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THE CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

Голованова В. І., студентка, ННІ права СумДУ, гр. П-52а

What is Culture? This word has several meanings, all derived from its Latin source, which refers to the tilling of the soil. Culture is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment, which is where it was learned. Culture consists of the unwritten rules of the social game. It is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others. Culture has got a great impact on the international business, especially on negotiations, marketing, cooperation and some visible trade features. Before considering in what specific ways culture influences business, we should define the term of culture and clarify its aspects.

It is generally known that culture comprises language, religion, social institutions, education, political and economic systems, national philosophy, and symbols. Therefore, when we speak about the influence of culture on business, these aspects should be considered, especially the key impacts of language, religion, and social institutions. When we analyze the power of these three cultural elements, a great impact of culture on the international business will become quite obvious.

It is common knowledge that language is one of the most important factors that have influence on the international business. Throughout history different groups have come into contact and there has been a need for a common language enabling business partners to communicate and exchange their ideas. Global trade and commerce are a constant exchange of information. The intensification of exchange in our global world has dramatically increased the need for a common language.

More and more often this common language is English, considered by many to be today's lingua franca. That is why the influence of English speaking cultures on global business is obvious. English is the dominant language of global trade. English proficiency is now seen by business as a generic skill much like computing skills or numeracy which people in international trade are assumed to possess. Nevertheless, one should bear in

mind that every language has some taboo words and idioms, which are likely to cause problems.

The second major aspect, which plays an important role in the world of business, is religion. The impact of religion in the business world varies from country to country, according to the legal system of each, the homogeneity of the religious creeds and their tolerance with other religions. Religion also affects the type of products that consumers buy. This factor cannot be ignored, especially in those states, where religion lays down a set of fundamental principles and values which govern the behavior and lives of its adherents. Religious beliefs can influence trading behavior in two ways. The first one is that sharing the same religious belief often implies sharing similar values. And the second, each religion has its own ethical standpoint towards the activity of trading.

The third one is social institutions. They are defined as a complex of norms, organized around the preservation of a basic societal value. It is also believed that the very nature of social institutions that produce values or standards of good and bad can also encourage justifications of sanctioned behavior. Societies differ in relation to their social stratification. The caste system affects the way people relate to each other and the level of mobility inside the society, while in countries where social stratification is less important communication is free and open and the level of mobility inside the society is very high. Also some societies are centered in individualism, while other societies are based on collective and group work.

In conclusion, culture with its great power has impact on the international business in many aspects, like languages, religions, social institutions, and consequently on every business function - managing workforce, marketing, negotiations, dealing with regulators, etc. English has become a symbol of today's business and speaking it means sharing and being part of a global business culture through which local barriers can be overcome. On the other hand, culture is changing due to the unparalleled increase of international communication and population, immigration, which spur business people to keep pace with the culture change in different countries or societies.

Керівник: Дорда С. В., кандидат філологічних наук