clients seem to completely rely on the consultant to perform the full task from the production of the advice to its implementation. This is clear from the fact that the consultant is seen as 'an extension' of client employees, meaning that clients might feel that the consultant should be engaged in the 'operation' work as an employee. Therefore, it is no wonder that these clients expect consultants to implement the produced advice since they are seen as 'employees'.

The second excerpt offers the same idea - Saudi clients perceive responsibility for implementation differently to international consultants. Clients seem to perceive the consultant as a 'magician' who makes things happen for them. They might be under the impression that consultants are supposed not only to advise but also to implement the advice, so they can see its effect. This magician image of the consultant suggests that clients expect them to implement their advice in the manner of a magician using tricks and techniques to construct an effect that entertains and impresses the audience. For the audience, the scope of the magician's work includes both setting up and executing the trick. In the same way, clients expect consultants to both construct advice and to implement it.

The second excerpt highlights both the Saudi clients and the consultant himself have perceptions about the responsibility for implementation. This is clear in consultant's assertiveness in the phrase *"the consultant cannot do the job of the clients and that is something clients need to understand. Consultants can help you, but you have to do your part of the work"*. The use of 'cannot' and the reference to the implementation task as 'the job of the client' suggest that this consultant takes his perception that clients are responsible for implementation for granted. From this point of view, it seems logical that conflict will take place between clients and consultants who are operating with opposing assumptions about responsibility for implementation.

Although the third excerpt does not offer explicit statements about the differences between Saudi clients and international consultants in terms of perceptions about responsibility for implementation, it clearly suggests that international consultants '*struggle*' with the fact that Saudi clients are less able to use or '*absorb*' the consulting advice. The clients' inability to absorb the advice suggests they are struggling with its implementation. However, as we shall see shortly, the reference to the '*development stage*' is an indication that these different perceptions may stem from the level of experience both parties have in consulting work in Saudi Arabia.

Clients and consultants having different un-addressed perceptions about responsibility for implementation might lead to conflicts that cannot be easily resolved after the delivery of advice. If different perceptions are not communicated and addressed at the beginning of

the consulting process, it might become subject to stagnation, making implementation difficult or impossible. In other words, if clients and consultants are not in an agreement about who is responsible for the implementation task, conflict is likely to take place, which may result in the advice not being appropriately implemented. This is because implementation requires an allocation of time, money and resources that must be accounted for by the party responsible for it. This is confirmed by an international consultant:

“As a consultant it is challenging, because I have a finance to go by. I cannot possibly do the operations for them ... Sometimes that is easier, but in the long run that doesn't make me successful, because I need to consult and then move on to the next client. It's a cultural aspect.”

The above excerpt describes the need to allocate resources from the consultant's perspective, but clients are also subject to the same challenge. Rationally, the advice cannot be implemented without a party who is responsible and prepared to implement it. In other words, clients and consultants cannot undertake the implementation task without prior preparation in which resources such as time, money and employees are allocated.

9.2.1.2 Cultural Differences and Implementation: The Clash between Contractual and Status-Based Relationships

The portrayal of consultants as 'employees' or 'magicians' suggests that clients and consultants perceive their respective roles differently. While consultants see themselves as 'helpers', clients seem to perceive them as 'workers' or 'doers' who operate under their authority. The image of the 'employee' suggests that the consultant operates under the control of the client. The image of 'magician' suggests that the consultant is perceived as a person who 'performs' tricks and techniques to please and satisfy the client. In both cases, the client has authority over the consultant, whereby the client is the receiver and the consultant is the 'doer'. This is fundamentally different to the image consultants have about themselves in which they are 'helpers' who assist clients to reach desired goals.

These different perceptions about the image and role of consultants seem to be related to the positioning of workers in their relationship with employers, and have cultural roots. These cultural roots stem from how different cultures position the worker within the relationship with the employer, and can be seen in two common relationship modes, namely contractual and status-based.

Dolgin (1990) and Vlieger (2012) state that working relationships can be *contractual* or *status-based*. In contractual relationships, employers and workers are consciously aware of the details and exact scope of the contract that determines the responsibility of each party, and the clear outcome of the relationship. In status-based relationships, there is manoeuvring between employers and workers over the explicit scope of the contract and the implicit pressure of status. Dolgin (1990) argues that the distinctive feature of status-based relationships is that employers who perceive their relationships with workers in this

way do not seem to place much emphasis on the contract as a binding agreement. For them, contracts are just formalities that do not carry the weight that those who behave from a contractual perspective seem to expect. In other words, status seems to impose more effect than the contract, and workers are expected to accommodate the wishes and interests of the employer although this is not clearly stated in the contract. Those who perceive their relationship with workers to be based on status seem to believe that the authority of their status carries more weight than the authority of the contract. Therefore, in status-based relationships, contracts are frameworks setting out the general scope of work, and the norm is to serve the expectations of the employer. This means the scope of work is likely to extend to tasks not explicitly stated in the contract. In contractual relationships, on the other hand, the norm is to serve according to the specifics and explicit scope of the contract (Dolgin, 1990).

According to Vlieger (2012), cultures vary in their views of relationships between workers and employers. On the one hand, Western cultures seem to have transformed from status-based relationships to contractual relationships over the past two centuries because of gradual evolution in economic, political and social structures. On the other hand, according to Vlieger (2012), in Saudi Arabia, contractual and status-based relationships between employers and workers seem to co-exist. This is because the country has undergone rapid and massive economic and social change over the course of sixty years. This has led to the co-existence of both types of relationship because rapid development did not eliminate status perceptions, but allowed contractual perceptions to emerge alongside them. Therefore, both modes still exist in Saudi Arabia, and the data suggests that clients' experience in consulting work determines the relationship mode they are likely to have with their international consultants, either contractual or status-based.

The data suggests that Saudi clients who do not have substantial experience with international consultants adopt a status-based relationship with them. This leads them to perceive that the consultant is their resource or 'butler' who works under their authority and should 'serve them' to accommodate their unstated expectation about the responsibility for implementation. Therefore, these clients seem to perceive that implementation is a fundamental part of the consulting process. For international consultants who operate in contractual mode, the implementation task is their responsibility only if stated and agreed on in the contract. Consequently, when a consulting relationship is formed between low-experience clients who perceive their relationships to be based on status and consultants who perceive their relationships to be based on contract, clashes over the scope of the work and future responsibilities are likely to occur, possibly causing stagnation and resulting in advice not being implemented.

On the other hand, Saudi clients who have a considerable stock of experience in the consulting work seem to adopt a contractual relationship with consultants. This means the specifics of the expected outcomes are explicitly addressed and agreed on prior to engagement. Experienced Saudi clients perceive consultants as experts who 'help them' to

achieve their goals. Therefore, experienced Saudi clients and international consultants are likely to view their relationship as a contractual one that has a specific scope and exact expectations about future tasks and responsibilities, including implementation. Consequently, the responsibility of advice implementation is likely to be determined from the beginning of the consulting process, thereby increasing the likelihood of the advice being appropriately implemented by a team that is prepared and has sufficient resources.

This chapter re-introduces the concept of the 'cultural conditioning' of the consulting process. The extent to which the consulting process is culturally conditioned determines the extent to which future tasks are addressed and accommodated. The more culturally conditioned the consulting process is, the more likely it will produce the expected outcome. This chapter suggests that the extent to which the consulting process is culturally conditioned is subject to the clients' and consultants' stock of experience of consulting work in Saudi Arabia.

As demonstrated in figure 16, *experience* can be explained through two typologies of client-consultant relationships. The first type of relationship is formed between Saudi clients who do not have substantial experience in consulting work and international consultants who do not have substantial experience in the Saudi environment. In such cases, Saudi clients are unlikely to recognise that consultants expect their relationship to be purely contractual and international consultants are unlikely to recognise that their clients perceive their relationship to be based on status. Therefore, the consultants might not see the need to state their scope of work explicitly or address the responsibility for implementation. Consequently, each party will be dealing with the other based on his own perceptions and assumptions, which may lead to clashes over future tasks. However, clients and consultants are expected to learn from those clashes, which means they are more likely to address their unstated expectations in the future.

The second type of relationship is formed when at least one party has a considerable stock of experience in consulting work in Saudi Arabia. If it is the Saudi clients who have the experience, they are likely to perceive their relationship with consultants as contractual, and are likely to honour the contract. If it is the international consultants who have the experience, they are likely to recognise that their clients might perceive the relationship to be based on status, and thus take corrective action by explicitly addressing the responsibility for implementation, and agreeing on the terms prior to engagement. If both parties have experience, the relationship is most likely to be contractual with a clear scope that maximises the likelihood of the advice being implemented appropriately.

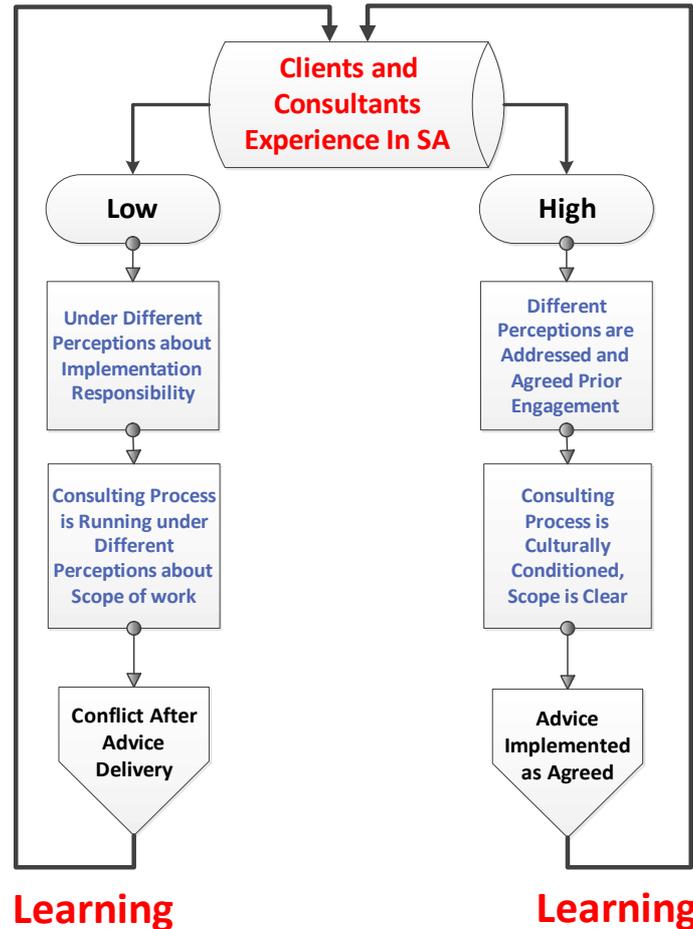


Figure 16: The Role of Experience in the Avoidance of CIP

Typology 1: Both Parties have a Low Level of Experience in Consulting Work in Saudi Arabia

The three excerpts previously presented show that international consultants with varying levels of experience have different perceptions about responsibility for implementation. These consultants now seem to be aware of the different perceptions of Saudi clients with regards to responsibility for implementation but the fact that they frame these experiences as struggles confirms that experience in the Saudi environment is crucial to avoid such difficulties. It is rational to assume that at the start of their experiences in Saudi Arabia, the consultants struggled with the fact that their clients have different perceptions about the scope of their relationship with consultants. This is likely to have led them to recognise the different cultural perception that their Saudi clients might have about their relationship. Consequently, it is rational to assume that the use of the word ‘struggle’ by the third consultant is a reference to clashes he/she had with low-experienced Saudi clients.

Although none of the above excerpts explicitly specify that they are referring to low-experienced Saudi clients, the data gathered from experienced Saudi clients affirms that

such perceptions are usually associated with clients who have a low level of experience in consulting work. Experienced Saudi clients offered the following feedback about how low-experience clients perceive their consultants, revealing the perceptions that the above-mentioned consultants seem to have been struggling with:

“They don’t have experience working with the consultant. They think that the consultant is like a butler for them. So, I can bring him every day, I tell him what I want, and you need to find the solution no matter what, it’s not my problem. So, you need to have the right skill and the right knowledge to make sure that the scope of work of that consultant is covering (what you) need.”

“I have seen a lot of people are very negative because he thinks that this consultant is supposed to worship him and give him whatever he wants and things like this.”

The first excerpt was shared by a Saudi client with nine years of interactive experience with international consultants. He is critical of the tendency of low-experience clients to view their relationship with consultants based on status. This was clear from the description of the relationship as a master-servant one whereby the consultant is seen as a ‘butler’. This means that low-experienced clients consider that the consultant’s main role is to ‘do’ or ‘serve’ what the client wants or needs. This suggests that they expect a ‘hands-off’ approach in their engagement with consultants whereby consultants are expected not only to ‘think’ about what needs to be done but also to ‘do’ what is necessary to resolve the issue. In other words, they expect consultants to both advise and implement the advice because they expect to be ‘served’ by them. Moreover, this experienced client asserts that it is experience that gives the client *“the right skill and the right knowledge”* to specify and understand the scope of the consultant’s work.

The second excerpt was shared with an experienced Saudi client who has over thirteen years of interactive experience with international consultants. He affirms the existence of the perception that the client-consultant relationship is based on the client’s status. This is clear from the description of the ‘god-worshipper’ relationship.

This perception of master-servant or god-worshipper relationship suggests that the consultant is viewed more as a ‘doer’ than a thinker. Clients may perceive that their consultants are servants who are supposed to ‘do’ what is necessary to resolve the issue under their authority and control, and assume that implementation is their responsibility. Although this client did not explicitly state that this perception is associated with low-experience clients, the fact that he is an experienced Saudi client who recognises and criticises this image implies that this is whom he is referring to.

Thus, it can be concluded that if both parties do not have sufficient stock of experience in consulting work in Saudi Arabia then their different perceptions about the responsibility for implementation are unlikely to be communicated or addressed. This is because both parties

will be operating from their taken-for-granted assumptions, derived from their perceptions about the relationship mode, whether contractual or status-based. This means that low-experienced Saudi clients assume that the consultants are responsible for implementation because their job is to 'serve', while the same consultants might be under the impression that the clients will be performing the implementation task because it was not agreed on in the contract. Consequently, when the advice is delivered, clients expect the consultants to continue to the implementation phase, while the consultants wait for the clients to do this. Subsequently, a clash between clients and consultants is likely, leading to stagnation in the consulting process or problematic implementation. It is highly unlikely that the clash will be easily resolved because neither party has planned or allocated the necessary resources, both assuming that the other side will take responsibility for implementation.

From these conflicts and reactions, clients and consultants begin to learn about their different perceptions. Such experiences allow them to be aware of the importance of communicating and agreeing on their expectations from the early stages of the engagement. In other words, both parties learn that it is important to culturally condition the consulting process in a way that accommodates all their expectations.

Typology 2: Saudi clients or International Consultants have a Considerable Stock of Experience in Consulting work in Saudi Arabia

This section suggests that if at least one party, Saudi clients or international consultants, has a considerable stock of experience in consulting work in Saudi Arabia, then the experienced party is likely to address the implicit expectations about the exact scope of work such as the implementation task. This section presents evidence from the data received from clients and consultants about the role of their experience in the early stages of the relationship. Also, it presents cases shared by Saudi clients and international consultants that show how they use their experiences to culturally condition the consulting process to accommodate implicit expectations.

The feedback received from experienced Saudi clients shows a more mature view of the image and the actual role of the consultant than that of low-experience clients. Experienced clients seem to perceive consultants as 'helpers' rather than servants, and their relationship with consultants as contractual with clear understanding about the exact role of the consultants. A Saudi client who has ten years of interactive experience with international consultants stated:

"I'm dealing with the consultant (as) a colleague more than a consultant (who) will do me a favour – just someone helping me to find an answer. He is not giving me the answer."

The fact that this experienced Saudi client views consultants as partners or 'colleagues' who 'help' him instead of 'serve' him supports the conclusion that the perceived mode of the relationships, contractual or status-based, depends the level of experience that Saudi clients

have. Hence, experienced clients are likely to have contractual perceptions about the mode of their relationship, with the consultants seen as 'helpers' who work with the client, not 'for' the client. Consequently, different expectations about future tasks such as implementation are unlikely to exist. This is because clients and consultants share the same perception about the mode of their relationships. Clashes over who is responsible for the implementation are, therefore, unlikely to take place because those who adopt a contractual perception about their relationship with others tend to address their expectations at the contracting stage and honour the specifics of their contracts.

A consultant who is experienced in the Saudi environment is likely to anticipate an inexperienced client's probable perception of the responsibility for implementation; this ability to anticipate is most likely derived from assumptions about the client's status. Therefore, experienced consultants are likely to raise the question about who is responsible for implementation. A Saudi client who has fourteen years of interactive experience with international clients explained how experienced consultants tend to address implicit expectations by being involved in drafting the scope of work for the client:

"Because the one who works in Saudi Arabia, he came to realise that, 'Ok. I need to work closely with the clients to draft the RFP or scoping this'. Then he will work with them to deliver, which is not a normal situation outside of Saudi Arabia."

The above excerpt explains the consultants' awareness of the need to culturally condition their consulting process. This is clear from the fact that this experienced consultant is willing to engage in drafting the scope of the contract to accommodate unaddressed expectations that clients might have. This is clear in the phrase 'the one who works in Saudi Arabia, he came to realise', which implies that the realisation has developed from experience whereby consultants realise that there is a need to engage in drafting the scope of work for their clients, *"which is not a normal situation outside of Saudi Arabia."* This means that the consultants need to culturally condition their consulting process to accommodate the embedded perceptions about responsibility for implementation that Saudi clients may take for granted if they have low experience in consulting work.

However, the fact that this input was shared by an experienced Saudi client implies that this client might be the party that raises the cultural conditioning of the consulting process with international consultants who do not have a great deal of experience in Saudi Arabia. This may be done to avoid any conflicts after the delivery of advice, in the event that clients want the consultant to implement the advice. In fact, the above Saudi client shares an example that shows how his experience has allowed him to culturally condition the consulting process with British consultants who have no prior experience in Saudi Arabia. His experience allowed him to communicate his expectations and set a clear scope for the consultants from the beginning of the consulting process. This approach allowed them to have a successful consulting engagement that produced the necessary consulting advice that they were prepared to implement without the help of the consultant. He stated:

“It is a strategic project, something new to us. We have some ideas about it, some thoughts, we bring them (the consultants) and say, ‘Ok, we want to have a road map for specific business we are doing. And since you are experienced (in the field in which the client is interested), we need you to come and help us to develop this road map.’ They came under impression, they never worked in Saudi Arabia, they came under impression. ‘Let’s have an agreement’, they test the water with us, ‘How you want to proceed with this if we have conflict in future? If we have - what do you want us to work, we need to have an agreement.’ It was very clear even from the CEO of the company. I said, ‘I want to have disagreements actually in front of the Board, it doesn’t matter for me. You should feel independent from us. If we are aligned, that’s perfect. If we agree, then no disagreement between the consultant and the project team of the company, that’s perfect. We can go to the Board and say all of us are agreed, we’re aligned, give us approval in that direction.’ But if he (the consultant) said, ‘Feel free, actually we wanted to be independent’, I don’t mind disagreeing, in front of the board saying, ‘Ok, that’s what the consultant thinks, that’s my thoughts as a management.’ Even if it’s a 180-degree disagreement, that’s fine. This is healthy, and this should let you work in a comfort zone ... I always told them, ‘When you work, we are working as a project team ... I tell them, ‘You are working as a partner.’ And believe me, with this relationship - we had 3 or 4 initiatives after this program, we didn’t even sign a contract for that ... And this is what this type of relation always I’m looking for. Always I told them, ‘I don’t want to work with a consultant as a consultant.’ I am working with him as part of the team ... There were a lot of questions that they don’t know. So, we give them, ‘Don’t worry’, and this will keep it very healthy. The program already concluded the planning phase and now we started the implementation phase.”

This Saudi client has fourteen years of interactive experience with international consultants and works as a project manager at a well-known a government-owned company that operates under the authority of the stock markets.

The experience of the British firm in Saudi Arabia was limited but this client’s experience meant that he perceived the relationship as contractual rather than status-based. This allowed him to understand the importance of explicitly stating his expectations and setting the scope of the work he wished the consultant to consider. Thus, he made it clear at the contracting stage that they needed the consultants’ ‘help’ to develop the road map needed. The fact that this client wants the consultant to ‘help’ implies that he expects the consultant to work ‘with’ him to develop that road map. This is confirmed by the fact that he wants the consultants to work with him as ‘partners’, not as employees or servants, as per the expectations of low-experienced clients. Therefore, this client does not expect to rely on the consultant for the implementation task. More importantly, his experience allows him to explicitly state that he only needs ‘help’ to ‘develop’ the road map, not to execute it. This is apparent in the fact that the consultants were encouraged by the client to ‘disagree’ with

him to the extent that disagreements could be shared in front of the board members. This implies that the client does not expect the consultant to simply advise and apply what they have advised. Rather, he wants the consultants to be 'independent' and 'disagree with' ideas, implying a high level of confidence in the way the consultant is used, i.e. mainly to challenge the client's ideas, not to suggest and implement ideas.

Therefore, the client was ready to implement what the board was willing to accept. In fact, in a follow-up phone call, the client confirmed that they were fully prepared for the task of implementation and had accomplished it successfully. He added that they did not expect the consultant to be engaged in the implementation, and that this was clear from the beginning of the consulting project. However, because of the healthy and clear relationship, the consultants had encouraged the client to come back to them if they need any further clarifications, and so, in the middle of the implementation, the clients requested further specific information from the consultants in a conference call at the cost of a few hundred dollars. This shows that the client had a full understanding of the advice and the way it should be implemented. Therefore, their implementation was successful and the need for consultants was minor and highly specific.

The above dialogue between this experienced client and the British firm prior to engagement was clear, and addressed specific expectations that might not have been addressed had the client not had sufficient experience in consulting work, and had the consultant been new to the Saudi market and did not recognise the perception about responsibility for implementation that Saudi clients may have. In other words, the above dialogue cannot be expected to take place if neither party has sufficient experience of consulting in Saudi Arabia.

Another example from the consultants' side suggests that international consulting firms that have a considerable stock of experience in the Saudi market seem to recognise the different perceptions of responsibility for implementation. Therefore, they culturally condition their proposals and contracts to clearly address this, and specify their responsibility for it. An experienced Spanish consultant who used to manage one of the international consulting firms during its early years in Saudi Arabia shared the following excerpt:

"So, one of the mistakes I've made in the beginning when I was working in Saudi Arabia was that I tried to take my side-line rule in the development process the way I did in the Western companies. Teaching people, directing people, redirecting them, explaining them, giving them an example and whatever, and then expecting them to actually go out there and do it. And I had to change that dramatically in Saudi Arabia, I had to change it in such a way, and it's not a bad thing actually. But, I had to change this in such a way that I had to jump into the change process and walk with them through the change process. Actually, do it together with them. Once, twice, three times four times, five times. As many times as needed,

until they actually got the whole thing and said, 'Okay, that's the way to do it' ... So, the learning process is a little bit more intensive."

The consultant who shared the above excerpt has over six years of experience in the Gulf region, including Saudi Arabia, and manages an international consulting firm that has operated there since 2011 (the interview took place in the spring of 2015). It is apparent from his feedback that he learnt from his experience that taking a 'side-line' in the consulting process in Saudi Arabia was one of the 'mistakes' he made in his early engagements with Saudi clients. The use of word 'side-line' is a reference to the type of services he used to provide to his Western clients and the type of services that his Saudi clients were expecting from him. The difference was that he used to direct, redirect, and explain to his Western clients what needed to be done and then expected them to "*actually go out there and do*" what he suggested. On the contrary, he needed to 'dramatically' culturally condition his way of working in Saudi Arabia where he began to 'jump' his 'side-line' and engage himself in the implementation task with the client.

However, it was not clear from the feedback whether the consultant's experience and the 'dramatic' cultural conditioning he applied to his consulting process was reflected in the firm's modus operandi in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the new managing partner of the consulting firm was contacted in February 2018 and asked if the current engagement processes specify responsibility for the implementation task. He replied:

"Yes, there is something around this. It depends on the client needs. So, usually, when they (the consulting team) approach a client, either they create the needs (because) he doesn't know what to do. So, we plan it for him and we tell him what the process is. Usually, this takes us from the inception phase, building the strategy, translating the strategy and then there is a phase where we call it the operations or executing the strategy, and this is where it comes where you have an optional or, in our proposal, something in addition, we can help him implement the strategy, and that is always optional - we give it to the client. Another way is when the client is mature, he understands what he wants, and he only wants us to clarify the strategy to build the KPIs but they have the capabilities inside where they don't need our help but we also offer them if needed. You can have this optional phase of implementation. We call it implementation or operations."

It seems that the experience of the previous manager has influenced how this consulting firm approaches clients in Saudi Arabia. This is clear from the fact that they include a clear section in their proposal that states the option of 'implementing' their advice for the client. Adding the option to 'implement' is an explicit assertion that the responsibility for this is an option that needs to be agreed on before the contract is signed. Moreover, the feedback of the current managing partner affirms that this approach is effective with low-experience clients. This is evident in two instances. Firstly, the consulting firm may help the client to develop the scope based on what the

client might need, and will, therefore be able to discuss the implementation task and agree it with the client. Secondly, the current manager referred to the 'mature' client who *"understands what he wants, and he only wants us to clarify the strategy"* so he/she can *"build"* or implement the advice. This is clear evidence that the clients' perception about the responsibility for implementation stems from their low stock of experience in consulting work.

In conclusion, the cultural conditioning of the consulting process depends on the experience of at least one party. If either the client or consultant has a considerable stock of experience, then the experienced side is likely to seek to explicitly address the potential misperceptions of the general scope of the work and the responsibility for implementation. Consequently, the consulting process is likely to be smooth, and implementation is likely to be performed. On the contrary, if the consulting side has a low level of experience in the country and the client in consulting work, then those different perceptions are unlikely to be communicated from the beginning. Consequently, stagnation in the consulting process and problematic implementation is likely. Problematic implementation results because it requires resources such as money, time and staff, which need to be considered and allocated at earlier stages.

9.2.2 Appropriation of Power Structures (APS)

This section discusses implementing consulting advice in power-dominated settings. Such settings are characterised by the fact that change cannot be applied without the approval and support of the decision-makers in the workplace. To protect their own interests and formal powers, those decision makers may seek to block or delay the advice from implementation.

The data suggests that the client has some power independent of the advice and the consultants but plays a crucial role in the process of advice implementation. By making use of the term 'appropriation', the author seeks to capture the extent to which multi-levelled and self-centred power members interfere in advice implementation to gain or protect their interests. The appropriation of different power structures (APS) on the client side suggests that powerful client members may use their formal powers to influence the extent to which advice is implemented. This influence stems from the fact that powerful members at different levels and in different locations may interfere to block, delay or manipulate the implementation of the consulting advice to protect or gain personal interests.

The use of power for self-centred reasons is, in fact, deeply rooted in the Arab culture. Researchers like Al-Omary (2008) and Sabry (2010) affirm that, in the Arab culture, powerful individuals can enjoy special privileges and benefits that are not available for others who do not enjoy the same power. Sabry (2010) argues that even if those privileges and benefits are not explicitly and formally stated, society seems to consider them as rights granted to those in power. In other words, those in power in the Arab world can enforce their personal

interests over the collective interests of society or the organisation, and objections and protests against this are unlikely. This section examines the impact of this behaviour on the implementation of consulting advice in Saudi Arabia.

Interference to block, delay, or manipulate advice implementation is highly likely in such power-dominated cultures. Therefore, the appropriation of different power structures on the client side determines the extent to which advice is implemented. In other words, this study suggests that the extent to which advice is implemented is subject to the extent to which the interests of the powerful are accommodated within the advice.

This chapter suggest that the appropriation of power structures (APS) in advice implementation can be seen in two ways following the delivery of the advice, namely in approving the advice, and in implementing it. Firstly, is suggested that in bureaucratic settings with central decision-making processes, power has a great impact on advice approval. This is because the approval decision is subject to the personal interests of the decision-makers. The data suggests that approval process takes a significant time because it must be approved by a chain of powerful members, who have vested personal interests. Consequently, consulting advice might become outdated, or the circumstances for which it was needed might change before it is approved. Ultimately, even if the advice is approved for implementation, it is less likely to address the issues for which it was originally developed.

Secondly, the interference of self-centred powerful members in the change process has a great impact on the implementation process. This is because they may refuse to accept change, request exceptions and exemption from change processes, or discourage others by invoking fear of change.

In power-dominated settings, the appropriation of power structures (APS) in advice approval and implementation processes seems to be inevitable, and cultural conditioning of the consulting process does not seem to be deployable at these stages. This is because the appropriation is done by independent, powerful client members who are not directly involved with the consulting process, and it is difficult to predict and account for their impact during the consulting engagement.

The following two subsections elaborate on how the appropriation of power structures impacts the approval and implementation of consulting advice. Again, this impact on advice implementation is not because of cultural compatibility but because of power dynamics independent of the advice itself.

9.2.2.1 The Appropriation of Power Structures (APS): during Advice Approval

Analysis of the primary data reveals that in power-dominated settings, there are two ways by which consulting advice can be approved. The organisational structure determines which is used. The first is the hierarchical way, whereby the advice is approved by powerful

members in different positions, such as section managers, department heads, chief executive officers, board members and chairmen. Second is the centralised way, whereby the advice is usually approved by one decision maker, known as the 'sponsor'. This is common in small and medium sized organisations, with a sole decision maker who orders the consulting advice and has the ultimate decision on its approval for implementation. Implementation of the consulting advice is likely to be jeopardised when the sole decision-maker is replaced by a new one with different personal interests.

First: The Hierarchical Approach for Advice Approval

This subsection proposes that, in a workplace governed by a hierarchical chain of self-centred powerful individuals who tend to put personal interests ahead of collective ones, approving consulting advice for implementation is problematic. This is because running the approval through that chain of power consumes a considerable amount of time; time is spent on clarifying misinterpretations through specific communication protocols, and delays caused by those averse to implementation. Consequently, the advice might never be approved for implementation, or might become obsolete because the circumstances for which it was developed have changed.

The section begins by highlighting the issue of hierarchy and bureaucracy in the Saudi workplaces from which the sample of clients and consultants is drawn. Then, it describes how the process of advice approval is slow and full of interference from powerful hierarchical members from the client side. Finally, it discusses the role of bureaucracy and hierarchy on the approval, implementation and positive impact of the advice.

The issue of hierarchy is very noticeable in workplaces in Saudi Arabia. An international consultant stated:

“One of the things that for me is difficult to accept, not to learn, but to accept, is this. In the GCC and especially in Saudi as well, the hierarchy is pretty strong. In general, hierarchy, the decision-making, commands, it is extremely hierarchical.”

It is apparent from the above excerpt that there is a high level of hierarchical power in the workplace. It is obvious from the phrase *‘One of the things that for me is difficult to accept, not to learn, but to accept’* that this international consultant is uncomfortable with the Saudi workplace structure, which requires approvals to go through a chain of powerful members.

This means that an approval might be delayed because of misunderstandings resulting from poor communication or simply because of disagreements or different interests among powerful members in the hierarchy. A Saudi client explains how they struggle with the issue of hierarchy when it comes to approving consulting advice because they need to follow a certain protocol to communicate with higher levels of management:

“For example, if you want to talk about our constitution we have board of directors, ok? One of them, he’s a governor of (Organisation name), we have people from

some ministries from around the table. So, once we have something like this (new advice that need to be approved), our role is just tell this to them. They need to take it with the minister. Because there is no one to call, ok? ... So, you cannot jump and just go to the minister ... You need to go, follow the protocol, and go now to those people, they will take it, they will escort it to the upper level, then they even ... they discuss it there, and then they can take it from there."

The above excerpt explains that there is a chain of power that operates by particular communication protocols. This is clear in the phrases '*They need to take it with the minister*' and '*you cannot jump and just go to the minister*'. The use of the word '*they*' is a clear indication that the approval of consulting advice is carried out by different people who are in charge of communicating and interacting with higher management. This fact is confirmed in the second phrase where the interviewee affirms that he/she 'cannot jump' to the decision makers for approvals. This means that the advice must be handed from one powerful member to another one higher in the chain. Thus, there is a distance between those who are involved in advice development and the self-centred stakeholders who decide whether it can be approved for implementation.

Moreover, the challenge becomes greater when those involved in communicating the approval and sharing feedback between powerful members are not familiar with the consulting project. This is because their interpretations and delivery of the consulting advice might be inaccurate, completely wrong, or biased. For instance, secretaries and independent advisers seem to be important for decision-makers. Those individuals are not part of the consulting project and may have no knowledge of what the consulting advice means or why it was developed. More importantly, they might find the advice threatens their personal interests or that of those for whom they work. Yet, those individuals might be involved in the delivery and analysis of the consulting advice with their bosses before granting any approvals. This dialogue between decision-makers, those who do not have sufficient knowledge of the advice, and probably biased middlemen is unlikely to lead to quick approval. This is apparent in the phrase '*they discuss it there, and then they can take it from there*'. The use of the word '*they*' here is a reference to independent and unknown people who operate with higher management. This means that there is a strong possibility that the information delivered by these protocols will be misrepresented, missed, or even changed because it is handled by many people with different interests, roles, backgrounds, and levels of understanding.

In fact, hierarchical power in Saudi culture, and in Arab culture in general, is highly intense in the context of approval for change initiatives such as the ones proposed in consulting advice. According to Al-Aomary (2008, p. 33), "the Arab culture demonstrates all the key features of high power distance cultures where bureaucracies are plagued with numerous layers and power brokers and where exclusive privileges and perks are expected for those at the top." The fact that there are 'numerous layers' of power implies that there are different levels of power impact depending on the position of the powerful members. Also, the fact

that there are different 'power brokers' implies that the impact can take different shapes depending on the interests of the power broker.

For instance, powerful members from middle management may feel that implementation of the consulting advice may reveal their poor performance. Therefore, they are likely to block the approval or enforce conditions or alterations in a form of 'conditional approvals' to cover their poor performance. According to Sabry (2010), this is expected behaviour because avoiding criticism and maintaining powerful status is vital for powerful members (Sabry, 2010). Cunningham (1993) Lucas (2006), Al-Omary (2008) and Sabry (2010) affirm that in such cultural settings, it is expected that parties may offer conditional approvals to enforce alterations in change initiatives to achieve personal gains.

Moreover, the powerful individuals who may delay, block or enforce conditions and alterations before giving their approval are not necessarily acting to benefit themselves directly. Rather, the motive can be linked to their desire to benefit other powerful members who are not part of the hierarchy but who are affected by the proposed change. This favour-exchange is another cultural way in which power is used to benefit other powerful members. Cunningham (1993) affirms that benefiting external powerful members is part of the 'favour system' or what is known as 'Wasta' in the Arabic culture (Cunningham, 1993). The Arabic word 'Wasta' does not have an equivalent in the English language but can be loosely translated as 'influence'. Thus, powerful members exchange favours through their influence on behalf of other powerful members who cannot exercise their power in certain places. Cunningham (1993) asserts that it is common among powerful members in the Arab world to exchange favours through interference in change initiatives to achieve personal gains for each other. In this way, it is expected that powerful members involved in the approval of the consulting advice are likely to interfere on behalf of other powerful members who are not part of the approval process.

However, conflict of interests among powerful members who have an influence on the approval of change initiatives does not seem to be limited to Saudi Arabia or the Arab world in general. Rather, Lucan (2006) affirms that in power-dominated settings, the interests of the powerful parties affected by the application of new knowledge-based solutions are not likely to be aligned. This means a conflict of interest among those involved in the approval process is likely, resulting in the approval being delayed or blocked.

Thus, it can be concluded that approving advice through a hierarchy of power structures might lead to time-consuming and biased negotiations through which clarifications, negotiations and requests for more information are likely to be made by decision-makers before granting any approvals. The fact that the approval process is slow means that the circumstances for which the advice was developed might change. Implementing advice to solve issues that have already changed means that it is unlikely to result in the expected outcomes. Delays mean that there are newly developed requirements that need to be accommodated before implementation.

Additionally, all these clarifications and negotiations may result in rejection or enforcement of constraints to protect or maximise the interests of powerful members. The enforcement of constraints or alterations means that the consulting advice is significantly changed. Those constraints render the consulting advice obsolete.

A Saudi client shared a real example that offers clear evidence for the above conclusions. He stated:

“We had a project – it’s a very massive project – and it’s all about setting the strategy of the organisation, and developing the business model, and how the organisation should work, and setting up the organisation’s structure and everything. It’s the backbone of the organisation. Unfortunately, the governance within that project was set into one individual who used to be the vice president of the organisation – he is the one who is the decision maker, he’s the one who is accepting the things. And this project stayed for almost a year. Things are being delivered but didn’t get the approval and the authorised people to approve it up to the board of directors. It was not presented to them. It was sent to them in a not good way. No response happened. A year passed, things are delivered then there are a lot of dependency and eventually when that VP presented eventually to the board of directors what has been delivered after one year, they just disagreed with everything from the start. So, that was a waste of resources, waste of money. (Consequently) the international consultant who had been working after 5 or 6 months – I have seen it – they sense that this work will not go public, this organisation will not get the benefit so [...] they start shifting and changing their resources. Because they know that it will be marked as a failure because of the sponsor of the project. After they just lived with him for 6 months. They knew that it would never fly”.

The above excerpt offers a real case in which bureaucracy blocked advice from gaining approval. The process of advice approval discussed in the above excerpt offers insights about three critical issues. First, it affirms a battle between powerful members from middle and top management who seek to protect or maximise their personal interests from the consulting advice. This battle begins at the stage of advice development and extends to the stage of advice approval. This is clear from the fact that the project was entirely managed by the vice president of the organisation, who was the sole decision-maker that shaped the entire consulting advice. The fact that this vice president managed to keep board members in the dark during the development of the consulting advice implies that he/she was deliberately trying to impose personal interests and views on the ultimate advice. Therefore, he/she managed to hide the updates from the board members to avoid any conflict. However, the implementation of advice cannot take place without the approval of the board members, which means that it must be unveiled for the approval to be granted. According to the interviewee, the advice was sent to the board members in a way he described as ‘not good’. This is probably an indication of another move by the vice president to present the advice in a way that prevent the board members from understanding the

details that they may dislike or reject. Consequently, the presentation was not convincing, and therefore the board did not offer any response.

This leads us to the second critical issue resulting from the power struggle between the vice president and the board of directors. Due to a lack of response from the board, the vice president came back after a year with a new presentation. The advice in the presentation was rejected and the board '*disagreed with everything from the start*'. This could be due to two factors. First, they may have different views or interests that dictate what should be applied. This means that despite the efforts and engagement of the consulting team and vice president, the board members, who may not have sufficient knowledge of the client situation or advice, managed to block the approval and stop implementation.

Second, the board disagreement might be because of the changing circumstances over the twelve months, described by the interviewee as 'dependencies'. It is understood that these dependencies are new circumstances that depend on or emerge from events that took place over a year previously. In other words, the issues that the advice addressed twelve months ago are no longer the same. Ultimately, the approval is still pending until the new circumstances are accommodated.

In summary, the above excerpt offers clear evidence about the appropriation of hierarchal power structures. This is evident because the vice president has deliberately guided the construction of advice to accommodate his/her personal interests. Moreover, the vice president made all the internal decisions needed for the construction of the advice without consulting higher management. Ultimately, after the delivery of the advice, the self-interest of the vice president collided with the interests of other powerful members further up the hierarchy and not involved in the consulting process. This caused the approval process to take a year, and, ultimately, the approval for implementation was not granted.

It is apparent that the consulting advice was satisfactory to the vice president who sponsored the project and interacted with the consultants. In other words, the advice was conditioned to a satisfactory level for the client. What prevented implementation was not cultural conditioning, but the appropriation of hierarchical power structures by powerful members. Those powerful members were not involved in the consulting process but own the decision to implement the advice.

Second: The Centralised Approach for Advice Approval

There is a centralised approach among firms to hire consultants to serve the personal interests and views of the ultimate decision-maker of the organisation. This means that as long as the interests of the powerful individual are addressed, and a consultant's advice is culturally conditioned to a sufficient level, then the advice is likely to be approved by the powerful individual for implementation. The issue arises when a sole decision-maker is replaced by a new one with different views and interests before approval.

The data suggests that advice approval is subject to delays or blockage when decision-makers leave, or new ones join the workplace. Change among powerful members means a change in the interests upon which the original advice has been requested, developed and conditioned. As long as the interests of the new decision-makers are not accommodated, approval will be subject to delays or blockage. Consequently, the positive impact of the advice is likely to be reduced, negated or dismissed. Saudi clients who have engaged in the implementation of consulting advice stated:

“Sometimes a director or a head gets changed on that day and someone else comes in his place who doesn’t share his views and completely changes the way things are being done.”

“They show their expressions or their dislike or discomfort of why this is being done. And they will state it clearly and say, ‘I don’t care what that person before me has said, I want it to be done this way and that way.’”

“The head or the new department leader or someone has left the project and assigned someone else and that person, 1 – he doesn’t know the history of the project or its main objectives, and 2 – he doesn’t see the rush now or the reasoning why we’re doing it the way we are. For example, we have for the anaesthesia, we have something called the connectivity engine, we’ve opted to go wireless option with this. Because of the sterile environment in the OR, they don’t want wires and cables everywhere – because it’s a sterile environment, they don’t want blood or anything to go in their way, (so) no one to trip over these cables. The new head was asking why we were going wireless, what if there’s an interruption (in the signal), what if there’s a weak signal, what’s going to happen – as if we’re doing all of this again from the start. So, this is one of the things we are facing in the change in the workflow from the management side.”

The first and second excerpts show that when a decision-maker leaves an organisation, the replacement might not be interested in the consulting advice and its outcome. In the first excerpt, this is evident in the fact that the previous and new decision-makers have different personal views. In the second excerpt, the phrase *‘I don’t care what that person before me has said, I want it to be done this way and that way’* suggests that the personal views and wishes of the new decision-maker are emphasised. The use of ‘I’ in the above phrase underlines the importance of the personal wishes of the decision maker.

Although this is an internal management issue that is not related to the advice or the way it is developed and culturally conditioned, it nevertheless seems to have a serious impact on the approval of the consulting advice for implementation. The decision to hire consultants is usually centralised and driven by the personal views and interests of the decision-makers. Thus, whenever the decision-maker who sponsors the projects leaves before the full implementation of the advice, the approval for implementation is likely to be subject to delays or even cancellations because the personal interests and views that the advice was

supposed to address have disappeared with the departure of the sponsor. Therefore, the advice may no longer be needed.

The third excerpt offers an interesting example of how change among powerful members may lead to conflicts that delay or block the approval of advice. The interviewee explains his struggle getting approval for consulting advice developed for the former director of surgery in one of the large hospitals in Saudi Arabia. It is apparent from the example that the former and new directors have different views about what should be implemented. While the first director was concerned about a clean and organised operating room using wireless technologies, the new director was concerned about the continuity of work and patient safety.

Although both directors have legitimate concerns about the proposed solutions, the fact that the decision-making was centralised and subject to the views of one person led to conflict. If the proposed advice had been shared, discussed and approved by several powerful members, the new director would have had more confidence about what needed to be done. Perhaps, however, because the new director knew that the decision was made solely by the former director, he/she was not confident about its suitability, and so chose to use his/her power to block implementation. Moreover, the concern raised about safety and continuity would be seen as legitimate. This brings us back to the same issue of how internal change is managed in Saudi workplaces, and how powerful members imposing their personal judgements and views on critical matters may lead to unwanted results. The change of decision-maker appears to lead to delay or blockage of the approval of advice, ultimately preventing a positive impact.

9.2.2.2 The Appropriation of Power Structures (APS): during Advice Implementation

The implementation stage follows the approval stage. At this stage, the implementation of consulting advice seems to continue to be subject to interference by self-centred powerful members from the client side. This interference takes different forms, such as refusing to adopt the new changes, requesting exceptions or exemptions from new processes and work flows, or running a propaganda campaign against the advice to scare and discourage others from adopting the proposed change. Saudi clients who were involved in advice implementation stated:

“This is a very specific example, the consultant comes and tells you, ‘This is the way out, you have to have your services listed and you have to follow a certain way of managing your incident’, and following certain KPI with our users. And we put them down, we start working and people would come and say, ‘you know, this can’t be applied (to) me’, ‘you know I need to personally go and offer my services to someone without going through your incident management service’, ‘I will now look more powerful’, ‘I wanna build my connections’, ‘I wanna build my way out through this’. Then, things get corrupted. We have to go back to consultancy, come fix what we have. I’m not saying we have corrupted things, but we said things are out of control.”

“Yes, [making a lot of exceptions in the development of processes] is our problem from the beginning. That the exceptions have become more than the norms. Yeah, but this is a part of our culture too. This is how things get done here. This is part of our culture, it just comes with us here. Like everyone want to reach, I would say, a specific outcome or specific things ... regardless how the whole organisation is going. So, it's like by using their power, their connections, things happen. Things happen, and it's applied on everyone. And it's ok you know they can get away with it. It's fine, it's legal ... I was kind of only implementing those and it didn't work. We had to get other consultants to correct our mistakes. They said the same things.”

The first excerpt affirms that when the implementation takes place and change begins to make an impact, powerful members might resist or try to manipulate this change. This is because powerful members in Saudi Arabia are highly individualized, and prone to putting their personal interests ahead of the collective interests (Sabry, 2010; Al-Omary, 2008).

Moreover, the culture seems to tolerate such behaviour, and it is expected that powerful members will enjoy privileges and perks, and that their personal interests will be considered (Cunningham, 1993; Lucas, 2006; Al-Omary, 2008; Sabry, 2010). In other words, powerful individuals seem to be able to use their status to interfere in the change process in a culture that seems to expect and tolerate such behaviour. There are two ways in which powerful members use their status to interfere in the implementation of consulting advice to gain or protect personal interests.

Firstly, the interference can be an explicit refusal to apply change as stated in the phrase *‘This cannot be applied to me’*. The use of the pronoun ‘me’ is clear evidence of the self-centred way of thinking and behaving that seems to govern the reactions of powerful members toward any change that may reduce their privileges, affect their status, or reveal their failures in a culture that, as discussed in the previous chapter, regards failure as shame.

Secondly, the interference can be pursuing exemptions or exceptions. Pursuing change in the advice to protect current interests or gain new personal interests can be expressed explicitly or embedded in general work-related excuses. For instance, in the phrase *‘You know I need to personally go and offer my services to someone without going through your incident management service’*, the powerful member is referring to his/her desire to interact directly and personally with others to perform the necessary job. Although the excuse appears to be work-related, the main driver of this resistance seems to be that the powerful members would like to be in control of what they do without the need to follow a certain protocol that may reduce their power. In other words, they might be under the impression that the more control they have, the more powerful they become, which enhances their social status in the organisation and in society. This conclusion is made explicit in the phrase *‘I will now look more powerful’*.

In addition to gaining more power to enhance social status, powerful members might seek to gain personal benefits that support their career development. This conclusion is supported by the explicit remarks made by powerful members who explicitly state that they want to gain more personal benefits, for example: *'I wanna build my connections'*, and *'I wanna build my way out through this'*.

Although these phrases may sound extremely odd to a Western reader, the culture that allows powerful members to develop a high level of individualism in Saudi Arabia's workplaces allows such remarks to be explicitly made. In other cultures, such explicit remarks might be considered a type of corruption or immorality. However, such remarks are not made publicly. Rather, they might be shared on a personal level such as between the powerful member and the manager of the consulting project, whereby the latter may lean towards the interests of the powerful members as a favour or 'Wasta' that he/she can claim back in the future. In other words, such comments are usually made between powerful members who tend to exchange favours with each other. This behaviour suggests that powerful members interfere in the implementation of advice by putting their personal interests ahead of those of the organisation.

The second excerpt further clarifies the issue of interference by powerful members to gain personal interests. The phrase *'Like everyone wants to reach, I would say, a specific outcome or specific things ... regardless how the whole organisation is going'* offers evidence that powerful members put their personal interests ahead of the collective interests of the organisation. This self-centred behaviour seems to accommodate many exceptions to the consulting advice, which ultimately leads to major defects in the advice. This is clearly stated in the phrase *'our problem from the beginning. That the exceptions have become more than the norms'*. Accepting exceptions from the beginning is a clear indication that clients allow defects to form at an early stage in the project. The defect is accommodated imperceptibly, and eventually approved for implementation because the impact of self-centred powerful members has become the norm, and exceptions and favours have been embedded and accommodated in the advice. Moreover, powerful members might deliberately mislead the consulting project by offering unreal requirements just to preserve certain interests or gain new ones. Ultimately, the defect might not be noticed until the advice implementation stage.

It appears from the above excerpts that an internal change management issue allows different powerful members to interfere with the change process. The fact that the interference of powerful members has become the 'norm' suggests that it has been institutionalised. The action is not seen as illegal or corrupt as long as it follows internal change-management rules and processes. For instance, since the project manager has the power to make an exception for another powerful member without the need to explain the

reasons behind such a decision, the decision cannot be questioned, and can be considered perfectly 'fine' and 'legal'. This behaviour might not be even noticed or objected to because it is seen as a cultural norm that has been institutionalised in the organisation.

This issue is independent of the consulting advice and is not concerned with either the suitability of the advice for resolving the clients' issues or with its cultural appropriateness. Rather, it is an independent cultural norm that allows powerful members to act on their personal interests despite the collective interests. This cultural norm results in a change-management process that seems to tolerate the interference of powerful members in the consulting work. This is clear in the first excerpt, where the client affirms that consultants are specific about what needs to be done, *'This is the way out'*. This means that international consultants seem to understand the clients' situation and offer clear advice to tackle it. More importantly, it means that the client does not blame the consultant for not being able to apply the advice provided. Instead, the client blames internal change management, which allows various powerful stakeholders to interfere with the implementation of advice to protect or maximise their personal benefits. In other words, the consulting advice might not be implemented because *'things are out of control'*; this is an independent change-management issue not related to the suitability or the cultural conditioning of the advice itself. This conclusion can be further supported by the fact that clients in both excerpts state that consultants are invited back to fix the defect they caused in the advice. If the clients believed that the consultants had not provided suitable advice, they would not invite them back to provide further solutions.

Even if powerful members do not have direct access to interfere with advice implementation, they seem to have indirect ways to block or delay the implementation of advice. Saudi clients who have witnessed these indirect ways state:

"And one more thing, [...] the person who has that power keeps criticising the work of this contractor until people believe that this is rubbish, we should not apply it. We wasted our money, it's better to keep in the drawers than we apply it in our company or entity."

This excerpt suggests that some powerful members may generate negative propaganda to undermine the advice or turn the stakeholders against the consultants and their advice. In other words, they seek to invoke fear and suspicion among stakeholders, making the implementation of the advice seem dangerous or disastrous. This is an effective technique in a culture that fears change and is sensitive to failure, and so the advice is unlikely to be implemented in such a situation. In other words, those who use this propaganda seek to invoke fear in other decision-makers who are sensitive to failure in a culture that associates it with shame. Consequently, they may decide not to implement the proposed advice to avoid possible failure that may damage their status and threaten their positions.

This technique is used by those who do not have 'Wasta' or a powerful member who can 'influence' the change process in a way that suits external powerful members. Thus, they propagate fear to frighten decision-makers away from a disastrous implementation. The decision-makers would most likely dread the shame that would accompany failure, and consequently, may block or enforce changes in the implementation to avoid any potential risk of failure; such interference may render advice valueless.

The above reasons that delay or block the implementation of consultancy advice are not related to the specifications or cultural conditioning of the advice. In fact, they are not even related to the consultants or their work; they are independent reasons concerned with how change and power are managed.

It can be concluded that the consulting advice was not implemented because of internal change-management issues that are related not to the advice itself but to the internal processes that allow powerful members to interfere by putting their personal interests ahead of the collective interests of the organisation. This means the positive impact of the advice that has been developed to benefit a group or an organisation is reduced, negated, or dismissed due to powerful individuals interfering in the implementation of the advice.

In conclusion, interference by powerful members that leads to the delay or blockage of implementation is independent of the advice itself. If the advice was not appropriately culturally conditioned, the client would not have approved it for implementation. Therefore, it is logical to assume that powerful members interfere despite sufficient cultural conditioning of the advice.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

This thesis had the aim of investigating culture's influence on the knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients. The particular focus was on investigating how culture as a source of meaning impacts knowledge exchange activities between people who come from different cultures. The previous three chapters demonstrate empirical findings that uncovered three stages of the consulting engagement, namely the hiring stage, the advice development stage, and the advice implementation stage. Each chapter focuses on a specific stage of the consulting engagement because the interaction between clients and consultants tends to take a different form at every stage due to the different conditions governing the interaction. For instance, during the first stage, the interaction is mainly about the hiring process and the establishment of the business relationship, in the second stage, it is about understanding the situation in hand and developing solutions for it, and at the final stage, it is mainly about the implementation of consulting advice.

This concluding chapter amalgamates the empirical findings identified in the previous three chapters to present theoretical and practical implications for this thesis. This chapter begins by outlining the context of this research followed by a brief summary of each chapter of the empirical findings. Subsequently, it explores the themes that link the previous studies with the findings. Then, it summarizes the overall contribution of this thesis and offers theoretical and practical implications. Lastly, it discusses the limitations and offers suggestions for future research.

10.2 General Research Context

In this thesis, the researcher suggests that studying the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients is crucial for two key reasons. Firstly, the consulting industry is expanding and the demand on its services by international clients is increasing. This expansion in the industry is associated with an increase in the number and types of services offered. Secondly, management knowledge is culture-specific; the migration of this knowledge from one cultural setting to another has proven to be problematic (Hofstede, 1994). Yet, it is not clear how knowledge is internationally disseminated by consultants who belong to different cultural groups to their clients (Kilburg, 2002; Hislop, 2002; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2004; Kilburg, 2002; Hislop, 2002; Avakian and Clark, 2012). Culture has a double effect because knowledge itself is culture-specific, and because the process of knowledge exchange and development is subject to the interpretations of those involved in it. In other words, the issue is not only that management knowledge is culture-specific, but that the carriers and receivers of this knowledge operate according to cognitive and emotional systems that are governed by their different cultures.

Although the consultancy research has implicitly acknowledged the influence of culture on the international dissemination of consulting knowledge (Wren and Greenwood, 1998;

Kipping, 1999, 2002; Clark and Fincham, 2002; McKenna, 1995, 2006; Saint-Martin, 2011; Faust, 2012; Aitken, 2014), this impact is still insufficiently studied. On an organizational level, it is not yet clear how consulting firms can use the image and reputation of their firms and services to develop legitimacy in different cultural settings (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Jung and Keiser, 2012). Neither is it clear how the internal knowledge management systems of consulting firms can generate knowledge that is culturally compatible with the new cultural settings (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Gardner et al., 2008; Reihlen and Nikolova, 2010, Werr, 2012). On an interpersonal level, it is not yet clear how culture influences the interpretive interaction between client and consultants in client-consultant relationships. Although the literature (Sturdy et al., 2009) has recently acknowledged that culture influences individuals' interpretations of knowledge, and that power influences their motivation to share knowledge, it does not offer any insight about the impact of culture and power on cross-cultural settings. This is because this recent research was conducted in the UK and dealt with cultural barriers within the UK's different sectors and organizations.

10.3 The Findings

The Hiring Stage

The process of hiring international consultants in Saudi Arabia is influenced by two elements: prior knowledge and power. Prior knowledge of culture determines how successfully international consultants present themselves to new clients. Those with limited prior knowledge are less able to communicate culturally-appropriate presentation leave positive impressions among clients. Therefore, they reduce chances of winning a contract. Those with inaccurate prior knowledge are also highly unlikely to communicate culturally-appropriate presentations, particularly when the prior knowledge is negative as well as inaccurate, as this may lead to lack of motivation on the consultant's part. Those with a considerable stock of accurate prior knowledge are most likely to communicate culturally-appropriate presentations, create a positive impression, and win the contract because of a shared understanding and common ground.

Power also plays a significant role in the hiring process because power is highly centralized in Saudi Arabia. Clients can be categorized into two typologies according to their motivations with respect to hiring consultants. The first includes powerful clients who prioritize their personal interests over those of the organization. The challenge here for international consultants is to recognize the centralized approach, and identify the underlying interests driving the project. The second includes clients concerned with constructing legitimacy for their decision to hire consultants. This group is driven by the desire to avoid blame and the cultural shame of failure, and seeks consultants who can offer a shield against this in the form of reputation, fashionable methods or success stories. The challenge here for international consultants is to recognize this need for legitimacy, and to communicate the components necessary for its construction.

Failure to recognize these typologies may be because international consultants are overwhelmed by the sense of power they gain from their experience, reputation and organizational resources, and this may significantly reduce their chances of being hired. In this context, international consultants can be categorized into two interrelated typologies. The first includes those who are overwhelmed by the sense of they gain from their long international experience, leading them to believe they can work with any clients from any culture on this basis. This group seems to have lost the ability to differentiate between the cultures that govern the thinking, behaviour and interests of their new international clients and, consequently, does not attempt to understand the cultural factors that drive their clients' decisions. The second includes those who are overwhelmed by the sense of power they gain from the fact that their organizations distinctive resources, believing that reputation, fashionable methods and success stories afford them the legitimacy to attract any client from any culture. This group is unlikely to recognize the cultural elements that drive clients' decisions, and, consequently, is unlikely to demonstrate powerful features that attract international clients from different cultures. These typologies may co-exist, resulting in consultants who are overwhelmed on both fronts.

The Advice Development Stage

During the advice development stage, experience plays a significant role in the extent to which international consultants recognize the function of culture and power in knowledge exchange and advice production with Saudi clients. The more experience they have, the more capable they are of culturally conditioning interactions and advice, deploying suitable corrective actions. Also, they become more capable of playing the politics in a way that allows them to verify input and accommodate the interests of powerful members. Consultants with a low level of experience base their prior knowledge exclusively on explicit cultural values and beliefs, from which they derive broad generalisations. Experienced consultants, on the other hand, base theirs on explicit as well as implicit cultural values and beliefs. This allows experienced consultants to understand clients as both individuals and as groups. When both implicit and explicit knowledge is deployed together, information asymmetry is reduced, leading to cultural conditioning. Interaction is the only way for an international consultant to gain valuable experience that allows them to understand implicit cultural issues.

International consultants interact with two typologies of clients: powerless clients (junior members of an organisation who work as terminals to deliver knowledge that suits the interests and objectives of higher management, and are unable or unwilling to offer 'constructive' feedback) and powerful clients (high ranking individuals who may act according to their own interests rather than those of the organisation). Experienced consultants are better able to recognise the limitations of powerless clients and deploy suitable corrective actions, such as directing requests for clarification to higher management. They are able to locate power sources, assess the weight and importance of

their interests, and, consequently, play the politics and culturally condition their interaction and advice to accommodate the interests of powerful clients. Consultants with low experience are less able to culturally condition their interactions, and are unlikely to correctly identify the source of power and information in an organisation, thus wasting time and effort. They are also vulnerable to manipulation by powerful clients because they do not recognise the greater power distance in the Saudi environment.

The Advice Implementation Stage

In Saudi Arabia, the implementation of advice is subject to Client Adverse Reactions (CAR). Two types of CAR have been identified. The first type is the 'Clash of Implicit Perceptions' (CIP), while the second is the 'Appropriation of Power Structures'.

On the one hand, (CIP) concerns clients and consultants who have different perceptions about responsibility for the implementation of consulting advice because of fundamental cultural differences related to hierarchical relationships of workers and employers. While Western cultures establish contractual relationships in which the worker is expected to deliver only what has been specified in the contract, Arab cultures establish relationships with workers based on status. This means the worker is expected to consider the contract as a framework rather than a binding agreement, and carry out tasks that are not explicitly stated in the contract.

Thus, clients and consultants may have different perceptions about the mode of their relationship, and different expectations about the scope of their responsibilities. In the case that both the client and the consultant are inexperienced, neither party will recognise that the other holds a different view of their consulting relationship, and responsibility for implementation. However, if at least one party is experienced clashes are less likely to happen. If it is the Saudi client who is experienced, it is likely that the relationship will be seen as contractual. This is because the experienced clients are likely to have a considerable understanding about the importance of having a well-specified scope. If it is the international consultant who is experienced, it is likely that those consultants understand that their clients might have different views about the mode of their relationship and expected outcome. Therefore, those consultants are likely to explicitly address responsibility for implementation prior to engagement. If both parties are experienced, the relationship is likely to be contractual, and have a clear scope.

On the other hand, (APS) concerns powerful clients who may block, delay or interfere with the implementation of advice in order to protect or increase personal interests. Such behaviour is rooted in a culture that allows and tolerates the enjoyment of enjoy privileges and perks by the powerful. Therefore, the impact of APS cannot be accounted for or accommodated by consultants. This is because the impact takes place after the advice development stage and it is almost impossible to account for events or decisions resulting from conflicts between decision makers not engaged in the consulting activity.

10.4 Relationship with Previous Research

The identified impact of culture on knowledge exchange at the three stages offers a contribution and answers questions identified earlier in the literature. There are three key questions asked in the literature review chapters that the above findings answer.

Firstly, consulting organisations seek to construct legitimacy using management fashion as a symbolic representation of their superiority and popularity (Abrahamson, 1996; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Alvesson, 2004; Keiser, 2012; Gardner et al., 2008; Jung and Keiser, 2012). As is widely agreed among authors like Hatch and Cunliffe (2006), Deephouse and Suchman (2008) and Scott (2013), this is because organisations need to develop legitimacy to sustain their business in the environment within which they operate. This means that the actions and products of the organisations should be desirable, and seen as proper and appropriate within socially constructed systems of values, beliefs and definitions (Suchman, 1995). Accordingly, and to minimise uncertainty, consulting organisations need to develop a professional image of superiority and popularity (Abrahamson, 1996; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Jung and Keiser, 2012) that reduces ambiguity for clients before the consulting engagement begins (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Jung and Keiser, 2012). The main objective of this professional image is to create impressions about the quality of service (Abrahamson, 1996; Westphal and Graebner, 2010; Markóczy et al., 2013). The question here is that although the consulting and symbolic management literature acknowledge that management fashions are culturally specific, the consulting literature does not offer insights about the transferability of management fashions into new cultural territories. In particular, it neglects to explain how prominent ideas that were developed in their home environments can be used to construct legitimacy in new environments. Neither is it clear how different cultural contexts influence the dissemination, decline and rise of management fashions.

These two questions are answered by the findings derived from the analysis of the first stage of the interaction, the hiring stage. It was evident that culture has a significant impact on how the formation of the client-consultant relationship takes place. The findings affirm that consultants need to understand what their clients perceive to be appropriate. Failing to communicate culturally-appropriate presentations reduces the likelihood of consultants winning contracts with new clients who are culturally different. Therefore, the researcher introduced the concept of 'prior knowledge' about culture and discussed its impact on the hiring process.

It was suggested that the stock of prior knowledge that consultants have about their clients' culture determines the extent to which they are able to develop and communicate culturally-appropriate presentations. In this way, consultants generate positive impressions and lead to the formation of the client-consultant relationship. Moreover, it determines the consultants' ability to recognise and adapt to the power dynamics on the client side, which governs their decision-making processes. Furthermore, it allows them to avoid being overwhelmed by the power of their international experience and organisational resources.

Prior knowledge allows consultants to be more able to communicate their international experience and organisational resources in ways that their clients find attractive. For instance, consultants may stress that their international experience includes countries that have great similarities and friendship with their clients' country, and avoid mentioning experience in those that have political, cultural or economic conflicts with the clients' country. Consultants may try to present culturally-appropriate resources they know will attract their clients such as team members who speak the client's language, or who were born and raised in the client's country, and avoid mentioning those with radical political, cultural, economic, or religious views of the client culture. For instance, consulting firms operating in Saudi Arabia should not include resources from their offices in Iran due to long lasting political conflict between the two countries that has left Saudis suspicious of those who work with/for Iranians.

In the context of the impact of culture on the dissemination, decline and rise of management fashions, the findings from the first stage of the interaction suggest that failure to develop and communicate culturally-appropriate presentations leads to negative impressions among clients which consequently leads to rejection of the consultants' proposal. Therefore, failure to secure new consulting projects affects the dissemination of management fashions.

Secondly, it was discussed that the vast body of literature that focuses on internal knowledge-management and knowledge-production systems in consulting organisations (Werr, 2012) seems to assume that these internal systems are used in similar cultural contexts. Therefore, the current literature does not offer any insights about the applicability of these systems in different cultural contexts despite the frequent concerns and doubts expressed by consultants about their applicability and the transferability of their tools, methods and cases (Morris, 2001; Greenwood and Empson, 2003).

The response to the issue of the contextuality of knowledge-management systems was answered in the second chapter of the findings, during the advice development stage. The concepts of corrective action and cultural conditioning of advice and behaviour suggests that the experience of international consultants plays a significant role in their ability to recognise explicit and implicit cultural elements on the client side. Consequently, experienced international consultants deploy suitable corrective actions to culturally-condition their advice and behaviour to accommodate those cultural elements. This implies that consultants culturally condition the tools and outputs of their organisational knowledge-management systems in order to employ them accurately in the development of culturally-conditioned advice. Therefore, it can be assumed that the cultural-conditioning of the output of organisational knowledge systems is a pre-requisite for cultural conditioning of the consulting advice. This conclusion is in line with the argument made by Werr and Stjernberg (2003) who suggest that the use of the knowledge management systems is subject to the consultant's experience. Indeed, the empirical findings of this study affirm

this claim and stress the importance of experience to culturally-condition the output of those systems and accommodate the cultural settings of the new environment.

Thirdly, the third chapter of the literature review extended on the work of Sturdy et al. (2009) who suggest that there are cultural and power boundaries that affect knowledge exchange between clients and consultants. This chapter raises the issue that Sturdy et al. (2009) limit their study to the UK and do not address the impact of culture and power on knowledge exchange between international consultants and clients.

This issue was addressed in the second chapter of the findings, and the concepts of corrective actions and cultural conditioning of advice and behaviour seem to offer an explicit answer to this question. It is suggested that consultants' experience with individual clients allows them to understand those clients on a personal level. This means experienced consultants are more able to recognise individual clients' personal ways of thinking and behaving. Thus, they can deploy suitable corrective actions that culturally-condition advice and behaviour in ways that accommodate the individual client. This is also related to the social constructionist argument put forward in the conceptual framework chapter, which suggests that the impact of culture should be addressed on a personal level rather than a group level. This is because individuals have different socially constructed cognitive and emotional systems that developed over time and according to the social circumstances they have been subject to.

The answer to these questions contributes to the broad gaps highlighted by Sturdy et al. (2009), which point to the neglect of the client side in the consultancy research, and the gap highlighted by Avakian and Clark (2012) which points to the neglect of the role of culture in consulting work in cross-cultural settings.

In terms of addressing the client-side in the research, this study has gathered and analysed data collected from both clients and consultants. The findings include insights derived from one party and verified by insights derived from the other.

In terms of addressing the neglect of the role of culture in consulting work across-cultures, this study contributes significantly to filling this research gap. This is because culture is the central component of the research question, and the findings offer critical explanations as to the role of culture in consulting work across cultures.

10.5 Implications of the Findings

10.5.1 Theoretical Implications

This research project contributes to current debates about the distribution of knowledge in the consultant-client engagement, and the role that culture plays in this process. The research identifies the incrementally important role of experience in the way consulting advice is distributed internationally. It also recognises that the way in which consultants

identify with clients' culture generates both opportunities and constraints depending on the level of their country-specific consulting experience.

The model developed in this research identifies that the role of this experience can be theorized as a 'stock of knowledge' dependent on the individual consultant working on a client project in a cultural setting different from his/her own. In other words, country-specific consulting experience encompasses knowledge of national, organizational and group cultures, personal ways of thinking, and business etiquette, as well as understanding of historical, political and social structures. This knowledge is acquired mainly through interpretive interactions with different cultures, and as such, is mainly implicit and cannot be fully articulated or employed by those who do not share the same interactive experience. This knowledge empowers those who possess it by enabling them to recognize and accommodate the implicit cultural and power dynamics that govern clients' perceptions differently at different stages of the interaction. Therefore, the model proposes that experience is a progressive phenomenon that often encounters obstacles, but may also accelerate with great pace. Such progress is dependent on how prior international consulting experience that has led to awareness of a particular cultural setting is used in specific client encounters.

By identifying three key periods in the consultant-client engagement, this paper focuses on the distinct conditions that exert a particular impact on the relationship. For example, it is suggested that cultural awareness remains highly implicit and tacit, yet it determines how client perceptions are interpreted during the early stages of the interaction. A theoretical development of this model indicates that experience and knowledge of a foreign culture remain fragmented phenomena. For example, consultants are unconsciously influenced by their own bias and preconceptions about Saudi clients, and create connections that are not explicit, but implicit. For example, religion and gender are strong cultural elements that impact on how consultants interpret the other party.

The development of a process model demonstrates that there are different stimuli in the way culture generates a reactive interaction with knowledge. Although, in the literature, knowledge is treated as a separate property that can be transferred, this research challenges this position, exploring the role of 'stickiness', or inertia to change.

By presenting the role of country-specific consulting experience at the different stages of the consulting engagement, this model contributes to the existing models in two ways. First, it emphasizes the dynamic role of this experience on knowledge-exchange interactions between international clients and consultants from the hiring stage to the implementation stage. This is because the form and impact of this knowledge exchange may vary according to the different elements that appear at different stages of the consulting engagement, with the interaction between clients and consultants taking a different form at each stage,

depending on the presence of particular elements. The existing models, such as the models of management fashion and organisational knowledge management systems, in contrast, focus on particular encounters that take place at certain stages. For instance, management fashion is assumed to be mainly effective at the hiring stage (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Jung and Keiser, 2012) where clients are expected to be impressed by the image or rhetorical descriptions of fashionable tools and methods. Another model, proposed by Werr and Stjernberg (2003), highlights how consultants use their experience to utilize their organizational knowledge management systems during the advice development stage, but does not offer any insights as to how those systems can be used at the hiring and implementation stages. Moreover, none of the existing models seem to explicitly acknowledge the impact of culture when applied in cross-cultural settings.

Second, this model builds on the existing models of management fashion and organisational knowledge management systems by introducing a cross-cultural dimension. This added dimension offers scope for these existing models to consider international insights and thus become more effective in cross-cultural settings. In other words, the added dimension stresses the importance of the cultural-conditioning of business ideas that flow between individuals who originate from different cultural backgrounds. This model, therefore, extends existing models into cross-cultural settings. In more specific terms, this model affirms that country-specific consulting experience is a fundamental prerequisite for the effective application of management fashion and for the utilization of knowledge management systems in cross-cultural settings. This is because such experience enables consultants to culturally-condition their advice and behaviour to accommodate the cultural conditions of their clients.

The following section elaborates on how country-specific consulting experience plays a dynamic role during the different stages of the consulting engagement, where different and changing cultural and power constraints seem to govern every stage. It also elaborates on how this type of experience is a great enabler for the effective use of management fashion and organizational knowledge management systems in cross-cultural settings. Figure (17) offers a graphical representation of the informative role the country-specific consulting experience plays at the different stages of the consulting engagement.

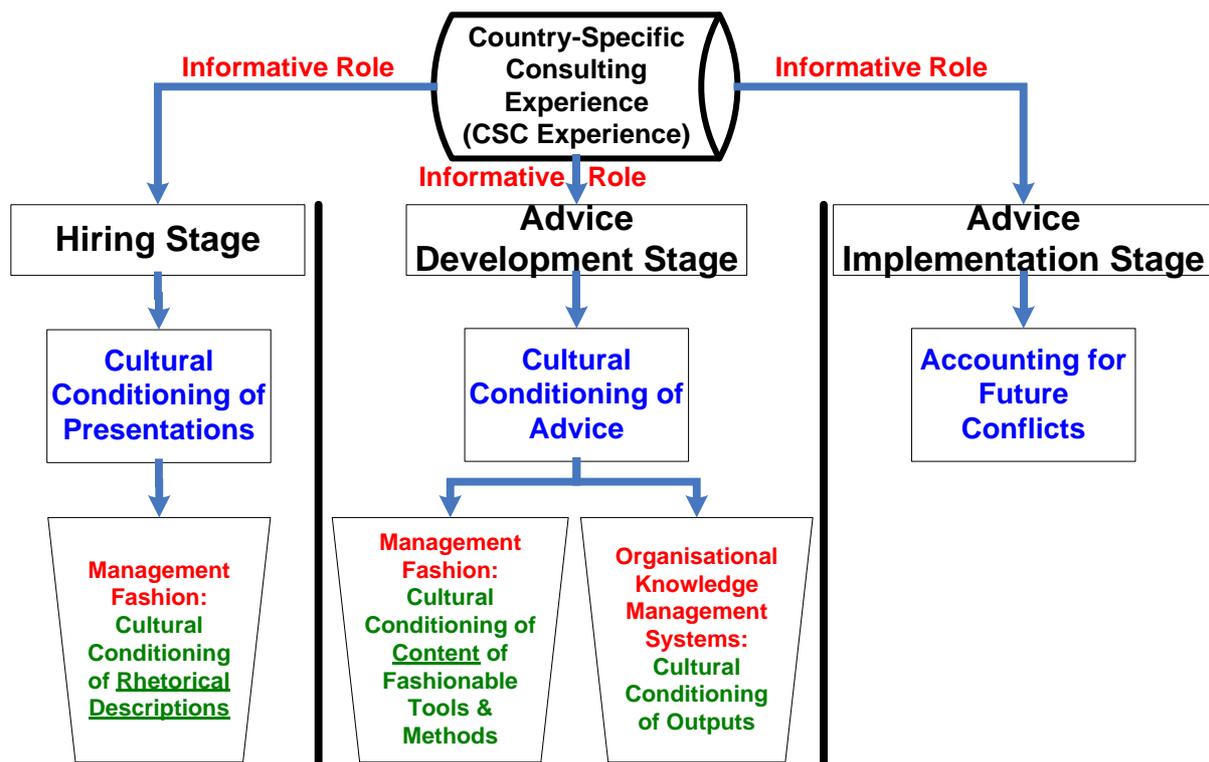


Figure 17: The Role of Experience in the Avoidance of CIP

Hiring stage

It is evident that consultants use impression management to win new contracts (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Jung and Keiser, 2012). According to the literature, fashionable methods and tools such as Total Quality Management and Business Process Reengineering have a significant impact on clients' decisions to hire consultants. This is because management fashion assumes that the popularity of ideas and their rhetorical descriptions stimulate positive expectations that create a framework for how the client-consultant relationship is formed (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Jung and Keiser, 2012), and is assumed to empower consultants by creating an image of them as brokers of a widely accepted superior knowledge (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Gardner et al., 2008; Jung and Keiser, 2012). This has proven to be effective in the environments from which popular ideas, reputations, fashionable methods and tools emerge. This is because clients and consultants come from the same cultural settings and thus are familiar with the meanings of the symbolic representations of those fashionable tools and methods. This research indicates that, in cross-cultural settings, consultants' identification with the cultural elements that govern international clients' perceptions is key to their ability to deliver impressions that facilitate the formation of a business relationship. This is because international clients might have different understandings of the symbolic representations of fashionable tools, methods, reputation and organizational resources from their consultants who have different cultural

backgrounds. Consequently, international clients might not perceive the symbolic representations of fashionable methods and tools as attractive because they have a different understanding of them.

The model proposed in this research suggests that country-specific consulting experience is crucial for effective, culturally conditioned use of management fashions in cross-cultural settings. This means that, if the objective of the management fashion is to create an image of superiority and stimulate positive expectations for their fashionable tools and methods to win international assignments, the symbolic representation of those images needs to be compatible with the cultural reference of the new clients in terms of what they find to be culturally attractive or appropriate. For instance, rhetorical descriptions that call for mixing genders in workplaces are unlikely to be attractive to Saudi clients. Consequently, Saudi clients are unlikely to contract with international consultants who use such culturally-inappropriate rhetorical descriptions. Conversely, rhetorical descriptions that acknowledge such a cultural element are likely to be attractive and facilitate the formation of the relationship.

Thus, a culturally conditioned proposal is likely to increase the probability of forming new business relationships with international clients. Such a proposal is likely to trigger a positive impression, and consequently facilitate the formation of the business relationship. This is a new conclusion based on evidence from this research, demonstrating that, without a considerable stock of accurate prior knowledge of an international client's culture and power dynamics, international consultants risk delivering culturally inappropriate presentations that are misunderstood or negatively perceived, thus reducing the likelihood of winning a new contract. This is because those inexperienced international consultants are more likely to be governed by their own perceptions about what counts to be attractive. Also, they are more likely to be unconsciously influenced by their own bias and misconceptions about their new clients which may lead them to present culturally-inappropriate presentations.

In contrast, international consultants with a considerable stock of experience are likely to deliver culturally-appropriate presentations that impress new international clients and facilitate the formation of a relationship. This research identifies that experienced international consultants make use of their 'prior knowledge' to create connections between their own subjective experiences and those of the client to deliver symbolic presentations that convey attractive meanings to the target clients and incline them to form a business relationship.

Thus, country-specific consulting experience can be regarded as a prerequisite for the effective use of management fashion in winning international assignments. This argument adds to the literature by looking at the role of experience as an enabler for ideas in cross-

cultural settings. This adds a new dimension to the literature, whereby a greater emphasis on the role of experience is required when discussing the use of management fashion in cross-cultural settings to ensure the compatibility of symbolic representations of fashionable methods and tools in new cultural settings.

Advice Development Stage

It is evident from this research that, during the advice development stage, clients are likely to reject consultants' advice on the grounds of cultural inappropriateness. Such a reaction might result in serious conflicts that may lead to delays, or even the termination of the relationship. This research identifies that 'corrective actions' emerging from the consultant's experience are instrumental in avoiding this situation by accommodating cultural knowledge in the client-consultant interaction. It also identifies 'cultural conditioning' as the main catalyst for accommodating cultural knowledge. This term seeks to capture the mechanism by which consultants demonstrate instrumentality in the management of the business relationship over time. Ultimately, the presence or absence of suitable corrective actions influences the success or otherwise of cultural conditioning.

Accordingly, it is clear that international consultants with a considerable stock of country-specific consulting experience are likely to recognize the implicit cultural and power constraints that govern clients' perception of their advice. Accordingly, they can use their experience to culturally condition their advice to accommodate these constraints and avoid conflicts. Conversely, those with limited experience are less likely to recognize these implicit constraints and more likely to face negative reactions from clients, resulting in delays or the termination of the relationship.

Thus, by presenting the role of country-specific consulting experience, this dynamic model adds to the existing literature in two ways. First, it adds to the literature of management fashion by establishing that this experience seems to be effective during advice development, whereby experienced international consultants are better able to culturally condition the *content* of their fashionable tools and methods to accommodate new cultural settings. This notion of the cultural conditioning of the content of fashionable methods and tools answers concerns raised in the literature (Hofstede, 1993; Sturdy et al., 2009; Nikolova and Devenney, 2009) about their suitability for clients who choose them based on impressions of their popularity or rhetorical descriptions, without sufficient knowledge of their content. This literature acknowledges that clients may reject fashionable methods and tools when the advice development begins as they come to understand their content.

This model suggests that country-specific consulting experience enables international consultants to recognize and accommodate the implicit cultural elements (e.g., segregation of sexes, lack of urgency) and power elements (e.g., central decision-making, hierarchy) that govern a client's reaction to the content of fashionable methods and tools. Therefore, this

model suggests that country-specific consulting experience should be considered a prerequisite for the correct application of fashionable tools and methods in cross-cultural settings.

Second, another model that seems to operate during the advice development stage, and to which this model contributes, is that proposed by Werr and Stjernberg (2003) and Werr (2012), which discusses the use of organisational knowledge management systems in consultancy. The model suggested in this research emphasizes the role of country-specific consulting experience in the effective utilisation of organizational knowledge management systems in cross-cultural settings. While Werr and Stjernberg (2003) highlight how crucial experience is for a consultant to utilize the tools, methods and cases offered by knowledge management systems, this model stresses how crucial country-specific consulting experience is to increase the transferability of output of knowledge management systems to new cultural settings. It is evident in this research that international consultants with a considerable stock of country-specific consulting experience are better able to utilise their organizational knowledge management systems. This is evident in their ability to culturally condition the output of these systems to accommodate implicit and explicit cultural and power elements. In other words, this experience increases the international transferability of the outputs of knowledge management systems. Consequently, this type of experience enables international consultants to retrieve more value from their organizational knowledge management systems, which allows them to produce culturally appropriate advice that sufficiently satisfies the needs of the particular international client.

Advice Implementation Stage

Although there are popular models that focus on the ways by which consultants form new relationships (Abrahamson, 1996; Benders and Veen, 2001; Clark and Fincham, 2002; Jung and Keiser, 2012), and how advice is generated (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Gardner et al., 2008; Reihlen and Nikolova, 2010, Werr, 2012), there are no popular models that focus on the post-advice-development stage, namely the implementation stage. This might be because western clients and consultants tend to perceive their relationship as a contractual agreement (Dolgin, 1990; Vlieger, 2012) whereby all parties are fully aware of the scope of their engagement. Hence, in the West, there is minimal possibility of stagnation between advice development and implementation due to disagreement about responsibility for the implementation task; both parties are aware of who is to perform the implementation task. This might explain why there are no models that address cultural conflicts affecting the implementation stage.

This model appears to be the first to conceptualise the impact of culture on advice implementation in cross-cultural settings by stressing the importance of 'Clients' Adverse Reactions' (CAR) to the advice delivered. This term seeks to capture *the different cultural perceptions* on the client side that impact the implementation of the consulting advice. For

instance, it is evident in this research that when international consultants operate internationally, they are subject to different perceptions their new clients might have about the mode of their relationship. While international consultants perceive their relationship with clients to be governed by contract, some international clients might perceive the relationship to be based on status, which implies that consultants are expected to perform tasks that are not stated in the contract, just to please the client.

The model identifies that these different perceptions of the relationship mode between clients and consultants is implicit and cannot be recognized and understood easily from the beginning, especially by minimally-experienced consultants who take for granted the fact that all business relationships are contractual. Accordingly, international consultants might face conflicts with clients who expect them to perform tasks for which they have not allocated time and resources. This might lead to a period of stagnation, whereby the consultant is not willing to perform the task of implementation, while the client is not able to implement the advice because she/he has not been prepared for this task.

Thus, the model proposed in this research appears to be the first to address this issue because it considers all stages of the consulting engagement. The model suggests that international consultants with a considerable stock of country-specific consulting experience are likely to recognize and understand the mode of the relationship perceived by their clients. Thus, they will ensure that all expectations are clarified at the contracting stage to avoid any conflict or stagnation in the future. Moreover, because these experienced consultants are able to state the unstated and anticipate events that might take place after the advice development, their advice is likely to be implemented, which entails that their knowledge is more likely to be internationally disseminated than that of consultants with only a limited stock of this experience.

Conclusion

It is evident from this research that country-specific consulting experience plays a significant progressive, incremental and dynamic role during the different stages of the consulting engagement. This offers two critical theoretical implications for the international dissemination of knowledge by consultants.

First, knowledge and culture should no longer be considered independently of each other. In fact, cultural awareness is a fundamental prerequisite for the international transferability of knowledge from one cultural setting to another.

Second, this experience is highly implicit and subject to the nature of the projects on which the individual consultant has worked. Therefore, in order to ascertain the suitability of an individual consultant for a project, emphasis must be placed on the scope and relevance of his/her particular experiences as well as his/her cultural background.

These conclusions suggest several pathways for future research on the impact of cultural experience on the international distribution of knowledge. Firstly, a focus on identifying whether the cultural elements identified in this study appear in studies that focus on other countries. This would allow us to draw general conclusions about how culture impacts knowledge exchange. Also, it would allow us to draw more general conclusions about the corrective actions needed to accommodate the impact of particular cultural elements. For instance, further investigation is needed into the impact of power and the role of emotions on knowledge exchange in different cultural settings.

Another pathway is to examine whether the cultural elements and power dynamics identified in Saudi Arabia exist in countries that share similar cultures to Saudi Arabia, such as the United Arab Emirates or Kuwait. Such studies would increase the generalisability of the findings of this research and they may identify new insights for this model from its application in new cultural settings.

Lastly, although it is acknowledged in this research that country-specific consulting experience is highly implicit, there may be more explicit dimensions to the experience international carriers of knowledge gain from projects with international clients. This means more explicit and generalisable dimensions should be articulated. For instance, it was evident from this research that international consultants unconsciously use their 'prior knowledge' to deliver culturally-appropriate presentations. Accordingly, articulating and conceptualising such unconscious behaviour is crucial for the research.

Exploring such pathways might contribute to understanding the impact of the individual's own bias on his/her perceptions and interpretations of client culture. More manageable and clearer conclusions are likely to be reached when particular dimensions of cultural experience are identified. Further pathways for future research indicated by this study will be presented in this chapter in the limitations and future research section.

Consequently, it can be concluded that consultants' country-specific consulting experience plays a significant role in their ability to accommodate the impact of culture on their consulting engagement with clients from different cultures. This means consultants' country-specific consulting experience plays a significant role in their ability to disseminate their consulting knowledge internationally. Therefore, the developed theory suggests that *country-specific consulting experience plays a significant role in accommodating the influence of culture on knowledge exchange between international clients and consultants.*

10.5.2 Implications to Practice

This study offers suggestive evidence for international consultants who operate in cross-cultural settings that culture is a crucial element that must be carefully accounted for. It is evident that culture might become a great barrier or a great facilitator for international assignments. If the role of culture is carefully accounted for, then consultants are more likely to win consulting projects, develop culturally-conditioned advice, and implement their consulting services. Failure to account for the role of culture can result in the failure of the consulting engagement at any of the three stages.

Therefore, international consultants may need to deal with culture as a key component that has a significant impact on the success of their international assignments and, consequently, their competitiveness in the international market.

In other words, the findings of this study suggest that accounting for the role of culture allows consultant to compete with others in the industry. International consultants should acknowledge the role of culture more explicitly and invest in the skills, tools and methodologies that allow them to deal with it more effectively and use it to their benefit. This can be done by focusing on three key areas.

Firstly, international consultants need to re-assess the compatibility and evaluate the attractiveness of their rhetorically described methods and tools to ensure they deliver the impressions and perceptions intended by consultants. This means that consultants might need to offer new or culturally-conditioned rhetorical descriptions for their services, methods and tools when they enter a new market.

Secondly, and this point has a practical organizational significance, international consulting firms should invest in transforming their internal knowledge management systems to produce outputs that can be culturally-conditioned easily and sufficiently. This would allow low-experienced consultants to use the firms' knowledge management systems more effectively in cross-cultural settings. Those systems can include details about some fundamental cultural components that must be accounted for in certain countries. In other words, international consulting firms should invest in making their knowledge management systems culturally smart, whereby vital cultural information is provided to consultants who work on international assignments. For instance, knowledge management systems should be able to tell American consultants operating in Saudi Arabia to avoid offering solutions that suggest mixing males and females on official sites. Such hints would motivate consultants to learn more about the suggested cultural elements and equip them to accommodate the impact of culture.

Thirdly, since experience plays a significant role in consultants' ability to accommodate the impact of culture at all stages of the consulting engagement, consulting firms should develop internal knowledge sharing schemes between experienced consultants and low-experienced ones who are about to be sent abroad. Such schemes should focus on

transferring the implicit knowledge of experienced consultants to low-experienced ones to prepare them to work more effectively in cross-cultural settings.

10.7 Limitations and Future Research

As with any piece of research, this study is not devoid of limitations that create opportunities for future research.

Firstly, the client data was collected from one country, Saudi Arabia. Although this facilitated data collection because it is the home country of the researcher, it limits the extent to which findings can be generalised. Similar studies from other countries would add more insights and allow for reflection on the generalisability of the findings of this research. In other words, findings from other countries would add a significant contribution to the body of knowledge through which the impact of culture on international consultancy is understood in other parts of the world.

Secondly, data was collected from Saudi clients who work in the semi-governmental sector. These clients were targeted because they were known to be acting on behalf of the public sector with international consulting firms. However, there are also Saudi clients who work for the public sector and who interact directly with international consultants. These public sector clients can offer more insights into the role of language in their interactions with international consultants because, unlike the semi-governmental sector which uses English as a first language, the public sector uses Arabic. Therefore, public sector employees tend to be weaker in their English language skills, which affects their consulting activities. Moreover, in the public sector, advice must be translated into Arabic prior to delivery, which may dilute the meaning and lead to misinterpretation of advice. This may lead to blockage or delays in advice approval and implementation.

Thirdly, data was collected mainly from Saudi clients and international consultants who worked in projects in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has thirteen regions with slightly different cultures and social structures influenced by local tribal customs. Also, these regions are dominated by different industries, which seem to govern the behaviour and way of thinking of their people. For instance, in the Eastern region, oil and gas seems to be the dominant industry in which many people work directly or indirectly. In this region, and based on the researcher's understanding of different demographics in his own country, there is a homeogeneity between the international oil and gas companies that operate there, the highly educated foreigners who live and work directly or indirectly in the oil and gas industry, and the well-trained and highly educated locals who have been influenced by the culture of the international companies that have been active in the region for decades. This has created a culture of professionalism, plurality, efficiency and even safety that the people from the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia are known for nationally. This region can be considered the most open to the Western world.

The Western region is greatly influenced by the fact that it contains the two holy cities of Makkah and Medina, which are visited yearly by millions of muslims from all over the world.

The culture here is influenced by spirituality of the holy sites which affects the behaviour of the visitors. This means religions tourism is the dominant industry, which makes the region more open to the Islamic and Eastern world than to the Western world. Accordingly, a study that considers these differences would add more insights to the understanding of the impact of culture on international consultancies in Saudi Arabia.

Fourthly, although the findings have authenticated the suitability of the conceptual framework developed, there may be an alternative framework that can offer different perspectives. The concepts of culture, knowledge, power and language have proven to be slippery and fairly complex whenever they operate together in one phenomenon. Therefore, it is understandable that other frameworks could have been proposed. However, this does not mean the adopted framework has any major limitation, in the opinion of the researcher.

Fifthly, another avenue for future research is to conduct a similar study in Saudi Arabia but following a different methodology and using a different conceptual framework. The findings of studies that adopt different approaches would add a significant contribution. The fact that the impact of culture can be studied at different levels (national, organizational, interpersonal) and through different dimensions suggests a considerable number of approaches through which different types of findings can be discovered.

Further, testing the findings of this qualitative study through a quantitative approach would lead to new insights and reveal some constant components that can be generalized on Saudi Arabia. In this context, future research can use the existing quantitative models that use a positivist position toward the concept of culture such as the cultural dimensions by Hofstede et al., (2010) and the cultural dimensions by the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004). These models offer particular dimensions by which the impact of culture can be manifested. It is important to highlight here that some of the cultural dimensions identified in this qualitative research have already been articulated by those positivist models. For instance, the dimension of power distance seems to be common between this qualitative study and the assumptions offered by those quantitative models. Also, the role of emotions can, to some extent, be related to the dimension of femininity and masculinity in Hofstede's model. This means similar research using different methods would increase the level of generalisability of the common findings, especially the common cultural elements or dimensions between qualitative and quantitative research. Also, similar conclusions from different research that adopt different methodological approaches on similar countries would offer further new directions for the following research to be by adopting the different methodologies to test the findings. Such research with different methodological approaches for similar and different countries would contribute significantly to our understanding of the impact of culture on the international dissemination of knowledge.

Sixthly, this study can lead the way in a new stream of research that focuses on the articulation of consultants' corrective actions derived from experience which allows them to

develop culturally-conditioned advice. Articulating the implicit knowledge that leads to suitable corrective actions on advice and behaviour should contribute to the research into knowledge management systems. In other words, future research should focus on enhancing knowledge management systems to offer different types of articulated corrective actions that allow consultants to culturally-condition their behaviour and advice according to the cultural settings within which they are operating.

Seventhly, since this research appears to be the first to address the impact of culture on advice implementation stemming from different perceptions about the relationship mode between clients and consultants, another avenue for future research is to identify other cultural elements that may block or delay advice implementation. This includes identifying factors related to different expectations about future tasks, different power dynamics, and different ways of doing business.

Eighthly, future research should focus on studying the appearance of the cultural dimensions identified in this study in other cultures, and assessing whether they have the same significance and impact on knowledge exchange activities. Such research would add a significant contribution to generalisability of the proposed model and add further considerations to it. More importantly, the appearance of similar cultural elements in other culture would reduce the slipperiness of the concept of culture, thus making the study of the impact of culture on knowledge exchange interactions more manageable. In other words, this research has identified some cultural elements that do not seem to be limited to Saudi Arabia such as the impact of hierarchy, central decision-making, sense of urgency, and shame caused by failure. Finding these cultural elements in other cultures would result in more generalisable findings that present common patterns of impact that can be studied even further.

Ninthly, this research has focused on the impact of culture on knowledge exchange between international consultants and Saudi clients. Future research can offer more focused contributions by studying the interaction between the particular cultural backgrounds of both consultants and clients. For instance, studying the impact of culture on knowledge exchange between German consultants and Saudi clients or between American consultants and Turkish clients would offer more specific insights into how individuals from a particular cultural background deal with those from another background, with clear cultural elements that distinguish each culture. This type of study has been carried out previously by Hofstede (1996) who studied the migration of American management models to countries including Germany, France and Japan. Furthermore, such studies would shed light on the way in which individuals can be biased by their own sets of beliefs, norms and values when they subjectively interpret the cultures of others.

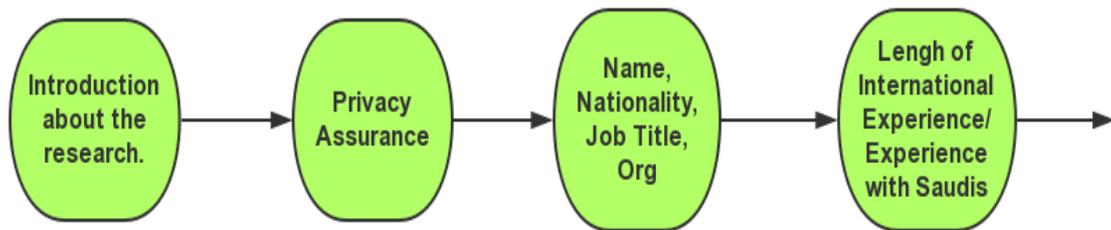
Lastly, since this research has identified that prior knowledge unconsciously governs international consultants' ability to deliver culturally appropriate presentations that facilitate the winning of a consulting contract, future research could focus on articulating

similar patterns of unconscious behaviour that generate opportunities or obstacles to success.

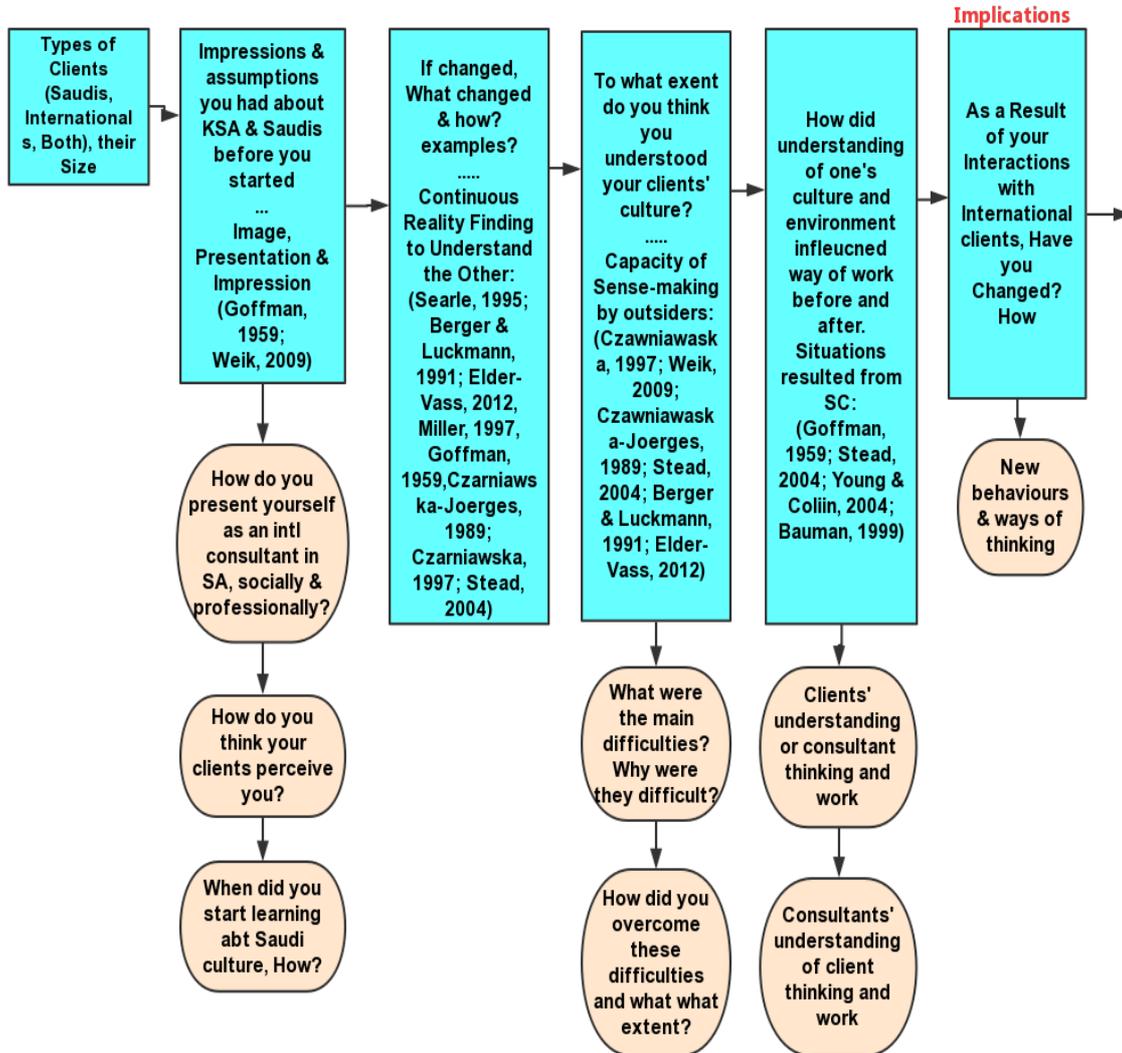
Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview prepared for consultants

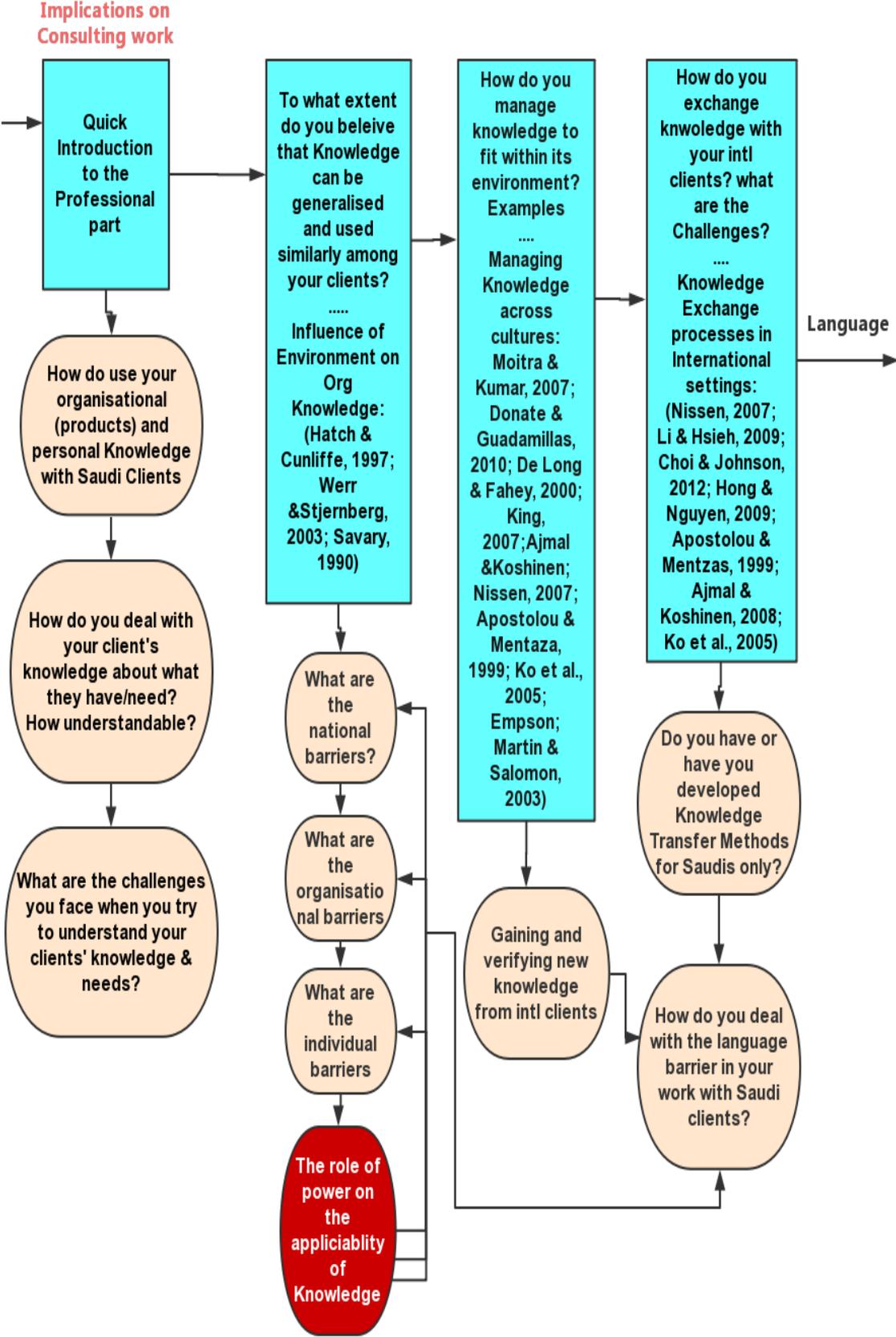
Introduction



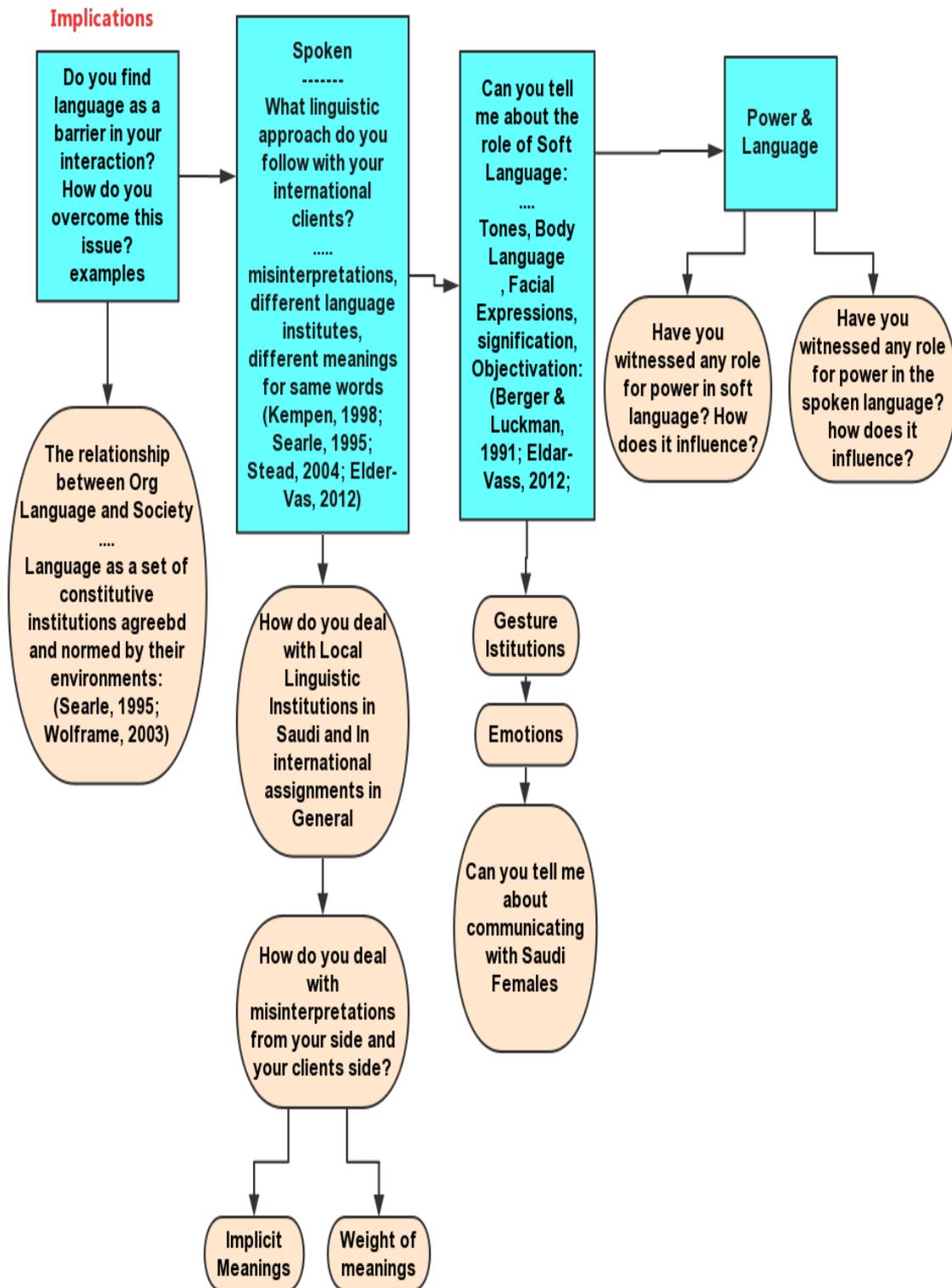
Culture 1/3



Knowledge 2/3

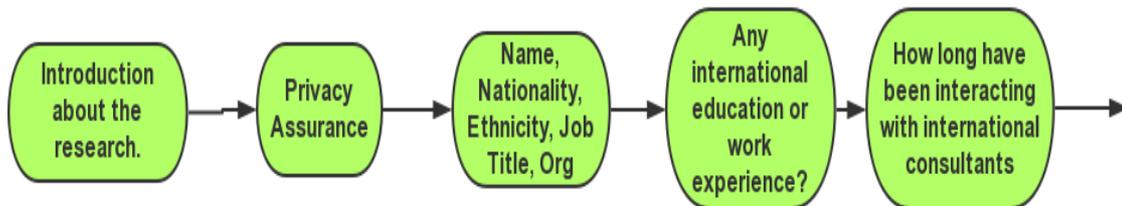


Language 3 / 3

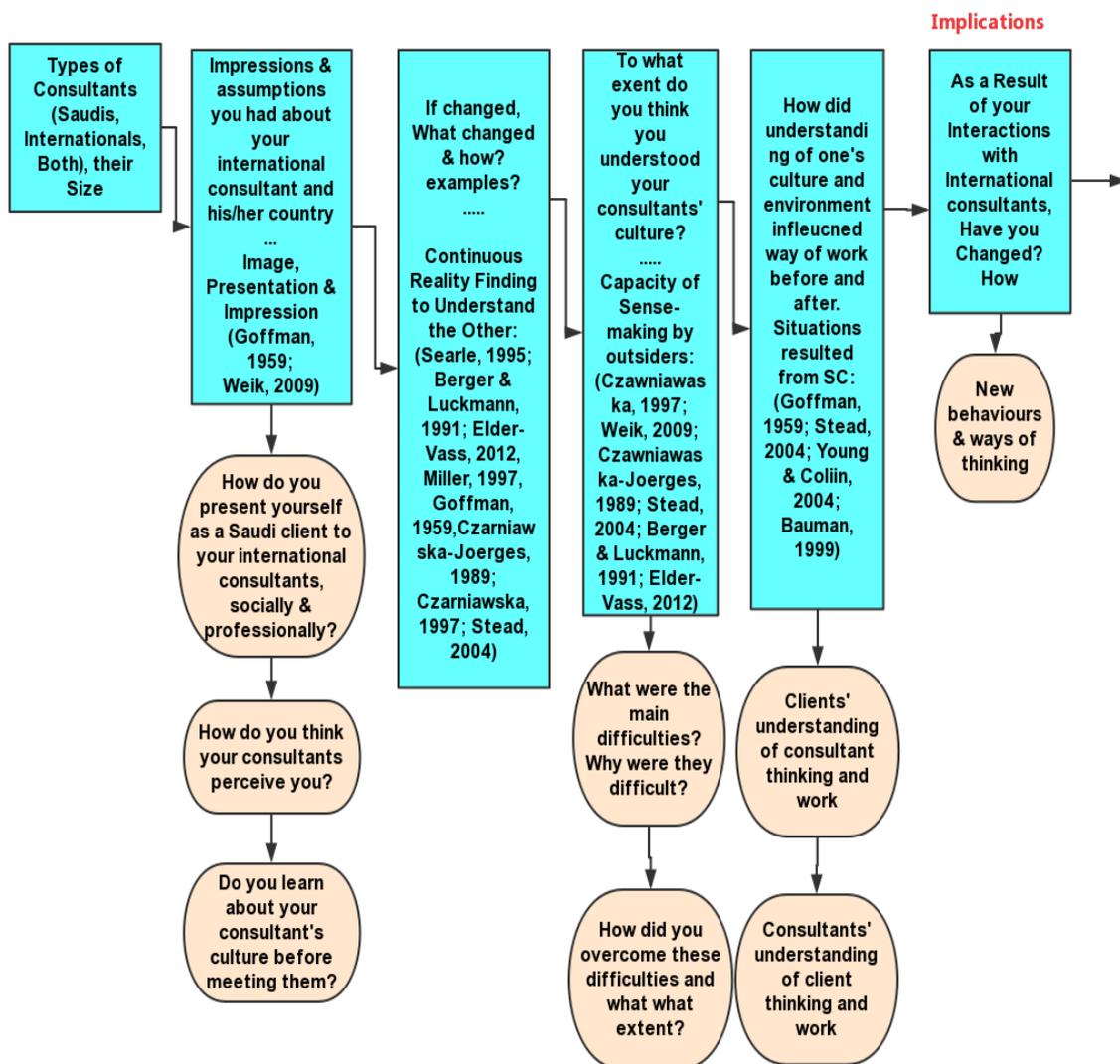


Semi-Structured Interview prepared for clients

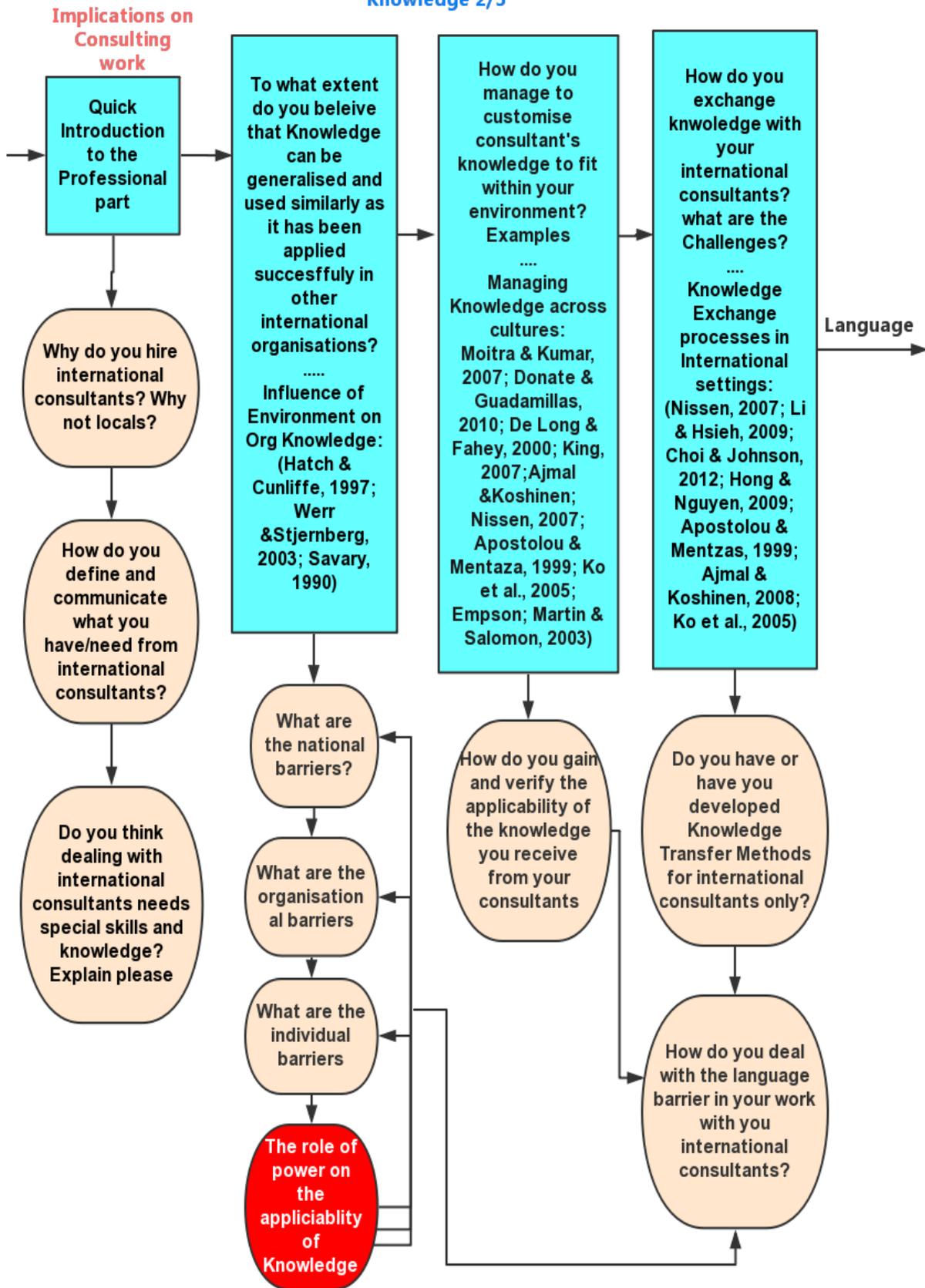
Introduction



Culture 1/3

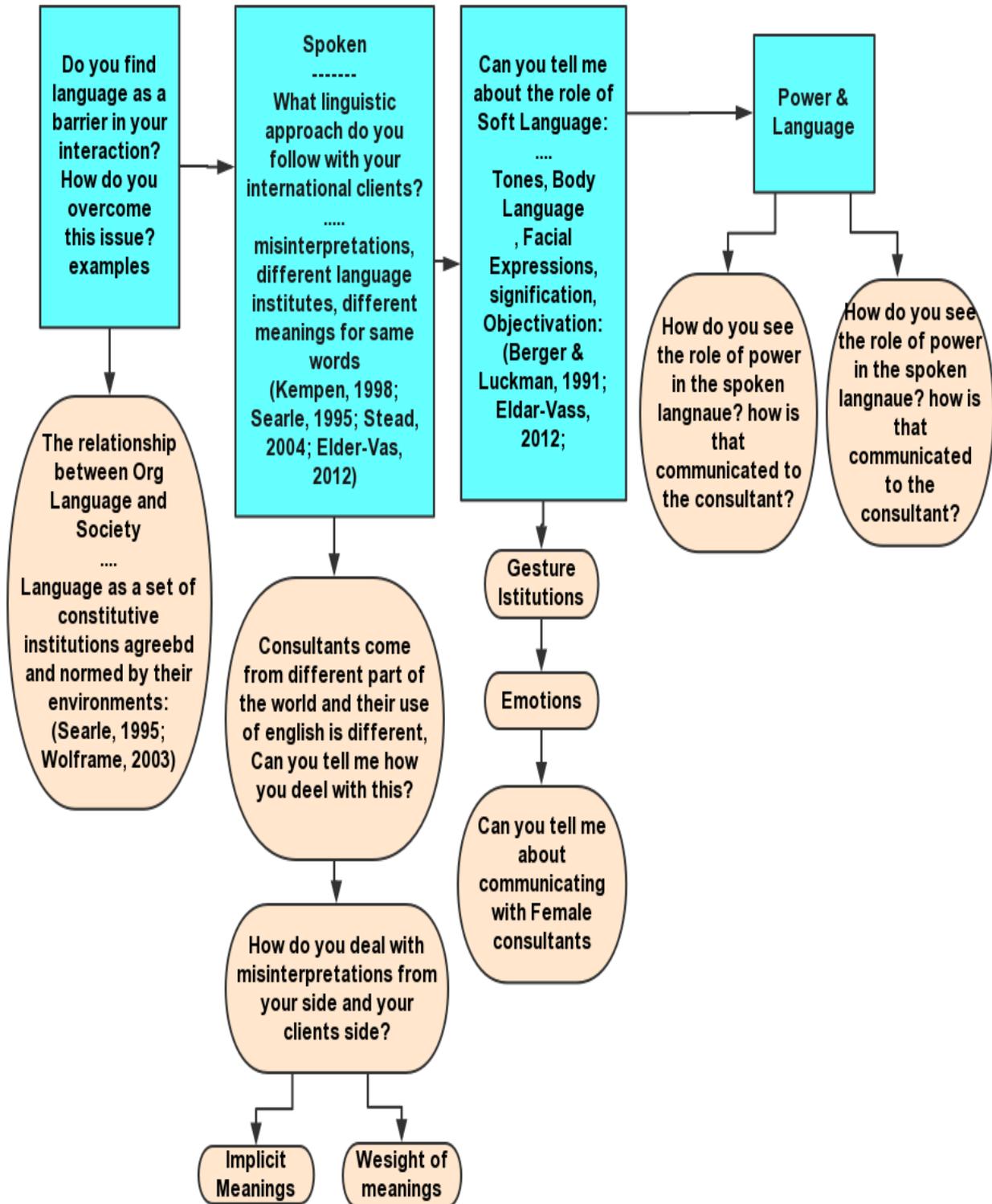


Knowledge 2/3



Language 3 / 3

Implications



Appendix B

Excerpt	Themes	Codes
<p>17. Religion either, but I think some of the things such as the prayer times five times per day, and certainly even during meetings, and having people get up and leave during prayer time, that was a big kind of a ... it wasn't a shock, but it was something different that I had not experienced before. I mean, to be in the middle of a meeting and just to say, "Okay, I get up and leave now, I am going to go pray, and we'll have a meeting after lunch," was a little bit different for me. So, I had to learn those types of things.</p> <p>22.: The religion plays a central role in the life of GCC nationals in general, which is something that in Europe is completely separated. In the GCC, the separation is much less, there's an integration and that affects the today life of the nationals, and therefore the way they do business. So [it is] implicated into the economy, but in a way that makes you need to understand what are those elements that you feel and how they affect the decision-making process.</p> <p>19.: It's also religion. There's no freedom of religion unfortunately, and I was quite religious in my attendance in South Africa. Both kinds of things have an impact, and it changes the way you think, it changes the way you behave. You either then get angry and leave. And I have seen people, they don't like it so they go, that's fine.</p>	<p>Religion as a barrier</p>	<p>Cultural Factors that Impact Behaviour</p>
<p>17.: I think another piece, their respect for punctuality, some cultures are very respectful for punctuality and here I find that that's not the case, especially for early start meetings. But that has been something that also was a big challenge, trying to get all people into meetings so you can get done on time.</p> <p>22.: But there's a bigger cultural barrier with Anglo-Saxon than with Latin world what I come from, so for them it's easy to deal with ... We are more resilient to unpunctuality.</p> <p>3.: we don't respect time and this is the part of our culture.</p>	<p>Punctuality</p>	
<p>21.: There is a strong sense of feelings. I remember a couple of meetings with a very senior guy and he was asking about how is he going to feel? And we like, you're running a business. And even recently we were doing a reorganization of this company, and there are two guys who are old, they are 60, they are probably looking forward to retiring, and the owner is a very young guy. He said, "How are they going to feel if I communicate with?" And I was like, "This is a business, if you have to do you have to do this."</p>	<p>Emotional Culture</p>	

<p>24.: Saudis are emotional, as emotional as I was in Spain. But they are definitely emotional. And it seems because they are, it has an influence on their work.</p> <p>1.: We are emotional so when the consultant going from a professional mode to a friendship mode then we'd be flexible with him. Even when he's not delivering exactly what we need we can accept it. We can make like ... I don't know how to say it but we accept incomplete deliverables because he's our friend, so we have emotions with him.</p> <p>3.: We're very emotional.</p> <p>8.: Well, I believe our culture is an emotional culture and I'm not sure about other cultures, but I believe it's less emotional in their culture than our culture. In our culture, problems always lead to personal conflicts. If there are emotions in the equation, of course it will affect it.</p>		
<p>22.: The second element is gender inequality or gender issue, which is chiefly depending in which country of the GCC, and there's huge variety from Dubai, inside the UAE it's quite different in Dubai and western region, then it's different in Saudi. I think that's one of the key elements that sometimes underpins the economic growth of this region.</p> <p>22.: Obviously, there's an element of communication, not being in the same room, not being able to spend the same time together. Here the communication there's a lot of number, communication a lot of touching and you can't touch woman, that makes it different. Male communications [are] completely different from female, there's much more barriers, it makes it more difficult. Especially in formal working space. The veil, it creates a huge barrier, it brings a lot of [negativity] for westerners. It creates a lot of rejection in our inner values. At least for me, it's the matter of some of the fears or some of the underlying values about gender equality.</p> <p>24.: Some very shy females [are] highly protected from the family and because of that they have difficulties to communicate with me as a foreign man.</p>	<p>Gender Issue: In-equality</p> <p>Gender issue: Communication barrier with females</p> <p>Gender issue: Communication barrier with females</p>	
<p>22.: That's way meetings can extend and extend, and people are comfortable, explain and then from here to another point. The only thing is you have to let it go and let it happen, feel comfortable, don't be shy. I feel very comfortable on those, that's where the Spanish piece of me brings an advantage to the table. There's</p>	<p>Lack the sense of urgency</p>	

<p>also British that get anxious with the timing and I don't do that.</p> <p>24.: And limit the interaction time and the business time to an hour, because after an hour, especially the locals, are getting tired and are spending more time with their smartphones to play with, sending messages to around the world than to listening to a real content of interaction. So that means limiting, do not expect too much out of one meeting, having your key points in mind, be open to general non business-related discussions in between and in the beginning, and that's more or less a little bit the way I tried to adjust.</p> <p>12.: Usually they work to deadlines and strict timelines and we like to have it the 'Inshallah' way - so we'll do it next Sunday, but you know what? I couldn't make it on Sunday, let's have it on Thursday.</p> <p>1.: Would take a long time to meet, make decisions and to approve the recommendation so it'll always take a long time to implement what they have.</p>		
<p>26.: The lack of openness, the lack of transparency and that distance that Saudis place to these experts that come to be worked. And the way I tend to deal with it is trying to be forthcoming with transparency with openness with clear arguments, with stretching my hand, and sometimes the hand doesn't come back. But I still do what I want to do and in terms of my way of dealing with people I am being quite honest and straightforward, even when there is disagreement tends to work better than the alternative. I feel sometimes clients are holding their cards close to their chest, they are playing a game that they're not really being open with you and so on. I tend to deal with that by saying, "Look this is what I can do, this is what I'm committing to, I believe this is fair and this is not," so I try to avoid getting pulled into the same dynamic.</p> <p>3.: But down the road, things need to be transparent. And things should be called their real names. In the end you don't want to fool this client that you're dealing with, however, you need to put it in the way that he accepts it.</p> <p>6.: The Saudi consultant. We have different more auditors more transparency than others [Saudi organisations]. Because you know this guy from my country will use the data and experience to build the country.</p> <p>12.: We make things appear nicer than it is and when things start happening when we get to the serious battle I would say things would look more like itself and not the way I explained it. Do you know what I mean? So this sometimes, it's not really, I'm not saying we're lying to make things look better. This is the way we speak, the way we make things look better. This is us, we're not very, very, very frank. We are frank in a way, but we use a kind of an indirect way of saying things.</p>	<p>Lack of openness and transparency</p>	

<p>26.: It's very difficult in the Saudi culture to say, "I made a mistake." The other that I was saying about, losing face. It's disrespectful to tell somebody that they haven't performed. It's often a very circuitous way, you have to go through the back and somebody else needs to say it.</p> <p>19.: You never ever talk down to somebody, and also you never raised at that issue that could leave the person, give him a bad face, give him the feeling amongst their colleagues that they have done badly. You never do that. So those are kinds of things that can be quite subtle to Westerners and they will.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either the project manager has been too firm and then he has found his exit visa waiting for him, because somebody didn't like that. Because it doesn't take much in the Government context as I said that deep culture, to offend somebody. It really is very easy to do that, you don't have to say much, you can just have an opinion and suddenly, "Who do you think you are? You're the guy who has dropped this opinion." I don't think like that. And then, you are done for the rest of your life. You will never fix your relationship with that person. Because I have noticed there tends to be ... it's a grudge society, grudges are held against individuals. <p>22.: I can understand because in Spain and the Latin world it's similar. I can understand the mentality. But that makes clients reluctant to risk-taking, and sometimes to achieve breakthrough research you need to make a risky move. And that is another barrier to our job as consultants.</p> <p>24.: Is it maybe fear to change things and then be accountable for, might be.</p>	<p>Un-willing to take risk: Because of shame of failure</p> <p>Shame of Failure</p> <p>Un-willing to take risk</p> <p>Un-willing to take risk: to avoid being held accountable.</p>	
<p>7.: So, they are kind of aware of the culture, they've been dealing with Saudi companies before and so they have a good knowledge of this culture. So, we didn't have any kind of surprises in terms of the way they deal with us in terms of culture. I think it makes sense. If we all think in an almost similar way or at least we understand each other's way of thinking, lots of conflict and stuff will be resolved.</p> <p>8.: If you have great experience or long experience with this consultant, [then] misunderstanding [is] hopefully minimal. But, usually misunderstandings happen</p>	<p>Experience Facilitates Knowledge Exchange</p>	<p>Cultural Factors that Impact Behaviour</p>

when both sides do not understand or recently work together.

10.: Imagine that I am managing this project. I'm dealing with those international consultants, I'm getting used to them, so I even understand their way and how they work and how they think and how they communicate.

13.: I'm talking about international - so they have some international offices in Saudi Arabia, they have offices abroad. And you realise that if you work with different resources from these offices, even the culture between them is different. Because **the one who works in Saudi Arabia**, he came to realise that, 'Ok. I need to work closely with the clients to draft the RFP or scoping this.' Then he will work with them to deliver, which is in a normal situation outside of Saudi Arabia.

14.: It can vary from a project where some consultants spend a lot of time here and they understand the culture very well. Some of the consultants just came here for the first time and for them it was very difficult to adapt to the culture. In my experience, the well experienced that has had several projects here, it will make it easier for them and for us to communicate and to understand each other. The client likes the Spanish culture: Their culture is closer to the Arabic culture, they are - how to put it politely? Yeah, they are flexible (laughs). Yeah, they understand that the flexibility, the relaxation.

Example, selecting a German or Spanish consultant: For me, if I needed the job to be done perfectly, if it has minimal interaction with other departments, I would pick the German. If it has a lot of interactions with other departments, other stakeholders, I would pick the Spanish.

24.: I need to because, again Ahmed might have a different mindset and the way of working and behaving then Suleiman. And Suleiman might be more influential then Saleh. I need to understand that, I can only understand that at one insight to talk with them and understand it and then also to get advice on the one insight from my team members who are also dealing with them. Plus, eventually, then also with other people in the organization, that is key, otherwise I would be lost. I would maybe phrase it in that way: **culture gives you an oval umbrella gives you an oval direction** which way each individual going in regards of behaviour etc. It is up to each individual. **Culture gives you a way, but how you proceed the way can be different from individual to individual and I need to deal with both dimensions.**

25.: I would say it's always about the person. I think you cannot work with the culture. I think you work with the person. Everybody knows right from wrong, everybody has basic values. Okay, the environment sometimes drives that you are tougher, boys don't cry. In other cultures, okay, boys should cry. The society around you will tell you what to do also. But the guy is the guy. He will learn something from society, but he will learn something from you, he'll adapt to you too. I wouldn't generalize it to the culture, I would say you can work with all the

<p>people everywhere.</p> <p>19.: And the people are culturally completely different. And in that way, I have found it difficult to play the politics, because it's a political game that everybody has to play. Positioning, social standing, what's your name, who are you. Not me particularly, but even within the structure I understand more and more day by day of the Saudi culture, and the layering. Even in they are doing name people. I talk to my colleague and he says, "Hang on, he's from the East, or from the West, he's from the South, he's from the North, he is from this tribe." And it is quite different from even South Africa. South Africa, from all of the black nations, we were able to determine where did people come from. Just from either the look of the people, or the sound of the people, the accent of the people. You do that. I think you probably do that anywhere in the world. So, the understanding of the different layers within the Saudi culture has become an interesting thing.</p>		
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Table 33: Excerpts, themes, and Codes Extracted from the Component of Culture

Excerpt	Theme	Code
<p>14.: The other aspect of power, which is common, you have power to force the consultants to give you results as you wish. This is more common in Saudi. You have the power to bring consultants and to tell the consultants, 'I don't care what you think, I need you to tell me 1, 2, 3.'</p>	<p>Legitimising personal views/decisions</p>	<p>Priority is to Personal Interests of the Powerful</p>
<p>6.: Some project is very easy, anybody can do it but they use consultants as tools to get approvals. Most of these projects now are not executed and saved for dust.</p>	<p>Legitimising personal views/decisions</p>	
<p>8.: Even though the product is not - the consultant - not in general, but most of the consultant work is putting the clients' words or work or opinion in a nicer way and to be presentable for somebody who is the decision maker in the organisation to get through.</p>	<p>Legitimising personal views/decisions</p>	
<p>9.: Sometimes we bring a consultant where the committee want him to say yes, not no. The issue with the consultant - people in the public sector want to transfer the risk of decision making, the risk of, 'He said yes, this is a good solution, or this is a good approach or not', by transferring it to the consultant. And when the consultant came with something that contradict with their previously made decision, clashes will happen, and conflicts will arise.</p>	<p>Legitimising personal views/decisions</p>	
<p>12.: Such well-known consultants have been behind it so you're ok, nobody will blame you in the future. This is a problem again, it's not their problem, it is our problem. But again, they exploit that and it because the norm when conducting work here. We did our due diligence; we did our job. There are people who criticised our work and they said that it's the right direction so why do we blame him?</p>	<p>Legitimising personal views/decisions</p>	
<p>25.: Very often you are being used to say what they want to say, but they don't dare,</p>		

<p>so they don't want to say openly that something is right or wrong, so they hire a consultant to say it for them. Well, but because in Saudi there is this reluctance to say things straightforwardly, you tend to be in that position more often than elsewhere.</p>	<p>Legitimising personal views/decisions</p>	
<p>27.: In most of the cases if not all, people were just looking to, you know, upgrade their own position without really looking at the overall real benefit for the organization in the end. And in the case of public organizations, you can deal with all benefit of the state and the people in. I believe it's a lack of honesty. That's what I think it is. There's basically three main factors, I think, you need to look at. One is power, the other one is ego, third one is money. Not all of them, but a lot of people in power positions or so-called power positions are so egocentric, are so directed towards themselves that it is very difficult, and sometimes nearly impossible to work with them. Arrogance.</p> <p>5.: All the discussion of any given proposal or organisation, if that does not go with whoever is running the whole show in that organisation, believe me, it's never going to fly.</p> <p>6.: Because if they don't deliver what these guys want the won't pay. There will be so many problems.</p> <p>7.: But if you are on the top management level, they do it the other way around where they - even if they understand the way you're thinking, they apply what the powerful wants. That's my point again is having international consultants, is that due to that power of those people - either top management or whatever - they try to make their consultants do what they want them to do, instead of having the consultants' input or point of view.</p>	<p>Addressing personal interests of the powerful is the main goal</p>	

8.: Well, the international consultants, of course, will follow the lead of the man of power. If I am the man of power, his work will be affected by the direction I am giving. Of course, whoever has the power in the organisation will steer the decisions and the results and the outcomes of the consulting work. So that's maybe - it happens. The consultant will always do whatever the client wants.

10.: Who manage the consultant and they set the expectations and accept what they are delivering is the key person in the organisation and who will determine if this will fly or not.

12.: I never saw a critical consultant work that is not really tailored to the way the executives wanted. Usually it goes that path. They incorporate that into the work, so they really understand, 'What do you want to show?' Again, this is a leadership problem in the country, because they only want people to stamp the work and verify that it's good and judgement was good.

13.: I realise with my experience of consultants that work within Saudi Arabia, they want to see which direction you want to go with and they try to lean it for you and put it in their words and documents. Because there is a culture in Saudi Arabia 'let's go with the decision maker.

17.: I think that the vision or the mandate that comes from the top is the one that's going to get pushed regardless, because I will tell them I don't think that's the right way and they don't really want to hear that. They want to hear why their way is the best way. For example, I have a client that wanted to pursue a process developed in a certain way, I totally disagree with their approach and at some point we had pretty harsh debate about this, but I ended up getting in ... got another consultant to come in and do the work. One of my employees came in and I assigned him and told him, "Look, here is the way I would do it, this is not the way we're doing it, the client

<p>wants it this way, this is the way we're going to do it. So, take whatever direction they are giving you and let's follow that path.”</p> <p>21.: In Saudi you need to go for the boss to convince him to implement something. It's very difficult to get feedback or influence from the bottom. For two reasons. One, because it doesn't work. Or it's a big risk for the present. Secondly, because it's usually very high hierarchy, it's too much of, "Okay that's what my boss said."</p>		
<p>9.: Second thing is dealing with consultants with different backgrounds and nationality, we should keep in mind they are not an employer or working under our supervision, 'whatever we say, they will make.' No, things will happen. Whenever conflicts happen, this does not mean disrespect of me as a client.</p> <p>10.: I have seen a lot of people are very negative because he thinks that this consultant is supposed to worship him and give him whatever he wants and things like this.</p> <p>24.: Also, a lot of government are playing the game, I am government employee, you have to do what I say because I'm government. And if you do not do what I do and what I want, we will kick you out and make your life miserable. That's quite often is the case.</p> <p>1.: They don't have experience working with the consultant company. They think that the consultant is like a butler for them. So, I can bring him every day I tell him what I want and you need to find the solution no matter what, It's not my problem I need. I can even ask him about the project to extend the scope this is my right which something not legal for the consultant.</p>	<p>Consultants seen as doers not thinkers</p> <p>Slave Treatment (worshipper)</p> <p>Slave treatment.</p> <p>Slave or (butler) treatment</p>	<p>Status-based Relationship</p>
<p>3.: Those consultants know how the powers and politics works so they would come to you ready and just enforcing ideas.</p>	<p>Understanding the power game</p>	<p>Locating power sources</p>

<p>4.: So, they would know, for example, who is the CEO or who is the executive directors and they actually will do an analysis of the stakeholders - who they need to meet with, and so on. So, when they go to meet with anyone, they know who this person is, and they know what kind of power this person has, so they address it accordingly. If they are doing it with the CEO, they will talk to him because they know he's the decision maker.</p> <p>10.: They sneak in into the organisation, they evaluate the management who they will deal with, they know who the decision maker is, they know who will actually affect the business in the organisation. From that perspective, they start dealing and deciding whatever you are a worthy client or not.</p> <p>11.: Yes, they are good at noticing who's in charge to give them the right attention that he needs for each meeting. And this is really something interesting, they're really good at it. I don't know how they do it, but they can spot it.</p> <p>24.: And then with that also the power map, who is the influencer and who is the decision-taker etc.</p>	<p>Locating and Evaluating power sources</p> <p>Locating and evaluating power sources</p> <p>Locating and evaluating power sources</p> <p>Locating and evaluating power sources (power map)</p>	<p>facilitates interactions for consultants</p>
<p>21.: When there's hidden agenda the communication is not transparent. For example, you can notice it is straight away, like your client is not copying you in certain emails, there are certain meetings that you don't go. That's like you have meeting and something was ... the next steps were this way and then suddenly somebody from the team doing something else. So, you get meetings and you are not there, emails that you are not there, communication to the team that you're not aware of, or interactions. You know that there's something going on.</p>	<p>Hidden agenda</p>	<p>Hidden agenda</p>

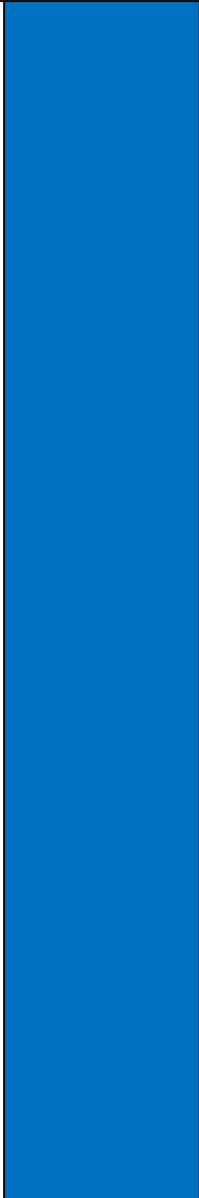
<p>24.: That is part of my job description to understand the client be able to advise them, that is one. Therefore, I need to do whatever is needed to understand them. Do I always understand them entirely, question mark, because certain things are not discussed openly, to understand maybe a political or personal hidden agenda. What also makes it sometimes difficult to understand or the way you [end up] company's or my clients have. I mean there are also a lot of not outspoken or shared topics definitely.</p> <p>26.: I feel sometimes clients are holding their cards close to their chest, they are playing a game that they're not really being open with you and so on. I tend to deal with that by saying, "Look this is what I can do, this is what I'm committing to, I believe this is fair and this is not," so I try to avoid getting pulled into the same dynamic.</p>		
<p>7.: Sometimes I notice in the communication between top management and our consultants, sometimes the management snap on stuff that doesn't worth it. Like, because he made a mistake of your position – you may snap on him, or the way the email is written, the Director or CEO could snap on them in front of everybody, which is through emails and stuff like that. I don't think it's the right way to do it because sometimes it's just give them slack.</p> <p>1.: [Powerful] people usually take the work personally. So, if you make a mistake with anyone of the clients and he will transform it from a professional word to personal. And he will start resisting. The people here in Saudi Arabia, this is very important one, they always resist change. They don't want to take change. They don't want to make any change to their ecosystem. To take them out of their comfort zone to something new they don't about.</p>	<p>Power must be acknowledged</p>	<p>Powerful people should be handled with an extremely careful manner</p>

<p>24.: I need to adjust if I see that somebody in the room has more power than the other, I show him in front of the others definitely a different kind of respect. I reach always to the person with the highest amount of power to make things</p> <p>25.: Especially in Saudi, for example, especially that was one thing in Saudi that people behave differently when the senior guys are in the room than when the senior guys are out of the room.</p>		
<p>21.: Hierarchy. Hierarchy, everybody, my experience is that most of the people I work with were looking for hierarchy in an individual way and showing off in an individual way. It's funny because everybody was like, "I did this." And the, "My team and I guide it and I led," that's not so common. It's about, yes, it's about the individual. And scaling the system. Not jumping, evolving in the system. Hierarchy. at least my experience is that people prefer to have a higher range, or a position, than higher salary.</p> <p>22.: One of the things that for me is difficult to accept, not to learn, but to accept, is this. In the GCC and especially in Saudi as well, the hierarchy is pretty strong. Hierarchy is the element that ... in general, hierarchy, the decision-making, commands, it is extremely hierarchical. Even sometimes questioning what is coming from your superiors will be understood as something crude or something inadequate, something bad. That's what I understand that sometimes happens to my clients. And it makes it difficult for a consultant that sometimes has to disagree with what the clients are saying, or the bosses of the client are saying. And this makes a fundamental difference between the client's expectation and consultant's value in where I come from, or from the western world. I think that's one of the [clear] barriers. Very linked to the previous point that I have mentioned because someone wants to change, then you have to change, and that makes sometimes decision-making process very inefficient and create a lot of problems. I am not</p>	<p>Hierarchy increases individualism</p>	<p>Hierarchy Issues</p>

<p>talking as a consultant to the companies, to the government entities, to the economies.</p> <p>[How to solve it]: Trying to work with the client I am making them understand the consequences of decisions they are making. But sometimes it's not ...</p> <p>25.: I try to explain logically why it is a mistake and why it should be done differently and suggest to client to talk to the guy and try to convince him with arguments and with the logic that this is not the right choice instead of ... I have no issue to talk to him myself, but it was mainly because I didn't have such a direct report and direct relationship, so I advised him to talk and try to provide these arguments, why it's not a good idea.</p> <p>22.: [Also], I would talk about silence, organizations are getting very silent, pretty much linked to the hierarchy, hierarchy generates silence.</p> <p>24.: For example, to get access to the board of Al-Rajhi Bank and CP etc. is super difficult. It's super difficult and highly sensitive. It means, okay you need to rely on your connection maybe to the CEO etc. You can have enough of power, and also a good begging of the board to make things happen. Because otherwise you as a consultant are always lost because you do not have access to the highest authority of power, means the board and then you should do, on the other hand side, ask to change, to implement certain things, it's super difficult.</p> <p>25.: I think people here tend to be very thoracically oriented. Like older guy is the ... Yes, doesn't matter what he says, he is older, so he must be right, or he must be wiser.</p> <p>27.: There were some bright guys available on the directive level and management</p>	<p>Diplomacy is effective with hierarchy</p> <p>Diplomacy is effective with hierarchy</p> <p>Hierarchy leads to silence</p> <p>Hierarchy affects access</p> <p>Privilege increases with hierarchy</p> <p>Hierarchy may contain</p>	
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<p>level, some of the people were really bright, but there were also a lot of, you know, I wouldn't say useless people but people who didn't fit in, you know, and didn't really have the potential and the intelligence and whatever to do what they needed to do because they have a real tendency to apply the influence to promote [un-fit] people inside the company. And in the end people ended up in the position where they are not able to fit in and to manage these people.</p>	<p>ineffective powerful members</p>	
<p>1.: For example, if you want to talk about our constitution we have board of directors, ok? One of them, he's a governor FTDC, we have people from some ministries from around the table. So, once we have something like this our role is just to and just tell this to them. They need to take it with the minister. Because there is no one to call ok? And even in a project where we work with the same government they want, they will show you what you call. So, you cannot jump and just go to the minister and say "oh, I have this, is explained it to you, you need to find the solution" you can't do that. You can't do it like this. You need to go, follow the protocol and go now to those people they will take it they will escort it to the upper level then they even the minister himself he can't go on top. He needs to take it to the same thing (inaudible). Discuss it there and then they can take it from there.</p> <p>2.: Unfortunately, this is something we have been facing in every project, where like you said, because they have the power, they will have their say in the project because they have this power. Unfortunately, as you know, when a project gets started and we submit the data, we start building and testing, they come at the end or before the end and say, 'This is not going to work, we need it to be done this way', and it's going to cause delays and problems. This is one of the things we escalate to our top management and we've had this a lot. Sometimes a director or a head gets changed on that day and someone else comes in his place, who doesn't share his views and completely changes the way things are being done.</p>	<p>Following protocols of communication</p> <p>Interfering with Implementation or development of advice</p>	<p>Approving or implementing advice is subject to delay or blockage by powerful members</p>

<p>3.: Oh yes. [Forcing exceptions on advice development by powerful members] is our problem from the beginning. That the exceptions have become more than the norms.</p>	<p>Interfering with Implementation or development of advice</p>	
<p>4.: We were talking in a meeting just before this, there were millions spent on hiring the best consultancy firm - I will not even say the name - that produced an excellent proposal and strategy and documents. I wouldn't give more details about it due to the confidentiality. But the majority of it is still on paper, we wish to see it implemented on the ground.</p>	<p>Interfering with implementation or development of advice</p>	
<p>5.: You will sit with their head, with their directors, and when you give some business and mix that with other who's working the same organisation and have different vision of what have been proposed, and if both have a big conflict that is not really addressed properly with a body that makes a decision to end that, otherwise no one will be also able to progress in that size.</p>	<p>Interfering with implementation or development of advice</p>	
<p>9.: I just want to find a good example. We could have a company restructuring study, we had contacted with me to do a restructure and me, as a contracting department for example. After I saw the deliverables of the restructure during the project stage's end - not at the closing, I don't like my position there in the structure. This is an example, I do not mean it's happening, but I'll try to influence it and put me reporting directly to the CEO, but not this specification. I'm using my powers as a contracting - not as a contracting, that's what we're doing right now but this is the power that I could influence the results of that study, even though the contract department have no involvement directly during the execution of the project but this is just for example.</p>	<p>Interfering with implementation or development of advice</p>	

<p>2.: They are not there earlier because they were not there. The head or the new department leader or someone has left the project and assigned someone else and that person, 1) he doesn't know the history of the project or its main objectives and 2)he doesn't see the rush now or the reasoning why we're doing it the way we are. For example, we have for the anaesthesia, we have something called the connectivity engine, we've opted to go wireless option with this. Because of the sterile environment in the OR, they don't want wires and cables everywhere - because it's a sterile environment, they don't want blood or anything to go in their way, or no one to trip over these cables. The new head was asking why we were going wireless, what if there's an interruption, what if there's a weak signal, what's going to happen - as if we're doing all of this again from the start. So this is one of the things we are facing in the change in the workflow from the management side. They show their expressions or their dislike or discomfort of why this is being done. And they will state it clearly and say, 'I don't care what that person before me has said, I want it to be done this way and that way.'</p>	<p>Change among powerful members may render advice obsolete</p>	
<p>10.: We had a project - it's a very massive project - and it's all about setting the strategy of the organisation and developing the business model and how the organisation should work and setting up the organisation's structure and everything. It's the backbone of the organisation. Unfortunately, the governance within that project was set into one individual who used to be the vice president of the organisation - he is the one who is the decision maker, he's the one who is accepting the thing. And this project stayed for almost a year. Things are being delivered but didn't get the approval and the authorised people to approve it up the board of directors. It was not presented to them, it was sent to them in a not good way, no response happened. A year passed, things are delivered then there are a lot of dependency and eventually when that VP presented eventually to the board of directors what's been delivered after one year, they just disagreed with everything</p>	<p>Battle between top and middle management</p>	

from the start. So that was a waste of resources, waste of money.

Table 34: Excerpts, themes, and Codes Extracted from the Component of Power

Excerpt	Themes	Codes
<p>10.: Most of the things that I have seen before, it's related to some of uncertainty from the organisation itself. So, this manager, let's say a business director in a company - he doesn't know exactly what he wants, he sensed that this project is actually ahead of him at this stage. That's why he's not certain about his requirements, his expectations and he just want the consultant to dig in, provide whatever they can do and they he selects. So, that he can get a huge bunch of delivery, more than whatever than is being written in the contract and the business requirements. That's what I have seen and that's what gives the consultation a frustration in a point of time. But they still need to satisfy his client. [Also], the Saudi culture sometimes, they don't like talking details. But he sets some [broad] expectations that he shares with the consultant. That's why the consultant goes back, does his homework up on what he understood, he delivers, then he supplies saying this is not what I'm expecting, you will redo this again. This is becoming very frustrating for the consultant. That's things that I have seen.</p> <p>13.: So, this perception should be clear by saying, 'Ok. Did he deliver what we need?' First, did you know what we need? - that's the first basic question. Did you translate it in very clear instructions to this consultant? But because always there is unclarity about the scope, that causes an issue in the delivery. Because if you don't know what you need, then whatever the consultant gave you will be based on nothing.</p> <p>1.: So, when you bring a consultant and tell him about your problem, so then, that's it. The scope of work for him it would be limited and when you ask him for something he will just go: "change</p>	<p>Not knowing or uncertain about the requirement or the scope</p> <p>(Unclear requirements and scope)</p>	<p>Knowledge Development Challenges</p>

<p>request, change request, change request.” So, you need to have the right skill and the right knowledge to make sure that the scope of work of that consultant is covering of your need.</p> <p>22.: They ask you this, but in reality, they want the other thing.</p> <p>24.: That is one. Second, sometimes I do not know what they really need, and that's more or less always not one meeting and weeks and months of discussions to come up what they really need and what we really have to do. And again, that's maybe also industry-specific. It's the level of maturity and experience, what is really possible and what others are doing, it's not already there. Therefore, I need to do whatever is needed to understand them. Do I always understand them entirely, question mark, because certain things are not discussed openly, to understand maybe a political or personal hidden agenda? What also makes it sometimes difficult to understand.</p>		
<p>17.: I found there's a bit of a hands-off approach for certain layers of management that they don't really want to get involved in decision-making or in too much of detail.</p> <p>11.: He doesn't care about the process; how did you get your data. Just tell me what you need, I'll try to get it for you and give me the result, we'll review it together. If I liked it, we'll tweak it a little bit and that's it. This is really the big problem. Why? Because first of all, there is a huge gap between whatever they are doing and whatever we are looking for. Well, our way of dealing with consultants has been so static and so one-sided way of communication, where the consultant is just working in the shadows and delivers his work to us and we accept it.</p> <p>21.: The other one is motivation. How to make people engage and try to deal with people who are with their phones with all the things.</p> <p>9.: They run one issue that we discovered lately here in the Kingdom, and whenever you have a project and we hire a consultant to do this consultancy service, we do not engage with him. We give him the task, go to your offices and every - for example three weeks - give me one of the deliverables</p>	<p>Clients do not prefer to be engaged in the process of development of the advice</p> <p>(Clients hands-off approach)</p>	

<p>- that sort of - this is waste of time. And recently, people are realising that engagement with the consultant is very important.</p> <p>26.: In the meantime, nobody else collaborate and nobody else gave you what you needed, so it doesn't matter, because you should be able to deliver, because they don't fully understand what it takes and how they need to be part of the process.</p>		
<p>17.: So what I have found at least in my experience with them, is they are very much looking towards best practice So they want prove processes proven ways of thinking, and they want them applied, and they want them proven and they want to be able to apply some certification or some measure that's authenticated by a different group that can say, "Yes we were we are compliant with these best practices." So, I would say, we have leverage, certainly, the industry's best practices and we do that already within Accenture, but it's even more important here, because I have seen many organizations that would say, "Okay, I want to improve my service in this way, I'm having issues here, I'm having challenges here." The focus that I've seen here is, "We want to comply with this standard." Regardless of what the main points are, regardless of what the outcome might be, they want to comply with the standard, so that they can get the certification whether it's personal or industry-based. So, we have to shift a little bit to focus on ... Because I can give them my experience that may differ somewhat from the documented industry best practice or maybe more detail that may have variance slightly, but they do not really have interested in your real-life experience. They want to know what the best practices.</p> <p>21.: First of all, I'm thinking the maturity of Saudi market is that they have their resources and they want to buy the best. That's the aspiration. The way they assess the best doesn't mean they end up having the best. It's like, if I go to Saudi tomorrow and I buy dates and I want the best, I will go for the most expensive ones. And you will tell me, "Those are not the best ones." You will tell me, "The best ones are from my uncle, they don't even have brand and they come in a barrel." It's exactly the same with consulting in Saudi. They are buying brands because of the level of maturity that you have. You want the best and your only reference is branding. Because with so many resources being such a quick, maybe that's more Dubai, but such a fast growth and fast evolution from the desert to the</p>	<p>Clients want the latest fashion regardless of applicability or need</p>	

<p>Ferrari, that leads to a mindset of "I want the best" because I have the money.</p> <p>22.: There's one part of the market here that placed by the ear, so if someone is doing something, they want to do the same. Me too. Regardless they need it or not. That's the most dangerous client. A client that is, ok this organization has been successful, they have been recognized, I want to do it as well. I don't know what they did, but I want to do the same because I want to. And that happens very much in this part of the world. Even in Saudi Arabia. These are the most dangerous clients because they truly don't know what they need.</p> <p>10.: So, we set our expectation and we tell them we know nothing so that they can actually expose and give us what's the best practices and best in the market. Sometimes we reach a point that we actually challenge them and what they are delivering and telling them that up to a certain way, we know better than what actually you deliver, aiming for getting more and more from them. So, it's type of methodologies that we deal with, depends on what we are asking, what kind of project that we are dealing with, what we are expecting from them and especially with actually the kind of consultant persons that we are actually talking to them.</p>		
<p>22.: There is many clients ... The consultant cannot do the job of the clients and that is something clients need to understand. Consultants can help you, but you have to do your part of the work. And the magic solution that the consultant does something, and it's solved is sometimes in imagination of many clients, it's not true. And the Western world has learned that, so consultants are very useful, but you need teams inside that are able to transform what consultants are giving you into tangible value.</p> <p>17.: I think one of the differences that I've seen here in Saudi is that the Saudi clients typically want you to do most of the ... they want you to not only provide the consulting, but they want you to be the operator as well, they want you do the work as opposed to, for example, different cultures, specifically the US, my experience in South America as well as Europe has been has been that they</p>	<p>Consultants are expected to advice and execute</p>	

more want you to consult and then move out of the way and let them do the work. They are trying to get you to help to better their operation, improve their operation as opposed to here where consultant is really also an extension of the team. They want you to be not just a consult. As a consultant it is challenging, because I have a finance go by. I cannot possibly do the operations for them. Sometimes that is easier, but in the long run that doesn't make me successful, because I need to consult and then move on to the next client. It's a cultural aspect, their workforce culture. I think it is changing. I've seen, we have a mix there's an older generation of Saudis who are happy they have the consultants who come in and do all the work, so they are really not consultants again, they are outsourcing the activities. And that's a different thing, right? But I think their line is still blurred. They bring consultant, they expected them to be an outsourcing provider so as opposed to the different cultures that I have mentioned before, the different geographies that I have mentioned before, whereas when they say "consultant" they have a clear definition of what a consultant is, not always a doer. I think it is a state of maturity, but I think it is evolved.

27.: There was one of the things I had struggled with for years in Saudi Arabia because the Western companies, and I think that's real difference between Western companies and Saudi companies, is that the Western companies, the majority of people in terms of being able to absorb information, do something with it an whatever, is generally higher than what I've seen in Saudi Arabia. It's a development stage I think. So one of the mistakes I've made in the beginning when I was working in Saudi Arabia was that I tried to take my sideline rule in the development process the way I did in the Western companies. Teaching people, directing people, redirecting them, explaining them, giving them an example and whatever, and then expecting them to actually go out there and do it. And I had to change that dramatically in Saudi Arabia, I had to change it in such a way, and it's not a bad thing actually, but I had to change this in such a way that I had to jump into the change process and walk with them through the change process. Actually, do it together with them. Once, twice, three times four times, five times. As many times as needed, until they actually got the whole thing and said, "Okay, that's the way to do it. And those are the pitfalls that I can encounter, that I have to avoid, I try to leverage this." So, the learning process is a little bit more intensive, and if you have admitted it, but you know, it's just rewarding if I do.

<p>14.: I always tell him it's supposed to be the other way around - if you are going to treat them as employees, we will hire employees. Consultants are not meant to be doers - we should be doing what they direct us to do.</p>		
<p>25.: what I do is I set separate meetings with the ... guy[s] and I try to have one-on-one meetings with them because maybe they are not comfortable to talk in public and so on. I try to talk to them separately. And they feel more comfortable just by themselves. It's definitely facilitator's role in discussion to encourage everybody to speak because definitely everybody has something interesting to talk about.</p> <p>7.: they gave us courses with 5 days on leadership and kind of stuff. After that they had this one-to-one session with each of the participants talking with them about their daily work, their obstacles, how to overcome them and some suggestions regarding that.</p> <p>4.: They conduct for example, lots of meetings and workshops and one-to-one sessions to discuss the scope of work. When they issue any deliverables, they bring the concerned parties and the stakeholders, and they explain to them, and there are lots of free discussions usually in these workshop sessions.</p>	<p>One-to-one sessions</p>	<p>Knowledge transfer methods for Saudis</p>
<p>21.: I realized that it was better to have short sessions of one hour every two days than two hours every week. Because they were more engaged I could get their attention for one hour and then I have time to maybe the topic couldn't be that big. So, you have to split them into smaller topics, you have one hour of discussion, then you get all the feedback you are preparing and then you do the next session. And that worked really well. I started with meet every week and let's discuss, and they said, "No, no, we prefer one on Sunday, one on Wednesday."</p> <p>24.: Out of every meeting to get some results out of it. And limit the interaction time and the business time to an hour, because after an hour, especially the locals, are getting tired and are spending more time with their smartphones to play with, sending messages to around the world than to listening to a real content of interaction. So that means limiting, do not expect too much out of one meeting,</p>	<p>One-hour sessions</p>	<p>Knowledge transfer methods for Saudis</p>

<p>having your key points in mind, be open to general non business-related discussions in between an in the beginning, and that's more or less a little bit the way I tried to adjust.</p>		
<p>18.): There are several ways to deal with it. One is to be pretty much firm and say, this is the way it's going to get done, which usually rattles the cages and people get really upset. Before you know it, you're on the blacklist. But sometimes you have to do that. You have to be firm and you have to say this is the way the things are going to get done. The other way is, you have to do it yourself which is another way. So, getting their attention and getting their ability to help you is quite difficult and as an expat, you are not allowed to be a manager. You are in the situation, where you are always on the side, so you can't tell anybody you have to do this because you are my employee, because you don't have employees. That is another cultural difficulty. Sometimes you have to escalate to the general manager, fortunately, I'm in the senior position, I can just relate to the general manager, and then deal with any cultural problem.</p> <p>27.: Not being able to get people energized, to get people on the right track, to make them cooperate, endorse and these kinds of things. Until I had a very informal meeting with an English guy in Dubai and we were having a beer together during the weekend. I told him about my struggle with Saudi people to get them aligned, energized, and endorsed in the process. And at the end of my explanation he told me, he said, "Well, you know, you're the Belgian, you are West European, you have been raised in a completely different culture, and actually what's your only excuse at this point of urgency as far as I can see it is that you want too polite. So go on there, and be less polite. Tell them what you want them to do for you." So that's what I did when I went back and, all of a sudden miraculously everything started to work, you know, better. Not in the best way, but better.</p> <p>1.: The way they behave look and here in Saudi Arabia we don't accept anyone to give us an order, OK? Even if you are a partner even if you are a senior partner we don't care. We don't give us an order. He's not Saudi he's a foreigner we don't accept anything from him. The way of transferring the knowledge is very important. I don't accept someone come tell me ok do that and tell me what you are doing every day. I need to see the table of your deliverables in this week. Because he's become</p>	<p>(Commanding) Dialog (Partnership) VS Command</p> <p>(Firm Commands)</p> <p>(No commands or orders)</p>	<p>Knowledge transfer methods for Saudis</p>

<p>more like an auditor.</p> <p>3.: Those consultants know how the powers and politics works so they would come to you ready and just enforcing ideas. And ordering you I would say for getting that. Sometimes they ask for something and the way you say it, this is not the way you ask for things. We know that you have the power and I'm going to give it to you eventually maybe you have the power from the CE or the CEO, but you still need to know how to present it. How to reach me how to approach me to give you all. You know what I mean. What you need. I can just feel offended and just give you half of the things. Unfinished or something that wouldn't serve you at all but, it's just, it didn't help the purpose of this engagement, that I would say.</p> <p>5.: I think this is more a partnership. If you think we're done the deal we came to that organisation we've done the business the science contract we have, this is done deal. I think the next is to have them as a partner with you to make a living. A partner you would have to sit with them on a monthly basis, quarterly basis or anywhere basis even.</p> <p>13.: So, when we went through that project of work with them, things have been changed with the consulting, so I'm dealing with a consultant more than a colleague more than a consultant will do me a favour – just someone helping me to find an answer. He not giving me the answer.</p>	<p>(No commands or orders)</p> <p>By developing partnership</p> <p>By developing partnership</p>	
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Table 35: Excerpts, themes, and Codes Extracted from the Component of Knowledge

Excerpt	Themes	Codes
<p>13.: At the end it will result in not satisfying my needs, because you didn't translate what you need, actually. This is the biggest source of failure.</p> <p>6.: Sometimes have some guys they have perfect language, so we bring him as translator between us.</p> <p>13.: So, this perception should be clear by saying, 'Ok. Did he deliver what we need?' First, did you know what we need? - that's the first basic question. Did you translate it in very clear instructions to this consultant?</p>	Importance of Translation	Language Considerations
<p>1.: Because most of these consultants understand this and when you work with a very important client let's say ministry of finance, ministry of labour or any semi government company, you always make sure you have all the consultants off the contract you always make sure that they have an Arabic guide there. Ok? So if you don't understand our guy will come to you, try to explain things, try to present it in Arabic to make sure that you understand what they are doing.</p> <p>2.: Usually, when I see a question addressed to them in the meetings, I usually rephrase it for them in a simpler term, but if they have a question they can send it to me in a personal email and I'll tell them what it means or what to say. But other than that, with time, the team are doing well.</p> <p>21.: I've been in projects where you actually have a translator or sometimes you bring somebody from your team that is Saudi. They feel more comfortable and they might understand you, but they don't speak. So, they shut their mouths.</p> <p>22.: The same thing. That's why you need to be surrounded by locals and people that can help you to translate things. So, "Inshallah" means three hundred different things. The same word, "Inshallah", means "go to hell, I don't want to see you anytime more" or "deal on, we begin tomorrow". It means anything between. Inshallah. You are able to</p>	Locals team members translate implicit meanings	

<p>create different Inshallahs but local gets better meaning of these Inshallahs. Or Khalas, it's same thing. So there's a lot of elements of implicit, the culture is very implicit, it's not very explicit. There's a lot of hidden tricks, hidden elements that you have to be able to read.</p> <p>24.: Language is the reason why I always have Arabic speakers, Saudis, GCC members etc. in the team and always try to have a mix, to mix works, and it's fine, works only for my side better because people are more listening to me because they respect me more, then I do certain things and if I see that it's the language is the barrier, than Arab speakers are doing it.</p>		
<p>9.: Usually in the verbal meeting we insisted that we have minutes of meeting or a written - whatever we discuss should be put in a written format to make sure there is no misunderstanding.</p> <p>12.: I try to emphasise on written communication more. So if we sit together, I try to go and write what I understood or what we really agreed to in writing, I emphasise that. I usually use the written communication, but if I think there is lack of understanding in terms of language, I emphasise more.</p> <p>18.: Usually at the end of the meeting we process where we have meeting, recurring meeting clearly define agendas, I make note beforehand, discussion point actions derived from that discussion points and action closure. So usually at the end of a meeting, what I would do if I am the chair of the meeting, or even if I am not the chair, I'll ask for summary of action items so that there is nothing missed, so we did the meeting.</p> <p>13.: We had consultants from Turkey and they didn't speak English very well, but it's not a big barrier because at the end, they will document what they want, they will send us emails, we will work around it.</p> <p>24.: And this is always important that you read in the meeting, in the conversation if the full understanding is reached and if further explanations are needed. That's how I deal with it.</p>	Documentation	

<p>17.: For me the soft language, the indirect communication is key, this is how you understood, part of what I talked about earlier, it is how you can sometimes verify that your message is getting across, so you have to look for those types of cues.</p> <p>24.: It is definitely there, sometimes I'm still lost what certain things means. Prepping the hand and then not losing the hand and then push you into a corner to have a discussion there with you and etc. That's happening and that's part of it. Sometimes I am a little bit lost. This is now something to make things more important to our show you yes if you are person more important than ... It has a meaning, but I think of from my side it's misled my interpretation of certain things. But it's here, and it has definitely a meaning, yes, absolutely.</p> <p>26.: At first it was a tough learning experience that I made some mistakes. I misinterpreted some signs like this sign, which in this part of the world means "wait a minute". In our part of the world, it means, "what are you saying?" It's almost an aggressive way of saying, "What? Are you implying that I'm mistaken or some ... What?" It took me a while to understand that one, but like that many others. It's just the translation, in the same way that words need to be translated, body language and signs also need to be translated.</p> <p>19.: I think there are subtleties in the body language, in the facial expressions that we probably never get it right. My colleague sits with me, we are sitting in the meeting, and I can think that things are going quite smoothly. And he tells me after this, "Oh my goodness, that was a disaster." And I'm saying, "What on Earth happened?" And he said, "No no, this one said something to that one, this other guy said something to the other guy," and then he put it together and it's this putting together thing, it's not we just talked like mates in the room. It's a case of this person at this management level said something to that person at a lower level, this lower-level said something to that person at a high level, and then that person responded to the other one. I'm thinking, "Oh my goodness, that's complicated."</p>	<p>Soft-language (body language and eye contact) supports / affects understanding</p>	
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Table 36: Excerpts, themes, and Codes Extracted from the Component of Language

Table 37: Themes and Codes that Explain the Impact of Prior Knowledge on the Hiring Process

Excerpt	Theme	Code
17.: <i>I didn't know much detail about the culture or the people here before I traveled here. I finished one project, I got a project here. I got the time enough to get a visa and then obviously read a few things about culture, but it didn't really provide much window for me.</i>	Not much detail, light reading	Consultants' Limited stock of prior knowledge
16.: <i>I had no preconceived notion, seriously, not at all.</i>	No Knowledge	
18.: <i>We were fairly ignorant, I would have known very little about Saudi culture, Saudi business, Saudi people, because the country the way it is, you don't have visitors unless on pilgrimage.</i>	Fairly Ignorant	
21.: <i>It's going to be easy money ... my perception was that they (the Saudis) were, you know, very low, not prepared, not educated. Everybody in Spain relates Saudi to the visits from the king and everybody knows that three hundred Mercedes that he brought and that three thousand people that always go with him.</i>	A country where easy money can be made because of wealth	Consultants' Considerable stock of inaccurate knowledge
24.: <i>Rich, always welcome to spend money, sometimes ridiculous, especially when outside of the kingdom, not well-established outside the oil industry in regards of corporate readiness and international marketplace</i>	A country where easy money can be made because of wealth and Backwardness	
18.: <i>Any perceptions I would have would have been quite negative.</i>	Negative perceptions	Consultants' Considerable stock of inaccurate and negative knowledge
19.: <i>When I first came here, my first reaction was that I am going to be killed ... like "Oh, my God, are you sending me there? They are going to kill me, what is going on?" I had a concern for my safety, that would be the first thing ... This mainly, the region was in turmoil, people weren't happy with us and as an American.</i>	Concerns about wellbeing and friendliness	
26.: <i>One goes with caution ... that means that spontaneity is usually not the way you approach things here ... It affects your life here. Working as part of your life here. So yes, it does get affected. The friendships you are going to establish with locals gets affected.</i>	Concerns about wellbeing and friendliness	
1.: <i>But they found that it's the royal decree it's all that they are after. . .</i>	Consultants are looking for easy money through targeting Royal Decrees	
1.: <i>Just putting something copy-paste from the resource of information somewhere else and just change some words.</i>	Consultants are not taking the client seriously	

Table 38 contd.: Themes and Codes that Explain the Impact of Prior Knowledge on the Hiring Process

Excerpt	Theme	Code
<i>22.: I present myself as a person that lives in the region and that is from Spain and that has Arab origin, because that's true.</i>	Familiarity through experience in the region	Consultants' Considerable stock of accurate knowledge
<i>25.: There are some similarities I guess, between our cultures. I think it matters, when I arrived at the airport people talked to me in Arabic and they were all surprised that I wasn't speaking Arabic. The people have dealt with me, like my client counterparty, I think it was mainly because we share the same value, we share the same passion for what we do.</i>	Similarities in looks, values, and passion	
<i>22.: I have Arab origin because pretty obviously, you cannot take pictures of me with recording machine, but my father comes from Andalusia, Andalusia had a huge influence of the Arab world, therefore we have a lot of values and culture and cultural elements in Spanish culture based or coming from the Arab world.</i>	Similarities in looks, values, and origins	
<i>27.: So, I worked through a partner who was a Lebanese guy. He was an excellent marketer, he's still an excellent marketer.</i>	Having a partner with accurate local knowledge	

Table 39: Themes and Codes that Explain the Impact of Clients' and Consultants' Power Distance on the Hiring Process

Excerpt	Theme	Code
<p><i>24.: I need to do whatever is needed to understand them. Do I always understand them entirely, question mark, because certain things are not discussed openly, to understand maybe a political or personal hidden agenda. I think there are three things, usually, that you need to understand from your client. One is what they want. The other one is what they need, and the other one is what is his hidden agenda. When the three of them are aligned, it's excellent. When what they want, and they need are not aligned, it can come to a bad plan, right? But the most difficult part is hidden one they because it's not so evident.</i></p>	<p>Hidden agenda: openness</p>	<p>Clients' Self-centered decision making</p>
<p><i>27.: I believe it's a lack of honesty. That's what I think it is. There's basically three main factors, I think, you need to look at. One is power, the other one is ego, third one is money. Not all of them, but a lot of people in power positions or so-called power positions are so egocentric, are so directed towards themselves that it is very difficult, and sometimes nearly impossible to work with them.</i></p>	<p>Hidden agenda: Lack of honesty and ego</p>	
<p><i>27.: In most of the cases if not all, people were just looking to, you know, upgrade their own position without really looking at the overall real benefit for the organization in the end.</i></p>	<p>Gaining personal interests: Climbing the hierarchal ladder</p>	
<p><i>21.: My experience is that most of the people I work with were looking for hierarchy in an individual way and showing off in an individual way. It's funny because everybody was like, "I did this."</i></p>	<p>Gaining personal interests: Climbing the hierarchal ladder Show off</p>	
<p><i>12.: A general manager wants to design solutions that makes him look good, helps him to maybe progress in his career, more than really tackling the project and solving it.</i></p>	<p>Gaining personal interests: Climbing the hierarchal ladder Show off</p>	

Excerpt	Theme	Code
4.: <i>They really look highly at them. They think: 'They are North American consultants, genius proposals will come from them', even if as I said, the same idea is said many times by our hospital (staff).</i>	Western superiority	Powerful Clients' Personal interests: Legitimacy construction
10.: <i>I get proposals from an international consultation firm and a local one and they are very close in terms of the commercial proposal - by default you will select the international. Why? Because you will assume they are better.</i>	International superiority	
5.: <i>A lot of success here [is] based on you know X company engaged with that firm and you know they had came up with a vision and you know they start to see the value of their engagement.</i>	Reputation: Local Success stories	
12.: <i>(If) such well-known consultants have been behind it, so you're ok, nobody will blame you in the future.</i>	Reputation: Well-known name	
19.: <i>I have traveled to some 76 countries already. So, going in to Saudi was, it is a country, it's not a big deal ... it is another country, another place to work and it wasn't a major deal moving into a different area was not at difficult thing for me.</i>	Traveling to many countries (International Experience)	Consultants' overwhelming sense of power
3.: <i>They come with this understanding that, you know, 'I did it all around the world, why I would fail in a place like Saudi Arabia!'</i>	Working in different parts of the world (International Experience)	
22.: <i>I am lucky in the sense that Palladium as an organization is the global leader in the strategy implementation and has one of the most regarding methodologies for strategy implementation and strategy management. So, our best practice worldwide is recognized I would say they are applicable all over the world because they have been applied all over the world.</i>	Relying on the superiority in a certain subject: Strategy Implementation (Organizational Resources)	
25.: <i>Accenture definitely lies on knowledge, sits on a huge mountain of knowledge. It's sort of like the Internet, the Google. You have terabytes and terabytes of information which you could not possibly process in a single lifetime.</i>	Relying on the size of the organizational knowledge system (Organizational Resources)	

Table 40: Themes and Codes that Explain the Impact of Consultants’ Experience in Their Ability to Accommodate Implicit and Explicit Cultural Elements

Excerpt	Themes	Codes
<i>6.: With the British company, to send us school transportation (options), they thought to throw the boys and girls to use the same bus, which is not happening in Saudi.</i>	Segregation Between males and females	Gender issue
<i>6.: They gave us one solution to have bus assembly point for the girls which cannot be happening. The starting point would be at 5 o'clock in the morning. Our culture does not allow the girls to walk alone in the road to the assembly point.</i>	Guardianship of Males on Females	
<i>22.: The male and female issue in Saudi. And the segregation between them now the country is more open to be honest with you not like before but still we have this business problem. Small example one of the consultants coming from UK to do quality assurance for the exam that we are doing. They request us put a camera on each PC while the students do the exam. And all the female rejected this so the project was stopped.</i>	Segregation between males and females	
<i>3.: They [low-experienced consultant] were worried about the way they would deal with us. Because it's at the end it's not only the traditions it's also the personal way of the female character. I would think they would be worried and kind of cautious.</i>	Confusion and caution with Saudi females	
<i>22.: Especially in formal working space. The veil, it creates a huge barrier, it brings a lot of (bad perceptions) for westerners. It creates a lot of rejection in our inner values. At least for me it creates ... It's the matter of some of the fears or some of the underlying values about gender equality between and especially with the Burqa.</i>	Confusion and caution with Saudi females	
<i>24.: I have seen some these experiences. Some very shy females who highly protected from the family and because of that they have difficulties to communicate with me as a foreign man. The other are extremely open-minded, communicated in all the way, are doing jokes etc. I have both. And what I recognize quite often the females are more passionate about things than the males, maybe the males are sometimes more lazy than females.</i>	Major personal differences between Saudi females	
<i>3.: Some of them would agree on things some other will not. Some of them will not really be open and speaking with strangers especially men. . .cannot go get coffee together.</i>	Major personal differences between Saudi females	

Excerpt	Themes	Codes
17.: <i>I do work with Saudi women, I have the good fortune of one my customers that is the most... I want to say the right thing... most dependable most reliable, one of the ones that if I need something I can ask her and she will get it done, because I've had better experience with her than her male counterparts. So, I do work with her quite frequently, I'm actually just starting a part aspect of the project where I am working with her more and her team, and her team is entirely women.</i>	Major personal differences between Saudi females	Gender issue
22.: <i>I think, again, Saudi females is a very big group. [There are] very traditional Saudi females, very western Saudi females. In this spectrum you have everything.</i>	Major personal differences between Saudi females	
3.: <i>This needs to be defined as a risk, it's a communication risk. You know what I mean? I cannot reach you if something happened, or I cannot really interact with you normally if I see you on corridor just to tell you something or just to talk to you. So, I think that it should be highlighted as a risk with the international consultant. I can see it as a risk because it will delay the communication it will delay a lot of things; the way people interact with each other and other would affect the overall outcome.</i>	Communication style with Saudi females	
22.: <i>Obviously, there's an element of communication, not being in the same room, not being able to spend the same time together. Here the communication there's a lot of number, communication a lot of touching and you can't touch woman, that makes it different. Male communications completely different from female.</i>	Communication style with Saudi females	
8.: <i>I believe our culture is an emotional culture and I'm not sure about other cultures, but I believe it's less emotional in their culture than our culture. If there are emotions in the equation, of course it will affect it.</i>	Emotional culture distinguishes SA	
21.: <i>There is a strong sense of feelings. I remember a couple of meetings with a very senior guy and he was asking about how is he going to feel? And we like, you're running a business</i>	Emotional culture distinguishes SA	
1.: <i>We are emotional. So, when the consultant going from a professional mode to a friendship mode then we'd be flexible with him. Even when he's not delivering exactly what we need we can accept it.</i>	Emotional culture distinguishes SA	
12.: <i>We hate criticism, so if you find a consultant that is very tough and honest, usually he will be cast out. They don't want to work with them, they want to work with somebody . . . (who) will do it in a very delicate way and that affects the way you really can have transfer of knowledge between cultures, especially between Saudis and others.</i>	Critical of criticism and painful reality Need for delicacy	

Excerpt	Themes	Codes
<p>19.: <i>Either (he) has been too firm and then he has found his exit Visa waiting for him, because somebody didn't like that. Because it doesn't take much in the Government context as I said that deep culture, to offend somebody. It really is very easy to do that, you don't have to say much, you can just have an opinion and suddenly, "Who do you think you are? You're the guy who has dropped this opinion." I don't think like that. And then, you are done for the rest of your life. You will never fix your relationship with that person.</i></p>	<p>Critical of firm interactions</p> <p>Easy to offend others</p> <p>Fragile relationships</p>	<p>Intensive role of emotions</p>
<p>19.: <i>You never ever talk down to somebody, and also you never raised at that issue that could leave the person give him a bad face, give him the feeling amongst their colleagues that they have done badly. You never do that.</i></p>	<p>Need for delicacy</p> <p>Critical of losing face</p>	
<p>26.: <i>"It's very difficult in the Saudi culture to say, "I made a mistake." The other that I was saying about, losing face. It's disrespectful to tell somebody that they haven't performed. It's often a very circuitous way, you have to go through the back and somebody else needs to say it, or you have to camouflage and assign that person to another project so that you don't have to tell them that they have a failure in the current one</i></p>	<p>Critical of losing face</p> <p>Shame of failure</p> <p>Confrontation avoidance</p>	
<p>1.: <i>We are emotional. So, when the consultant going from a professional mode to a friendship mode then we'd be flexible with him. Even when he's not delivering exactly what we need we can accept it. . . we accept incomplete deliverables because he's our friend, so we have emotions with him.</i></p>	<p>Socialization leads to softness with consultants and increases vulnerability of clients</p>	<p>Unwillingness to socialize</p>
<p>1.: <i>Making such thing (Socialising) with him would make it go from the professional more to the social. And I am your friend and you cannot attack me in the meeting you cannot send me tough emails. And if you send him tough email then he will come to your office and say what's wrong let's discuss with lunch and these things and try to sort these things this way. Ok, but if you are tough with them from the beginning they will respect you and they will think one hundred time before they send you an email or garbage to you.</i></p>	<p>Socialization leads to softness with consultants and increases vulnerability of clients</p>	

Excerpt	Themes	Codes
<p>17.: <i>For us, especially as consultants, part of our success is developing trusting relationships with client, and that has been a challenge for me obviously being a Westerner, I have many clients I've worked with across many international boundaries, I will go with them for dinner and we will have events, things like this, I've been here (In Saudi Arabia) for two years I have yet to experience that. So, I think, that's been a bit of a challenge to ... I think that ... in this culture they don't separate their social lives so much between work and personal, so their friends are their colleagues, but that's limited to the people that they are locals, that they're working with. If you are international, you still an outsider.</i></p>	<p>Difficult to socialize with Saudi clients</p> <p>Clients' inability to separate professional life from work</p>	<p>Unwillingness to socialize</p>
<p>12.: <i>Usually they (the international consultants) work to deadlines and strict timelines and we like to have it the 'Inshallah' (God's will) way -so we'll do it next Sunday, but you know what? If I couldn't make it on Sunday, let's have it on Thursday.</i></p>	<p>Flexible in meeting deadlines</p>	<p>Lack of sense of urgency</p>
<p>22.: <i>That's why meetings can extend and extend, and people are comfortable, explain and then from here to another point ... that's where the Spanish piece of me brings an advantage to the table. There's also British that get anxious with the timing and I don't do that.</i></p>	<p>Extended meetings</p>	
<p>17.: <i>I think another piece, their respect for punctuality, some cultures are very respectful for punctuality and here I find that that's not the case, especially for early start meetings.</i></p>	<p>Respect for punctuality</p>	

Table 41: Themes and Codes that Explain the Impact of Consultants' Experience in Their Ability to Accommodate Power Dynamics at the Client Side

Excerpts	Themes	Codes
<p>17.: <i>They (top management) want to delegate that down to people that are not responsible. I think, certainly (not) so in Western cultures, the managers want to be more informed, they want to be more involved about making decisions. But (in Saudi Arabia) it's kind of a flip side here and, even though the managers don't want to get involved, there is a sense of delegation.</i></p>	<p>Interaction takes place mostly with the less powerful</p>	<p>Interaction with powerless clients</p>
<p>7.: <i>If it's on my level, I have to say what I think in a way that doesn't conflict with top management. I try to say it in a nice way but if they still insist on it, we will do it the way they (the top management) like.</i></p>	<p>Feedback depends on avoiding conflict with higher management</p>	
<p>21.: <i>It's very difficult to get feedback or influence from the bottom. For two reasons. One, because it doesn't work ... Secondly, because it's usually very high hierarchy, it's too much of, "Okay that's what my boss said."</i></p>	<p>Feedback depends on avoiding conflict with higher management</p>	
<p>17.: <i>So, even though the manager doesn't want to get involved, the employee doesn't want to take the decision, we end up in a lot of paralysis, because you have one that's scared to make a decision, you have another that's doesn't want to make a decision, so you are stuck. It has been a huge challenge for us actually.</i></p>	<p>Junior Clients are un-willing to take instant decisions (Avoiding conflict)</p>	
<p>10.: <i>If the middle management didn't understand the actual need from that project from the top management but he still responsible (the consultant) - he's the one that's accountable for that delivery. This is his problem.</i></p>	<p>Consultants are responsible for verifying feedback and requirements</p>	
<p>10.: <i>If he's brilliant (the consultant) and he knows, he'll actually try to get to the top management himself so that he can interact with him bypassing his sponsor ... But, it depends on how the consultant and management are working.</i></p>	<p>Consultants are responsible for verifying feedback and requirements</p>	

Excerpts	Themes	Codes
<p>5.: <i>Well, you know we can get on the subject that we discussed with five, six stakeholders, however no one will be able to make that decision they will be probably conflicting with each other. And I think this is also one of the probably key challenges for any firm that may come to any organisation because you (referring to the interviewer as a consultants) will sit with their heads, with the directors, and when you give some business and mix that with other who's working the same organisation and have different vision of what have been proposed and if both have a big conflict that is not really addressed properly.</i></p>	<p>Conflict between decision makers</p>	<p>Interacting with self-centered powerful clients</p>
<p>2.: <i>Because they have the power, they will have their say in the project because they have this power. Unfortunately, as you know, when a project gets started and we submit the data, we start building and testing, they come at the end or before the end and say, 'This is not going to work, we need it to be done this way,' and it's going to cause delays and problems.</i></p>	<p>Powerful clients seeking to deviate the project to their personal favour</p>	
<p>3.: <i>Oh, yes, (making a lot of Exceptions in the development of processes) is our problem from the beginning. That the exceptions have become more than the norms ... So, it's like by using their power, their connections, things happen ... The consultant comes and tells you "This is the way out, you have to have your services listed and you have to follow a certain way of managing your incident," let's say that. And following certain KPI with our users. And we put them down we start working and people would come and say: "you know, this can't be applied on me", "you know I need to personally go and offer my services to someone without going through your incident management service like request from that way that everyone is supposed to go through ... "I will now look more powerful." "I wanna build my connections", "I wanna build my way out through this." Then, things get corrupted.</i></p>	<p>Powerful clients seeking to deviate the project to their personal favour is the norm</p>	
<p>8.: <i>Well, the international consultants, of course, will follow the lead of the man of power. If I am the man of power, his work will be affected by the direction I am giving Well, the international consultants, of course, will follow the lead of the man of power. If I am the man of power, his work will be affected by the direction I am giving.</i></p>	<p>Experienced consultants follow the lead of the most powerful</p>	
<p>13.: <i>I realise with my experience of consultants that work within Saudi Arabia, they want to see which direction you want to go with and they try to lean it for you and put it in their words and documents. Because there is a culture in Saudi Arabia "let's go with the decision maker."</i></p>	<p>Experienced consultants lean towards the interests of the most powerful</p>	

Table 42: Themes and Codes that Explain the Impact of Consultants' Experience in Their Ability to Predict and Accommodate Clients' Perceptions about Implementation Task

Excerpts	Themes	Codes
<p>1.: <i>They don't have experience working with the consultant. They think that the consultant is like a butler for them. So, I can bring him every day I tell him what I want, and you need to find the solution no matter what, it's not my problem. So, you need to have the right skill and the right knowledge to make sure that the scope of work of that consultant is covering of your need.</i></p>	<p>Consultants are perceived as butlers</p>	<p>Low experience leads to different perceptions about scope of work (Status-Based Relationship)</p>
<p>10.: <i>I have seen a lot of people are very negative because he thinks that this consultant is supposed to worship him and give him whatever he wants and things like this.</i></p>	<p>Consultants should worship clients</p>	
<p>17.: <i>I think one of the differences that I've seen here in Saudi is that the Saudi clients typically want you to do most of the work ... they want you to not only provide the consulting, but they want you to be the operator as well, they want you to do the work as opposed to, for example, different cultures, specifically the US, my experience in South America as well as Europe has been that they more want you to consult and then move out of the way and let them do the work. They are trying to get you to help to better their operation, improve their operation as opposed to here where consultant is really also an extension of the team. They want you to be not just to consult.</i></p>	<p>Consultants perceived as doers rather than thinkers</p>	
<p>22.: <i>There are many clients, the consultant cannot do the job of the clients and that is something clients need to understand. Consultants can help you, but you have to do your part of the work. And the magic solution that the consultant does something, and it's solved is sometimes in imagination of many clients, it's not true. And the Western world has learned that, so consultants are very useful, but you need teams inside that are able to transform what consultants are giving into tangible value.</i></p>	<p>Consultants perceived as doers rather than thinkers</p>	
<p>17.: <i>As a consultant it is challenging, because I have a finance to go by. I cannot possibly do the operations for them ... Sometimes that is easier, but in the long run that doesn't make me successful, because I need to consult and then move on to the next client. It's a cultural aspect.</i></p>	<p>Consultants perceived as doers rather than thinkers</p>	
<p>13.: <i>I'm dealing with the consultant [as] a colleague more than a consultant [who] will do me a favour – Just someone helping me to find an answer. He is not giving me the answer.</i></p>	<p>Consultants perceived as 'colleagues' and helpers</p>	<p>Experience reduces the chances of clashes (Contractual Relationship)</p>

Excerpts	Themes	Codes
<p>13.: <i>Because the one who works in Saudi Arabia, he came to realise that, 'Ok. I need to work closely with the clients to draft the RFP or scoping this.' Then he will work with them to deliver, which is not a normal situation outside of Saudi Arabia.</i></p>	<p>Experienced consultants explicitly set the scope with clients</p>	
<p>27.: <i>So, one of the mistakes I've made in the beginning when I was working in Saudi Arabia was that I tried to take my side-line rule in the development process the way I did in the Western companies. Teaching people, directing people, redirecting them, explaining them, giving them an example and whatever, and then expecting them to actually go out there and do it. And I had to change that dramatically in Saudi Arabia, I had to change it in such a way, and it's not a bad thing actually. But, I had to change this in such a way that I had to jump into the change process and walk with them through the change process. Actually, do it together with them. Once, twice, three times four times, five times. As many times as needed, until they actually got the whole thing and said, 'Okay, that's the way to do it' ... So, the learning process is a little bit more intensive.</i></p>	<p>Experienced consultants prepare for clients' implicit perceptions</p>	<p>Experience reduces the chances of clashes (Contractual Relationship)</p>

Table 43: Themes and Codes that Explain the Impact of Appropriation of Power Structure on Advice Implementation

Excerpts	Themes	Codes
22.: <i>One of the things that for me is difficult to accept, not to learn, but to accept, is this. In the GCC and especially in Saudi as well, the hierarchy is pretty strong. In general, hierarchy, the decision-making, commands, it is extremely hierarchical. (Context suggests difficulty in approving advice)</i>	Saudi workplaces are extremely hierarchal	Hierarchal approvals
1.: <i>So, you cannot jump and just go to the minister ... You need to go, follow the protocol and go now to those people they will take it they will escort it to the upper level then they even ... they discuss it there <u>and then</u> they can take it from there.</i>	Hierarchal structures and protocols delay approvals	
2.: <i>Sometimes a director or a head gets changed on that day and someone else comes in his place, who doesn't share his views and completely changes the way things are being done.</i>	Change in decision-makers may delay or block approvals	Central approvals
2.: <i>They show their expressions or their dislike or discomfort of why this is being done. And they will state it clearly and say, "I don't care what that person before me has said, I want it to be done this way and that way."</i>	Change in decision-makers who request changes that lead to delays	
2.: <i>The head or the new department leader or someone has left the project and assigned someone else and that person, 1) he doesn't know the history of the project or its main objectives and 2) he doesn't see the rush now or the reasoning why we're doing it the way we are.</i>	Change in decision-makers may delay or block approvals	
3.: <i>We start working and people would come and say, 'you know, this can't be applied on me', 'you know I need to personally go and offer my services to someone without going through your incident management service', 'I will now look more powerful,. 'I wanna build my connections', 'I wanna build my way out through this.' Then, things get corrupted. We have to go back to consultancy, come fix what we have. I'm not saying we have corrupted things, but we said things are out of control.</i>	Powerful clients ask for changes that lead to personal gains	Interference of powerful clients during advice implementation
3.: <i>Like everyone want to reach, I would say, a specific outcome or specific things ... regardless how the whole organisation is going. So, it's like by using their power, their connections, things happen. Things happen, and it's applied on everyone. And it's ok you know they can get away with it. It's fine, it's legal ... I was kind of only implementing those and it didn't work. We had to get other consultants to correct our mistakes. They said the same things.</i>	Powerful clients ask for changes that lead to personal gains	

<p>9.: <i>And one more thing, even though the person who has that power keeps criticising the work of this contractor until people believe that this is rubbish, we should not apply it. We wasted our money, it's better to keep in the drawers than we apply it in our company or entity.</i></p>	<p>Running propaganda to implant fear to problematize unwanted change</p>	<p>Interference of powerful clients during advice implementation</p>
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