National culture and its impact on the relational integration and performance of Supply Chains: case of Morocco

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to explore the determinants of Moroccan culture and analyze their influence on the relational integration and the performance of Supply Chains, by answering the following research question: Does Moroccan culture present favorable characteristics to the relational integration of Supply Chains?
Given the fact that the relational integration of Supply Chains represents the cornerstone of the philosophy of Supply Chain Management, a crucial source of the performance of the whole of links of Supply Chain, and an origin of the durability of their relations. And since the national culture showed its influence on values and lifestyles, on negotiations, and on behavior and ethics. Consequently, we can estimate that national culture can have influence on the relational integration and the performance of Supply Chains, and the building of trust between partners.
The methodology adopted is both qualitative and quantitative, and is inscribed in the framework of moderate positivist epistemological position. The combination of methods will lead us to identify and more understand our research problematic.

KEYWORDS: Supply Chain Management, Integration, Trust, durability, Moroccan Companies.

1   INTRODUCTION

One of the most remarkable trends on which it is necessary for companies to focus on is globalization. In the past, the majority of organizations were competing with other companies in their country of origin or their area. Today, companies enumerate multiple partners everywhere in the world, are supplied out of raw materials, require services, develop alliances and distribute their products in all the continents.

From now on, companies are requested to build powerful relations with their partners; based mainly on trust, and to integrate their Supply Chains, in order to achieve perfectly the discounted goals. There is a consensus [1] in the literature on the fact that the higher the level of the relations with the partners of Supply Chain is, the more the visibility of the operational activities of the suppliers is large. That will generate a certain transparency and will contribute to the creation of a platform on which information can be communicated between the actors. The integration of Supply Chains improves the sharing of information, by generating relations based on trust [2]. Moreover, the deepening of the links based on Supply Chains encourages the resolution of conflicts and supports reactivity and flexibility between all the actors.

In general, trust can be defined as the deep conviction that the associate with whom the exchange took place is honest and/or benevolent. Trust, thus defined, is regarded as a covering shock absorber of the long-term stability and the success of inter organizational relations [3]**.**

As Arrow [4] calls it, it is lubricating social relations that ensure their durability. Researchers endeavor to show the function of trust in the cost cutting of transaction [4] in the stability of the relations and the reduction of conflicts [4] and in

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the reduction in risks [5]. Some among these researchers, in particular [6], consider that trust is a mechanism of coordination which comes to supplement the other mechanisms of coordination identified by [7]. Finally, trust can only represent one crucial factor, inevitable and antecedent of the integration of Supply Chains and the durability of the relations of their links.

However, the study of the integration of Supply Chains, as well cannot be carried out, without the taking into account of a significant component responsible for their success or their failure, that of national culture. Indeed, much of recent studies indicate that the practices of management and their effectiveness amply change from one country to another. Such variations are inherent in the multiplicity of values and cultural beliefs [8].

The goal of this research article is to explore the determinants of Moroccan culture, and to analyze how its characteristics participate to support the integration of Supply Chains, by focusing on the relational aspect of the integration of Supply Chains, and that, by basing our work on a mediating variable which is trust.

2 NATIONAL CULTURE AND THE RELATIONAL INTEGRATION OF SUPPLY CHAINS: THEORETICAL BASES AND DEBATE

Morocco illustrates a country which has an enormous potential of improvement of the competitiveness of its economy, in particular through a considerable logistics, optimizing and ordering all flows of goods. So Morocco implemented the National strategy of Development of the Logistic Competitiveness (2010-2015), which will release the crucial answers for the radiation of logistics and which seeks to register the Kingdom of Morocco in the most powerful Supply Chains.

The taking into account of the national culture in the integration of Supply Chains, remains a central point to evoke during the adoption of this new way of managing, in order to contribute to its success.

This research article has as an interest, to explore the determinants of the Moroccan culture and to analyze their impact on the integration of Supply Chains. That while answering the following question: Does the Moroccan culture show characteristics favorable to the relational integration of Supply Chains?

Our research task fits in several theoretical fields, since it combines two disciplinary fields namely: the integration of Supply Chains and national culture and since its goal is to study the influence of national culture on the integration of Supply Chains and trust between the various partners.

The theoretical fields of our article will be presented as follows:

2.1 THE MODEL OF THE NATIONAL CULTURE OF GEERT HOFSTEDE

In order to treat the determinants of the national culture, we chose the model of Geert Hofstede. Although various cultural models are proposed in the literature, and in spite of much criticism [9], the applicability of the model of Hofstede in the work registered in sciences of management and its validity, remains remarkable, compared to other cultural models [9]. The model of Hofstede is also adopted in work which aims at the comparison between national cultures [10]. Finally, the model of Hofstede represents the model founder of the national culture, and shows a certain facility of comprehension, with a clear explanation of the determinants of the national culture.

The national culture can be defined according to [10], like mental programming; because this programming begins inside the family, and develops, then, at school, in the district, in the workplaces and generally in the life in group.

Social anthropology shows that the national culture is in addition in the ways of thinking, acting and feeling. The national culture, according to Hofstede, is thus, the collective programming of the spirit which differentiates members of a group from members of another group.

The model of Geert Hofstede is composed of five principal dimensions of the national culture:

- **The hierarchical distance**

The hierarchical distance is defined by [11], as the perception of the degree of inequality of power between a subordinate and his superior. This determinant refers to the degree of inequality expected and accepted by individuals. In companies with strong hierarchical distance, power is centralized and leadership is exerted in an autocratic and coercive way [12]. Contrary to countries where the hierarchical distance is weak, the emphasis is placed on equality and co-operation.

- **Individualistic or Community orientation**

According to Hofstede, the distinction between national cultures can also be achieved through the relations that the individuals maintain with the other members of the community.

This dimension refers to the importance given by an individual to his own person or to his entourage. In companies marked by individualism, individuals are concerned more about their own interests and of their immediate environment [13]. However, in countries with Community culture, the importance is given to the emotional ties and the relationships linking the members of the community.

- **The relation with uncertainty and ambiguity**

This third dimension refers to the degree of tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity. The level of control of uncertainty means the degree to which individuals of a culture accept ambiguous, risky, unforeseeable, not-structured, and even anarchistic situations. It also refers to the manner with which these members react to this unpredictability [14].

The control of uncertainty can be highlighted through, research forecast plans and tools of stability and order. The small degree of control of uncertainty, results in taking risks, and confrontation with ambiguous future events.

- **Male or female orientation of values**

Male cultures attach great significance to the values of success and possession, whereas female cultures focus especially, on values of mutual aid and empathy, in a preoccupation with social cohesion.

- **Short-term orientation and long-term orientation**

Cultures with short-term orientation are cultures which respect tradition, the execution of social obligations, and consider that service to others is an important goal. These cultures have as   principal values of work: freedom, respect of rights, success and personal blooming.

Cultures with long-term orientation encourage perseverance, precaution and the direction of savings. These cultures have like fundamental values of work: training, honesty, responsibility and self-discipline. Considering that we study the determinants of the Moroccan culture, and to respect and reflect to the maximum the reality of our context of research, we will add another determinant even if it does not appear in the model of Hofstede, that of religiosity.

Indeed, although religiosity does not appear among the determinants of national culture suggested by Hofstede, we consolidate our choice by former work [14], which integrated religiosity, in order to better apprehend some companies characterized by religion. The latter can, indeed, play the part of an explanatory factor of the attitudes, behaviors and relations with others.

The Moroccan society, precisely, is mainly marked by religion [14] and as already confirmed of Geertz [15], the Moroccan culture is characterized by a strong attachment to religion.

2.2   THE TRANSACTION COSTS THEORY (OLIVER E. WILLIAMSON)

The subject of the integration of Supply Chains can be approached through various theories; one of these principal theories is the transaction costs theory [16], because this theory is mainly interested in the subjects of collaboration, alliances and inter-organizational relations in general.

- **General presentation of the transaction costs theory**

The transaction costs theory suggests as a basic element, that markets and organizations are modes of coordination of exchanges. It is by comparing transaction costs on the market with those required by the hierarchy, that the adequate form of governance becomes clear. Oliver E. Williamson is the chief of wire of the economy of transaction costs. In addition to the proposal for assumptions of behavior at the base of this theory, this author reflected on the most adequate forms of governance according to the characteristics of transactions

He also covered the issue of the intermediate forms of governance, those which are located halfway between the market and the hierarchy (alliances, joint-ventures, franchises…). And finally, he studies the types of contracts to extract a general theory from the choice of the forms of governance. The transaction costs theory rests on assumptions of behavior, which one assigns to an individual similar to homo-contractor. It is limited rationality and opportunism.

Limited rationality is defined like the limits of the cognitive capacities of individuals, who allow making satisfactory decisions rather than optimal decisions. Opportunism is defined as the research of personal interest by means of fraud, trick, or generally by sharing incomplete information. The transaction costs theory supposes that there exist economic reasons to make a choice between the market and the hierarchy, like means of coordination of exchanges. These reasons are related to the characteristics of the transactions, on which it is necessary to be based to choose the form of the most adequate governance. These characteristics are: the specificity of credits, uncertainty and the frequency.

The transaction costs theory is very relevant to cover issues relating to complex organizational relations and to also solve the problem of opportunism at times such as of inter company's exchanges. It is a useful theory to apprehend the evolution of modern and complex organizational structures, by explaining why the objective of inter organizational relations is focused on the cost cutting of transactions.

- **The integration of Supply Chains according to the optics of the transaction costs theory**

Lambert and Cooper [17] affirm that Supply Chain Management is the integration of the processes since the last user, via the suppliers who offer services and information, which guarantee added-value for customers and all the recipients. The integration of Supply Chains represents the major subject, and the key success factor of Supply Chain Management. This integration encourages the sharing of information concerning the key processes; the producers can react in a more flexible way to the individual requests of customers, reduce the time of delivery and lower the level of stocks [18].

According to the optics of the transaction costs theory, the integration of Supply Chains can be seen as a special mode of governance [19]**.** Its formation is influenced by the specific investments carried out by partners**,** and its formation also induces cost cutting and uncertainty and improves the performance. The integration of Supply Chains also reduces transaction costs, through the establishment of long-term relations with the partners.

The integration of Supply Chains reduces the costs resulting from the contract signature, and the costs of negotiation, because the producers share information with their customers in real time, and the time necessary for the negotiation becomes restricted.

The cost cutting of transaction is minimized by the integration of Supply Chains, starting from the building of trust and long-term relations with the partners. Through the integration of Supply Chains, information is shared throughout Supply Chain, and it is available in real time for all the links of the Supply Chain. That involves a great visibility and makes it possible to avoid the delay and the distortion of information and consequently, to reduce transaction costs generated by opportunism. On the other hand, the key factor of the success of an effective integration between the partners of a Supply Chain is trust. Without the foundation of trust between the various actors of the Supply Chain, no type of integration will reach the expected success. It should be noted that trust represents an element that is paramount and previous to the integration of Supply Chains.

2.3 THE THEORY OF COMMITMENT AND TRUST (ROBERT M. MORGAN AND SHELBY D. HUNT)

- **General presentation of the theory of the commitment and trust**

The theory of commitment and trust founded by Morgan and Hunt is a theory inspired of the field of marketing, which stipulates that the success of the relations in marketing requires the construction of commitment and trust. The development of the theory of commitment and trust was realized after the report that the co-operative aspect of the economic behaviours was neglected. The economists speak about the theories of pure competition, and are unaware of the theories of pure co-operation [20]**.**

However, the most important factor of the effectiveness of social organizations is the willingness of any person to trust another person, and the efficiency of the social groups which depends on the existence or the absence of trust [20] **.**

Morgan and Hunt [20] indicate that commitment and trust are the "keys", because they encourage marketers to protect and invest in the relations, through co-operation with partners, to resist the unforeseen events and to profit from the relations built for the long-term and, finally, to minimize the possible hazards inherent in the relations, by trusting their partners who will not act in an opportunist way. In short, for Morgan and Hunt, commitment and trust directly generate co-operative behaviors, which take part in the success of the relations in the field of marketing.

Commitment, according to Morgan and Hunt, is a relation during which an associate believes that the current relation with the others associated is very important, as for the efforts which must be provided to maintain it, and makes sure that it will last indefinitely. Trust, is when a part believes in the integrity of another part, affirm Morgan and Hunt. Like commitment, trust was largely studied in the literature of social exchanges [20]**.**

In strategic alliances, Mc Allister [20] shows that the greatest block to the success of alliances is the lack of trust. Morgan and Hunt theorize that trust is fundamental in all the social exchanges, and that trust leads to co-operation and collaboration, as well as to the construction of long-term relations with the partners. Co-operation according to the two authors is the only result which is directly related and is influenced by trust. Theoretical work as well as empirical research indicates that trust leads to co-operation.

- **Trust and Supply Chains integration**

The existing literature amply indicated that trust is relevant in Supply Chain Management, and showed that trust, is a predictive factor of the persons in charge of the positive results and performance in the context of Supply Chain [21].

The positive correlation which exists between trust and the performance of Supply Chain, remains notable in several types of industries, in particular, that of cars, the supplies of computers and electronic components [21]**.**

Thus, the performance generated by trust was checked by several researchers in terms of cost cutting and development of flexibility [22]**.** In inter organizational relations, the participants in the Supply Chain estimate that their associates will make what is better for the total system. By so doing, organizations are laid out to collaborate with their partners, because they suppose that these parts will not behave in an opportunist manner [23].

Indeed, trust also functions in Supply Chains as an abstract mechanism of governance, which facilitates inter organizational coordination [21] **.**Finally, when trust is present in the Supply Chain, the partners tend to behave in an altruistic way, for the good of the whole Supply Chain. The invaluable effect of trust in inter organizational relations is well treated in the literature. It is also analyzed according to several theories the most notable of which is the transaction costs theory. Within the framework of the latter the theory, trust reduces research, the cost of monitoring and control, as well as uncertainties in information sharing [24]**.**

In the studies of strategic management, trust was identified as a determining cause of inter organizational relations associated with adaptability and the behavior of associates [25], also adding, that trust does not leave a place for opportunism. Empirical research confirmed that trust and opportunism are substitutes one of the other [26].

3 THE IMPACT STUDY OF THE DETERMINANTS OF NATIONAL CULTURE ON THE RELATIONAL INTEGRATION OF SUPPLY CHAINS: MOROCCAN CONTEXT

In this article, we will focus on the relational aspect of the integration of Supply Chains. As a result, the taking into account of the cultural, ethical and relational aspects during the analysis of the integration of Supply Chains remains fundamental. We noticed through our review of the literature that the majority of research focuses on a quasi-exclusive way on operational and technological elements, allowing the installation of an effective integration of the links of Supply Chain, hence our choice of totally focusing on the relational optics of the integration of Supply Chains.

3.1 NATIONAL CULTURE

- **The hierarchical distance**

Various studies showed the strong hierarchical distance existing in Morocco [27]**.** And the EARTH project carried out by House, confirms the highest score of the hierarchical distance from Morocco, in 62 countries which are part of the study. These results join those of [14], which show that generally, countries with a high index of hierarchical distance are also countries that are collectivistic contrary to the individualistic countries where the degree of the hierarchical distance is weak.

- **Individualistic or Community orientation**

Many studies were interested in the Moroccan context [14], indicate that the Moroccan culture is characterized by an elevated level of collectivism. In addition, the results of Hofstede classify Morocco among collectivistic countries.

- **The relation with uncertainty and ambiguity**

The studies associated with the Moroccan context show that the Moroccan culture is characterized by a small degree of control of uncertainty [14]**.**According to [14] **,** Moroccans allot this low level of control of uncertainty and ambiguity to Islam and the notion of Maktoub. Indeed, the notion of Maktoub relieves people of the concern and anxiety caused by unforeseeable events.

- **Male or female orientation of values**

This dimension presents a problem in the Moroccan context. Work which was interested in this dilemma exposes contradictory results. Beside the score of Hofstede allotted to Morocco (53 for male values and 47 for the female values), the work of Nouiga [14] and that of Balambo [14], show that the Moroccan culture is dominated by a strong degree of femininity.

- **Short-term orientation and long-term orientation**

Hofstede [28] shows that in certain short-term directed Moslem cultures, the hesitation of migrants to change nationality, which involves having two passports, translates less national pride than religiosity. A national culture like that of Morocco, as **Hofstede** [10] indicates, encourages that highly. It does not conceive that a child of a large country can give up his citizenship.

Through, the passage quoted by Hofstede [28]**,** we can conclude that the Moroccan culture represents a culture whose orientation is short-term, based on the respect of the traditions and on conformity to social norms.

- **Religiosity**

The Moroccan company, mainly, is precisely marked by religion [14]**.** A range of work shows the religiosity of the Moroccan company [14].

In the following part, we will see which type of trust can be generated through these determinants of the Moroccan culture for, in the end, connecting national culture and trust.

3.2   COGNITIVE TRUST VS AFFECTIVE TRUST

Through our review of the literature on the existing types of trust, we adopted the typology of Mc Allister [29]**,** who explains in our opinion all the subjacent criteria to decide on. The typology of Mc Allister includes cognitive trust and affective trust. Cognitive trust is founded on individual information, reliability and dependence with regard to the other. This trust known as rational is based on the objective characteristics allotted to the partners [29], like responsibility, integrity, credibility and reliability. Whereas affective trust is based on attention, on the interpersonal emotions between the individuals, these emotional ties constitute the base of decision making towards others. This trust rests on benevolence, commitment and mutual respect.

3.3   LINKS BETWEEN THE NATIONAL CULTURE AND TRUST: ASSUMPTIONS

As already quoted previously, the Moroccan culture is a culture which is marked by a strong degree of hierarchical distance. This hierarchical distance strongly influences the process of attribution of trust. In fact, in countries with a strong hierarchical distance, importance is given to social status and the external signs. Consequently, the process of attribution of trust in these countries is done on the basis as of emotional criteria and generates, as a result, an affective trust. Taking into account these conclusions, we formulate our first assumption: **H1: A culture with a strong hierarchical distance is positively associated with an affective trust.**

The Moroccan culture is a culture marked by Community values, based on the importance of the entourage and the predisposition to mutual aid [30]. The partners tend to build emotional ties, and the community has more importance than the individual. This cohesion perceived between the partners is based, indeed, on emotional ties. The person profits from the benevolence and the protection of the group, to which he owes honesty on the other hand. The development process of trust between the partners is done then on emotional bases [14]**.** These conclusions consolidate the development of the second assumption: **H2: A Community culture is positively associated with an affective trust.**

According to our review of the literature, the Moroccan culture represents a culture with weak control of uncertainty. In similar cultures, risk taking is regarded as a usual fact. The behavior of the individuals is not marked by anxiety and maladjustment with new situations. People are more open and tolerate differences in opinion, and comply only with the fundamental formal rules, contrary to cultures with a strong control of uncertainty. Individuals belonging to such a culture appear more phlegmatic, slackened and contemplative [14].

Their relations with the other are marked by the search for benevolence and about attachment, they are not worried by the ambiguity of the future and their choices are based on intuition and affectivity. In such a culture, trust is developed through emotional processes [14]**.**

These theoretical elements, already quoted above bring us towards the formulation of the third assumption: **H3: A culture with weak control of uncertainty is positively associated with an affective trust**

Our review of the literature revealed to us that the Moroccan culture is a culture marked by a female orientation of values. In similar cultures, members are supposed to be modest, tender and are concerned with the quality of life [10], with an orientation towards co-operation, benevolence and altruism [10]. Individuals in female cultures focus on social relations,

mutual aid, where the collective interest dominates the individual one. They build their trust on the basis of quoted value. Members of a female culture support the development of a trust based on the affect [14].

These conclusions will consolidate the formulation of the fourth assumption: **H4: A culture with female orientation is positively associated with an affective trust.**

We concluded through our review of the literature that the Moroccan culture is part of the cultures identified by short-term orientation, and marked by the respect of traditions, of social obligations, altruism and the creation of relations. We can conclude that a culture with short-term orientation builds its process of decision making to allot trust on affective relational standards, and is based on the respect of the other. Through these elements, we can formulate our fifth assumption: **H5: A culture with short-term orientation is positively associated with an affective trust.**

Finally, and for the simple reason to respect our context of research as much as possible, we integrated religiosity as the sixth determinant characterizing national culture.

The review of the literature indicated to us that the Moroccan culture is marked by a strong religiosity. The individuals of such a culture are unaware of any projection in the future which implies a mobilization of objective processes of prediction, with the prevalence of abstract considerations and metaphysics. Cultures with a strong religiosity remain marked by a strong affectivity in the relations with partners, which relations are built around an ideology, common moral principles and identity resemblances. In this culture, the process of the construction of trust is based on an emotional process [14].

These elements support our sixth assumption: **H6: A culture with a strong religiosity is positively associated with an affective trust.**

3.4 RELATION BETWEEN TRUST AND THE INTEGRATION OF A SUPPLY CHAIN: ASSUMPTION

Through our review of the literature, we adopted the typology of integration indicated in the work of [31] and [32]. This typology is composed of two types of integrations; namely functional integration and relational integration.

Functional integration is based on impersonal elements, objectives which make it possible to integrate a Supply Chain. While relational integration, the one which interests us in this research, is founded on the development of actions of coordination, and of collaboration, which makes it possible to build "a relational and cultural osmosis" [33], an osmosis which could not be realized without an emotional investment in the relationship, expressing a sincere and detailed attention to the wellness of others [29], an investment which gives a singular attention to the relational and social criteria of the relation, rather than to the instrumental attributes.

These characteristics correspond to the determinants of affective trust [29]. Affective trust is identical to the predisposition of the partner to have an open behavior with respect to the other. It is marked by a will to make more than what is formally envisaged. In the recent work of [34], affective trust is identified as having a significant impact on relational integration in Supply Chains, in particular on the will of information sharing and in the sharing of risks and profits.

The elements which we have just quoted enable us to formulate our seventh and last assumption: **H7: An affective trust is positively associated with the relational integration of Supply Chains.**

CONCLUSION

The registration of the Moroccan companies in Supply Chains requires a change in the tools and methods of management and of information sharing, by the establishment of new information systems, which can be the object of several positive or negative feedbacks on behalf of the persons in charge and the employees. Acceptance or refusal is inherent in a certain number of parameters relating to the national culture. As Philippe d'Iribarne explains it, culture is a system of direction, through which the individual perceives and interprets a situation or a concrete action. This system of direction, which is constituted during history, is shared with the other members of the community.

Indeed, the national culture remains a critical and crucial element, since its influence is notable on values and lifestyles, on the perception of the quality of the service and satisfaction, on negotiations, on the manner of searching information, on the practices as regards publicity, and on behaviors and ethics. Thus, we can estimate that the national culture can have influences on the relational integration of Supply Chains and on the construction of trust between the partners.

In this paper, we are interested in the positioning of the national culture in the integration of Supply Chains via the analysis of the determinants of this fundamental concept, by focusing on the relational aspect of the integration of Supply Chains, in other words the relational integration of Supply Chains. This because this relational or behavioral integration constitutes the cornerstone of Supply Chain Management [31].

To conclude, and taking into account the conclusions from our work, we point out the seven assumptions that we developed namely:

H1: A culture with a strong hierarchical distance is positively associated with an affective trust;
H2: A Community culture is positively associated with an affective trust;
H3: A culture with weak control of uncertainty is positively associated with an affective trust;
 H4: A culture with female orientation is positively associated with an affective trust;
H5: A culture with short-term orientation is positively associated with an affective trust;
H6: A culture with strong religiosity is positively associated with an affective trust;
H7: An affective trust is positively associated with the relational integration of Supply Chains.

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