

# Journal of Asian Scientific Research

Online ISSN 2223-1331

Vol 1 No 3

July, 2011



**Asian Economic and Social Society**  
[www.aessweb.com](http://www.aessweb.com)



## Impact of Culture in Multicultural Groups: Cross Analysis between China and India

### Abstract

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**Keywords:** Culture, Cross Analysis, China, India, Multicultural Group

With the increasing trend of globalization, the impact of globalization has led to a fast changing environment the boundaries for business is diminishing day by day so is the movement of people between different countries and cultures. The requirements of multinational organizations like expansion plans in international market has continually increased the need to understand the cultural dimensions of different countries to achieve better results. Therefore the companies are required to understand a national culture's impact on areas like communication in multicultural teams in different countries which has a high degree of effect on team performance. So our research question revolves around this topic as "How does culture influence communication in multicultural teams". This paper makes an attempt to investigate the influence of national cultures on communication in project teams in China and India by focusing on construction industry based on a number of factors including Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensional framework. The researchers intend to explore the cultural factors having major impact on communication in multicultural project teams of both countries. Throughout our research and study, useful lessons on national cultures impact on communication can be drawn for multicultural project team in China and India. It can provide a better insight for the project teams to have concern for and understand why people from different countries and cultures react or respond to various situations in a different manner, giving high emphasis to communication process.

### Introduction

Project management as a discipline is getting enormous attention in the past few years, as the major organizations are executing the routine functions in the framework of projects so the need for project management is growing simultaneously. The bigger the organization is the greater need for managing different projects required. These multinational organizations have diverse work force to help them achieve their goals and targets. People from different backgrounds and nationalities work together as a team to accomplish common desired goals. Communication is the key factor to keep them together as a team. There are various factors which influence the communication in the team. The study will be focused on the cultural factors, how they can effect communication in internal and external aspects. Therefore, our core research area is to identify the influence of cultural factors on

communication process in project teams of multinational organization.

### Construction industry in developing countries

In order to narrow down our research we have chosen construction industry as our target and developing countries as our field of research, to be more specific in China and India. As two of the world's fastest growing economies of the world, both China and India have undergone dramatic changes in terms of economic development and globalization. So we are going to focus on the cultural influence on communication in this era of globalization in these two fastest growing economies in Asia. Although there has been numerous of researches done on the intercultural communication but that corresponds to the situations which were totally different when compared to today's situation as mentioned above the world is different today in terms of economic changes. Therefore, we feel that there is an

opportunity to explore this area of intercultural communication and to attempt to add our findings to the mountain of information.

## Literature Review

### Culture

We started our literature review as a beginning process of the related study in a particular field which will lead us to explore and gain better understanding of our main objective paper topic which is *“How does culture influence communication in multicultural team in China and India”*. The objective of this literature review is to provide a preliminary mapping of the literature and researches in terms of culture and communication in a particular construction project in emerging economies of Asia in order to review the main factors of how intercultural communication is practiced within certain projects in different environments. To define the meaning of “culture” in organization, explore links and gaps as both in practically and theoretically, identify what are the causes and effects and lastly how culture can influence communication. Frameworks provided in our literature review will illustrate, what cultural factors will have impact on communication prospective.

### Theoretical framework of culture Different meanings of culture

The word “Culture” can be defined in various ways and it has several meanings. Over 164 definitions were defined by two anthropologists, (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952). According to Trenholm and Jensen (2000) they define “culture as a set of beliefs and values, norms and customs, and rules and codes that socially defines a group of people, binds them to one another and gives a sense of commonality”. Cultural prospective scholar Hofstede (1980) stated that “culture is the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. However, culture is a large and an inclusive subject, therefore it is difficult to define. Based on Hofstede’s definition, Beamer and Beam (2008) add that culture also relates to learn and shared behaviors, values, norms and material object which encompasses what one creates to express values, attitudes and norms. According to (Terpstra and David 1985) they proposed the meaning of culture in international management context based on Hofstede’s definition. “Culture is a learned, shared, compelling, interrelated set of symbols whose meaning provides a set of orientations for members of a society. These orientations, taken together, provide solutions to

problems that all societies must solve if they are to remain viable” Culture in this sense is a system of collectively held values.” Where as Hall (1959) describe culture as a mean of communication. Cooper (2000) added that “culture can be seen as a concept that describes the shared corporate values within an organization which influences the attitudes and behaviors of its members” where as Cooper, Thomas and Simonds (2007) give us the three ideas about how culture can be affected “culture affects our perception”, “culture affects our verbal and nonverbal language”, “and “The culture affects our identity”

### Hofstede’s cultural framework

Hofstede, who has conducted a remarkable scale of cultural studies in history including in a multicultural company (IBM) where he did a research on the employees in 72 countries. According to Hofstede (1980) he mentions that there is no such approach / technique or management theory globally as different countries view “management” in various meanings. He added that in order to gain a better understanding of culture in management and communication of different countries, knowledge and empathy with the entire scene are essential. However, he originally contributed frameworks which describe the cultural dimensions model which describe four dimensions of differences / value perspectives with different cultures. Power - The degree of which people involved expects and accepts that the power is being distributed unevenly. It describes the extent the people of less power such as employee accepts that the manager has greater power. In a country whereby there is high power distance, less power employees are afraid to against or defend themselves to their superiors during conflicts or disagreements. People in high power distance cultures optimistic emotions towards superiors and pessimistic emotions to the less power people. (Hofstede 1980; Blodgett et al, 2001) Individualism and Collectivism - The degree where people feel that care should be taken of or to care of themselves, their organizations and families. Individualists value independence, and tend to believe that personal goals and interests are more important than group interests (Hofstede 1980; Triandis 1995; Schwartz, 1992). Collectivists refers to when individual are gathered into groups, it vision themselves as members of extended organizations or family and rather place themselves after their group interests. Masculinity- The degree of which a culture is conducive to dominance. Assertiveness and acquisition of things versus a culture which is more conducive to people, feelings and quality of life. In a masculine society individuals are more aggressive, ambitious, and competitive; whereas individuals from

feminine societies are considered as more humble and modest. (Blodgett,2001;Muller et al,2008). Uncertainty avoidance- The degree of which people experience threatening by uncertain circumstances and have build beliefs and institutions in order to prevent from such situations. In a society whereby with the levels of uncertainty avoidance is high, the demand of consensus and written rules are high. On the other hand, societies characterized by low uncertainty avoidance rely less on written rules and are more risk tolerant (Hofstede 1980;Blodgett et al, 2001). According to Muller and Tuner (2004) Hofstede has made an additional dimension to his existing cultural framework by which was initially called confucian dynamism. Long term-Short term- It describes the impotency which attached to the future versus the past and present. Long term: values oriented towards the future, like saving and persistence- short-term: values oriented towards the past and present, like respect for tradition and fulfilling social obligations (Hofstede, 2003). High long term also faces considerations common but considered itself as weakness, and place relationships ordered by status, where as in low long term the protection of one's face is important and placing status not as a important relation in relationships. (Hofstede, 2001)

#### **Applications of Hofstede's framework**

Hofstede's cultural framework has been used and applied extensively in a wide variety of contexts, across most of the behavioral science disciplines. Hofstede's framework has been used to examine topics such as cross-cultural differences in attitudes and behaviors in the field of marketing and management (Blodgett et al,2001) organizational identification and employee turnover intentions (Abrams, Ando, and Hinkle 1998), and to compare stereotypes across different cultures (Soutar,Grainger, and Hedges, 1999). However, the invasive influence of Hofstede's culture framework over the academic, and the excess of recommendations and finding arising from the study. The assumption of the applicable of the cultural framework has emerged. There were also doubts concerning about the applicability of Hofstede's framework. The critique of theory was tested using a cross-cultural comparison of reward preferences in four countries. The findings reveal that although his framework provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the reward arena, the proposition that human values are conditioned solely by national culture ignores the potential influence of a variety of other contextual factor. (Blodgett et al, 2001).

#### **Reasons for choosing Hofstede's five dimensions model for our research**

The term of "Culture" is always difficult to define not because it is complex but it has more then 300 definitions and many of scholars have identified dozens of dimensions of cultural variability in terms of different beliefs, values, and practices (Stohl, 2001). But the most prominent, in agreement with many other researchers, Stohl (2001) identifies the work of Hofstede (1984) as the most influential scholarly work in the area of culture. Hofstede (1984) defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the member of one human group from another." This focused the differences between cultures. And as mentioned above there were other related empirical studies by Trompenaar (1997) which focused on the ways cultures develop approaches to handle problems and difficult situations and by Hall (1976), he categorized cultures by the extent their language is contextually related. But after reviewing all the models the most thorough coverage of appropriate dimensions and concepts for a work-related intercultural communication study is provided through Hofstede's five dimensions model (Muller & Turner, 2004).

#### **Analyzing China and India based on Hofstede's dimensions**

The comprehensive study by Hofstede indicates the values in different countries can be influenced by cultures. His well-known studies was conducted in the employee values scores collect in IBM from the year 1967 to 1973 , featuring over 70 countries worldwide. The diagrams below will illustrate the two selected countries in Asia on the cultural differences based on the five dimensions and also the comparison studies of China and India.

#### **Culture and communication**

According to Beamer and Varner (2008) "communications system such as language and non verbal communication are products of culture. They are also tools intricately bound up in the processes of culture itself: language is related to thought processes and to mental learning processes." In fact in the vast literature of culture and communication many scholars have used them interchangeably as culture is communication and communication is culture. But as our culture is often defined by our language, it leads to the distinction between the two as separate segments. It is quite inadequate to define culture on the basis of language as it limits our expression

within a single word or words. But when language is turned back on itself and communication is the object of its enquiry as well as the means. Understanding communication can help us understand culture (Beamer and Varner 2008). Therefore, there is a great degree of impact on communication as far as culture is concerned.

### **Intercultural communication**

The world is changing today rapidly and it is characterized by an ever growing number of contacts whether be it personal or business resulting in communication between people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For the purpose of economic activities Communication is crossing national boundaries; it is not necessarily different from any other communication activity. What are different here are intercultural communication activities among people of different cultures (Wells and Spinks, 1994) this type of communication results because of contacts within the areas of business, science, education, tourism, military cooperation, mass media, and entertainment but also because of increasing pace of immigration brought about by political conflicts or labor demand. In any of these contacts, there is communication which needs to be as constructive as possible, without misunderstandings and breakdowns. It is seen that research on the nature of linguistic and cultural similarities and differences can play a positive and constructive role. So assessing the impact of cultural factors on communication will further increase our understanding and be a part of the ongoing constructive process between cultures. So, Intercultural communication took place whenever a minimum of two persons from different cultures or micro cultures come together and exchange verbal and non verbal symbols (Neuliep, 2003). Intercultural communication is always considered as contextual. Which means it is a combination of

factors like situation, circumstance, setting, the people involved, relationships between them, gender, age difference and so on. While intercultural communication refers to communication within multicultural teams as well. Global customer satisfaction calls for effective functioning of geographically dispersed, culturally mixed work teams (Hofner, 1996). Intercultural communication is very vast field due to vastness of both communication and culture. There is enormous literature and research in this field. There are many researchers and professionals of note within the intercultural field, who basically all have different definitions for 'intercultural communication'. For example Karlfried Knapp (1987) says "Intercultural communication, can be defined as the interpersonal interaction between members of different groups, which differ from each other in respect of the knowledge shared by their members and in respect of their linguistic forms of symbolic behavior" (Knapp, 1987). The theories on communication developed by the researchers and academicians can and have been applied to many fields such as business, management, marketing, advertising and website design. As business becomes more and more international, many companies need to know how best to structure their companies manage staff and communicate with customers. Intercultural communication gives them an insight into the areas they need to address or understand most effectively. Intercultural communication theories are now also used within the public services like education, health care due to increasing multicultural populations.

### **Origin of intercultural communication research**

To throw some light on the past developments in the research of intercultural communication, here is the list of Major events or development in the field of intercultural communication.

Table 3.1. Major events in the development of the field of intercultural Communication

Period	Description
1950-1955	Development of the original paradigm of intercultural communication by Edward T. Hall and others at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington D.C.
1955	First publication on intercultural communication by Hall ("The Anthropology of Manners" in <i>Scientific American</i> )
1959	Publication of <i>The Silent Language</i> in English (a Japanese edition appeared in 1966 as <i>Chinmoku No Kubota</i> )
Late 1960s	Development of the first intercultural courses at universities (e.g., University of Pittsburgh); and publication of Alfred Smith's (1966) <i>Communication and Culture</i> .
1970	International Communication Association established a Division of Intercultural Communication
1972	First publication of an edited book on <i>Intercultural Communication</i> by

	Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter.
1973	<i>Intercultural Communication</i> by L.S. Harms at the University of Hawaii is published (the first textbook on intercultural communication)
1974	First publication of <i>International and Intercultural Communication Annuals</i> ; The Society of Intercultural Education, Training and Research (SIETAR) is found
1975	<i>An Introduction to Intercultural Communication</i> by John C. Condon and Fatih Youssef is published (the second textbook in intercultural communication); the Speech Communication Association established a Division of Intercultural Communication
1977	<i>International Journal of Intercultural Relations</i> begins publication
1983-present	Theory development in intercultural communication is emphasized (e.g., three International and Intercultural Communication Annual volumes on intercultural communication theory are published)
1998	Founding of the International Academy of Intercultural Relations

Source: Hart (1966)

## Empirical Observation

### Introduction

The data collected has been taken from leading companies from India and China in the construction sector. Data has been collected from 12 individuals from 6 companies each company with two employees have been interviewed to support our findings the list of questions asked to interviewees is shown below with a brief summary of their responses which has been analyzed in next section of data analysis but in this part will display the responses obtained from the respondents in the companies.

### Area of research

Our research was carried out in construction sector in china and India, and most of our respondents were from multinational construction companies. 3 companies from china and 3 from India were selected for interviews. Construction sector was targeted as it is one of the fastest growing sectors in both the economies more details about which are given in following section.

### Construction Sector Overview of Emerging Economies

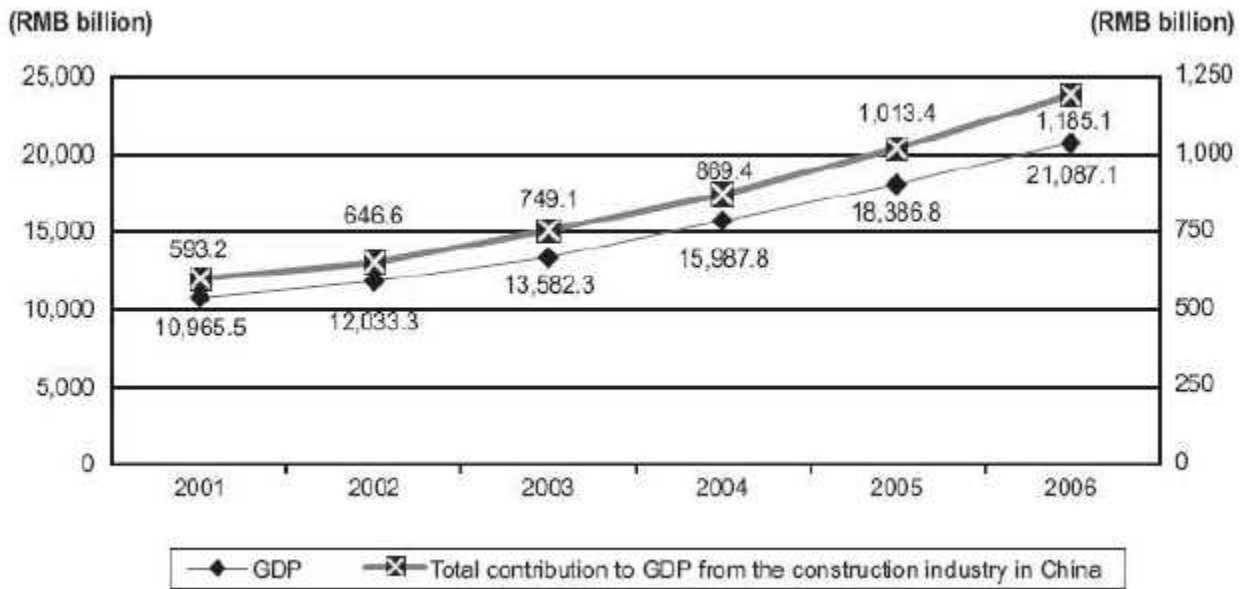
Today, China is one of the fastest growing economic in the world. Countless numbers of established international organizations/ companies are entering its market hoping to seize the opportunity of China's emerging economy. The world has witness China being the world's biggest construction market from construction project such as the Olympics in Beijing 2008 , the rapid expansion of manufacturing industries, energy sector and national infrastructures, these created pull factors for international players such as architecture firms, construction companies and business consultants to invest in China. In the era of globalization, it is possible to diversify business operations into different countries with different cultural background. An example of the design-build contract for the new airport terminal at the southern China (Guangxi Zhuang province) was won by the

UK based Airsys ATM company (Lu and Paul, 2001) .The given example shows that it is common to learn that products could now be designed in one culture, manufactured in another, and sold in yet another. (Muller, Spang, Ozcan, 2008). The reform program and open door policy of China have created the rise of foreigner involvement in China's construction sector. Out of all the foreign contraction contractors in China, more than 60 percent of them has established offices in Shanghai and enjoyed the ranking of 225 top international contractors in China such as Fluor Daniel and Bechtel Group (USA) John Brown (U.K) and a few Japanese firms, (Lu and Paul 2001)

### Overview of Chinese Construction Sector

China construction industry has been experiencing the rapid development and enjoying the steady growth rate for the past few years. According to National Bureau of Statistics, PRC, the main construction which brings upon the China's Tenth Five- Year plan from year 2001-2005 was the construction of nation's infrastructures featuring: railways, bridges, chemical plants, energy generation, and etc. The launch of "The Tenth Five-Year" plan has provided China's construction industry with well guidance and opportunity for the greater development. The main objectives of The Tenth Five-Year Plan aimed to upgrade the design standard and rise up the design level and emphasis on the construction technique focusing on the necessary of construction market reformation and standardized for quality assurance. Undeniable that China's economy is the main factor of the rapid development of construction industry. According to National Bureau of Statistics, PRC, the growth of the industry develops at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 14.8% from the year 2001-2006. Figure 2.1 illustrate the increase of China's GDP and overall contribution to GDP from the construction industry from year 2001-2006.

Figure 1.1 China's GDP and contribution to GDP from construction industry



Source: National Bureau of Statistics, PRC

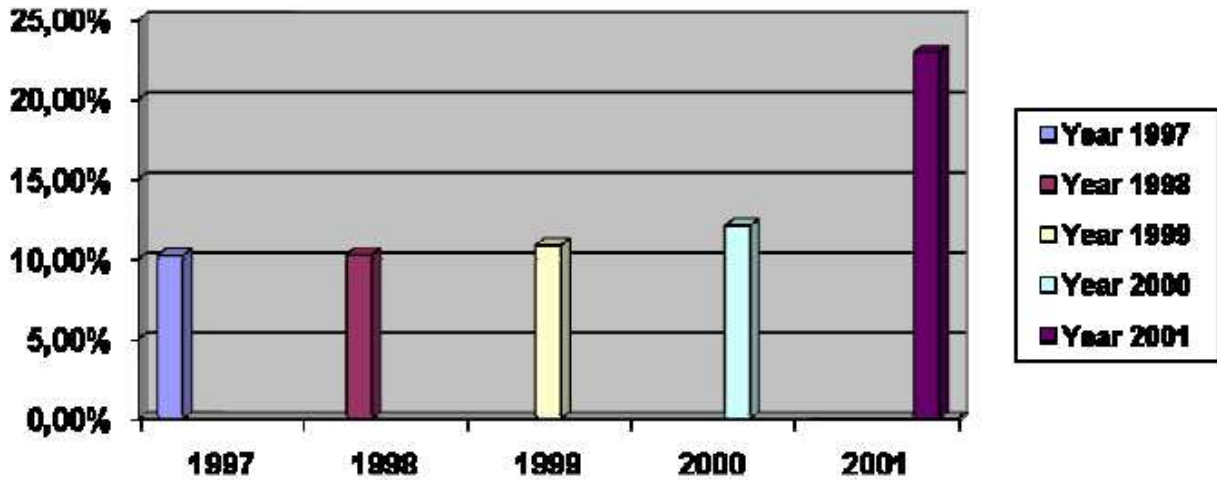
According to China Statistical Yearbook (2002) indicate that in early 1990s, there were only 256 construction projects invested by foreign companies of which 136 were civil engineering works, 48 of them were the national means of transportation such as highway, railways, bridges and tunnel 7 of them were power stations, dams, harbor projects which valued at 5.65 billion RMB.

In year 2001, China started to march into greater involvement in construction projects arena which consisted of 622 construction companies with investment from parts of China such as Taiwan and Hong Kong. The construction projects which value were at 10.255 billion RMB had employed in total of 76,800 human resources. The incremental value was 2.735 billion RMB, Area under construction was up 3.748,500 square meters, and the completed area was 1,459,400 which created total profit of 375 million RMB. The construction industry achieved 646.2 billion RMB in total output value in 2001, accounted

for 6.7 percent of the country GDP. The construction industry realized 704.7 billion RMB in total output value in 2002 with the incensement of 10.54 % from year 2001, 637.5 billion RMB which accounted for 6.9 percent of its GDP. The total area under construction was up to 1,883,286,800 square meters, the accomplished areas was 976.99 million square meters which generated the total profit of 29.439 billion RMB. In the beginning of 2002, the number of construction enterprises in China increased to 45,893, the incensement of construction enterprises also resulted in massive employment of 21,106,600 employees. Out of the employment from the enterprises and firms of which, 44,997 were locals. These firms generated 1,518.595 billion RMB in output value in 2001 and 398.022 billion RMB in added value. The area under construction was up to 1,874,480,800 square meters and the completed area was 975,532,300 square meters.



Fig 1.2 Analysis of output values in China's construction industry



Sources: China Statistical Yearbook 2002

The construction industry in China has been able to maintain the rapid growth and representing a higher than its gross national product. The output values of the construction industry was increased steadily as illustrated in figure 1.1 such as 10.19 % in 1997, 10.25% in 1998, 10,84 % in 1999 ,12,06% in 2000 and 22.91% in 2001. The growth is expected to increase rapidly along with the booming economy of China supported by Lu and Paul (2001) who forecast that in year 2015 china's construction industry is expected to reach USD 700 billion.

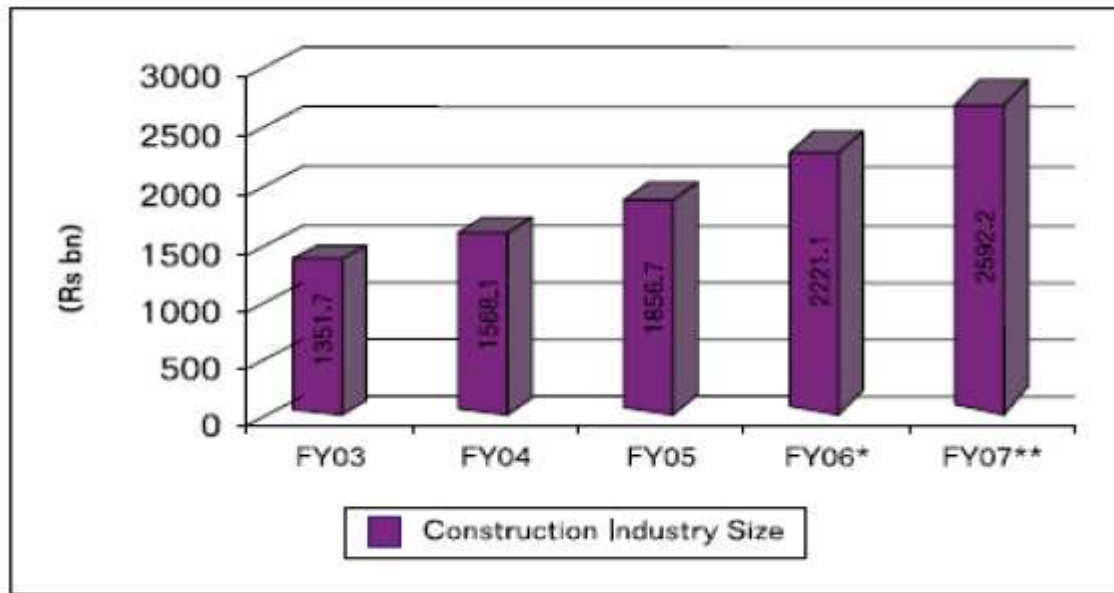
### Overview of Indian Construction Sector

After having a look at the Chinese construction industry, our second field of research will be Indian construction industry which is one of the most attractive investment sector, due to immense potential and huge demand in terms of infra structural and realestate projects. The Indian construction industry is the second largest contributor to the national economy. It is the second largest employment generator after agriculture in the country. The valuation of construction industry in India is worth over USD 51 billion and accounts for almost 20% of GDP. The Planning Commission of India published the 11th Economic Plan in 2007(2007-12), and allocates \$500bn as investment outlay for

development of infrastructure projects. The Indian construction industry is quite large and is crucial to various sectors of the economy. It employs approximately 31 million persons next to agriculture in terms of employment. It consumes 40-50% of the National Plan outlay. A few points to mention about Indian industry sector are as follows:

- India recorded the highest construction spend growth from 2005, driven by growing number of infrastructure projects and a booming real estate sector
- The introduction of REITs (Real Estate Investment Trusts) by mobilizing capital
- markets will further accelerate real estate growth
- Technological developments, such as ready-mix concrete, 3-D modeling, and mobile
- computing, are being used more often now
- -Competition is Very high across segments like road construction, housing and urban
- infrastructure development, but is relatively less in airport and port development
- projects.

Figure 1.3 Indian Construction Industries



Source: India's leading construction companies 2007

The figure above shows the continuous increase of construction sector in terms of value in India. This growing trend is expected to continue with same pace in 2008-09 as per estimates. Year 2007 seven has shown significant increase from 2006 with a total investment of 2592 billion Rupees. The economy of country has been on the upswing when the process of economic reforms was started in 1991. It has been a key growth driver for the national economy. A notable point here is that the industry is largely fragmented and overtly dominated by smaller players, although major players, especially those involved in big infrastructure projects, have already made their mark in the international arena, and it is on them to shape the future of this sector. The current estimates about the size of the construction industry in India is \$70.8 billion, out of which the 87 key players account for nearly one third share, while the rest chunk of the highly untapped market is distributed amongst the 25,000 plus smaller players. The basic success factor responsible for the stupendous growth of the Indian construction industry is the support from the government their sustained political will since 1991. India, with its abundant land mass area and a billion strong populations, is definitely a major market for the construction sector in terms of infrastructure and property (residential & commercial) development.

The increasing pace of development in this sector has attracted international construction giants from USA, UK & Middle East. The presence of multinational construction players has bought new techniques & methods for this sector. Our focus will be to assess the multicultural teams working in these corporations and to find some concrete data for our research. While India at present is one of the most preferred destinations for foreign investment, it needs more infrastructure facilities to convert these preferences into action. India being the second most populous country has high rate of unemployment, but construction sector has played a role of major employment driver, being the second largest employer in the country, next only to agriculture. This is because of the chain of backward and forward linkages that the sector has with other sectors of the economy. More than 250 ancillary industries such as cement, steel, brick, timber and building material are related or dependent on the construction sector. A slight increase in expenditure in this sector has a significant & multiplier effect and its capacity to generate income to the levels as high as five times. But still there are a lot of problems as in real estate sector, post the US sub prime crisis and the slow down in the economy has affected the Indian construction sector as well particularly real estate, the real estate developers are caught between sluggish

housing demand and rising cost of capital. The increasing trend for housing and capital loans have reduced immensely, causing a liquidity crunch for real estate players, while on the other hand a slowdown in the demand has led to a increasing fall in real estate prices between the range of 15% to 30% even in the normally price-inelastic metro areas. Future prospects for Infrastructure investments continue to be the most important growth driver for construction companies. The proposed increase in allocation in the plan by planning commission during FY08 will translate into business for construction companies. The Indian construction industry is on its way to achieve its true potential of being leading the world, which clearly suggests a range of opportunities for various industry players.

### Analysis of Data

In our analysis of data, we have included cultural dimensions from Hofstede's framework together with certain other elements of culture that are found in different countries and impact communication. Our primary research findings were based on semi-structured interviews conducted on construction companies in China and India. Interviews were conducted on team members who have experience working in multicultural teams. 3 construction companies were selected from each country and 2 members from each company were interviewed. In total we have interviewed 12 people from China and India. We have divided our correspondents into groups which are as follow:

#### China

Chinese Company 1 (CC1)

China Communications Construction Company Ltd  
Interviewees: CC 1.1 (Mr. Lau Xi), CC1.2 (Mr. Wen Xiang)

Chinese Company 2 (CC2)

Pan China Construction Group  
Interviewees: CC2.1 (Ms. Yeo Yu), CC2.2 (Mrs. Lim Choo)

Chinese Company 3 (CC3)

Zhen Jiang Construction Ltd (ZJCC)  
Interviewees: CC3.1 (Mrs. Lau Xi), CC3.2 (Mr. Chong Kee)

#### India

Indian Company 1: (IC1)

Reliance Infrastructure Limited  
Interviewees: IC 1.1 (Mr. Chinmay Mehta), IC1.2 (Mr. Prashant Gupta)

Indian Company 2: (IC2)

L&T Engineering & Construction Division  
Interviewees: IC 2.1 (Mr. Kalian Mishra), IC2.2 ( Mr. Rustam Jedi)

Indian Company 3: (IC3)

Nagarjuna Construction Co.,Ltd  
Interviewees: IC3.1 (Mr. Kuldeep Sandhu), IC3.2 (Mr. Deepak Jain)

### Classification of data

Our findings will be classified into 2 headings as factors in national culture and their influence on communication. This will provide us with classification of cultural factors in India and China, their affects on intercultural communication. Each of the 2 headings is further divided into sub-headings to extract maximum information from our research.

#### National culture in China and India

- Individualism
- Power distance
- Masculine
- Long term and short term orientation
- Uncertainty Avoidance

#### Effects on communication

- Individualism
- Power distance
- Masculine
- Long term and short term orientation
- Uncertainty avoidance
- High contexts and Low contexts
- Relationship
- Means of communication
- Non-verbal means of communication
- Miscommunication
- Intercultural training program

#### National culture in China and India

##### Individualism

Based on the responds from the 6 interviewees, most of them shared a common view in seeing collectivism as a more effective approach in working in a project team especially in construction project whereby every part is important step in delivering the main objective and see individualism as a approach which against the vale of team work(CC1.1) The Chinese tend to encourage collectivism in working as a team and prioritized teams before oneself, in other word teamwork is view as an important aspect along with the relationship among team members which are to be considered as well(CC2.1). According to (CC1.2) even though individualism is not encouraged in our team, there are some of the team members who tend to be adapting individualism. As most of the responds from Chinese interviewees were in favor of collectivism, the results did not reflect on Hofstede's dimension which indicates that Chinese tend to belong to the individualism side, placing individual/self-interest before the group. Supported by (CC3.1) who mentioned that in certain situation such as

planning where by individualism is encouraged so that one can freely express ideas and opinions. Moreover, (CC2.1) added that in some situation, individuals are assigned with specific responsibility for completing tasks and achieving objectives which is why there are some individual who focuses on their individual goals and achievement in their careers. Most of the Indian interviewees state that collectivism is preferred over individualism. They feel that collectivism is necessary in teamwork whereby collaboration is needed also it brings in better coordination (IC1.1). The Indians see many advantages in collectivism such (IC2.1) mentioned that team setting collectivism is preferred to coordinate efforts. Supported by (IC1.2) who pointed out collectivism was emphasized by the team members from the beginning of the work. However, there are some contradictions on the discouragement of collectivism which depends on the requirement of the work; small tasks which team members are supposed to do together are preferred to do individually (IC2.1).

#### **Power distance**

As illustrated in the Hofstede's dimension (Figure 1.1) which indicates the existence of high power distance in China which refers as an unequal distribution of power where decisions and planning are done by the seniors or superiors. Because of the large gap between them, daily tasks and job assignments are given without arguments. Respect was identified by all of the interviewees (CC 1.1,1,2,2,1,2,2,3.1,3.2) as a way to show that they accept the existence of power distance which can be in terms of experiences, ages or positions. However, level of respects are given in different situations, a member of CC 1.1 ,1.3 mentioned that only some basic manners are given to the seniors as in personal which does not influence working activities, in other word the respects are given to a certain amount supported by CC 2.1 indicates that even though people in the higher position have greater power but everyone still has the right in showing their opinions. Where as members from CC 1.2, 2.2, 3.1 agree that respects given to the seniors are as tradition values which are common in the Chinese culture, the amount of respects are given in great amount to the seniors in the extent that members of lower ranking do not challenge their seniors. In addition interviewees from CC.3.2 indicate that the respect shown to seniors can be spotted by the use of language, using polite or formal words when interacting with his seniors. In spite of the responds from 3 Chinese respondents, the acceptances on power distance on these 3 companies reflect

equivalently to the Hofstede's dimension on China which emphasized on the unequally distributed power. As for India, the power distance based on Hofstede's dimension which scores closely to China shows that both countries has similar approach toward the inequality distribution of power. Being a traditionally and culturally oriented country India sees power distance as a gap where by respects and formalities are to be given to the seniors. It can be supported by the all the interviewees (IC 1.1,1,2,2,1,2,2,3.1,3.2) which emphasized on the respect given to the seniors especially by IC 3.1 who describes Indian culture which teaches people to respect the elderly. In the scope of hierarchy, Indian places positions and rankings into main concern while interacting the people but in the present, IC1.1 points out that the tense of being around people with higher positions in the team has been decreased where one could approach their seniors in a friendly way to some extent which is very common as in western countries (IC 2.1), where as correspondent IC3.2 mentioned that "we have certain level of distance with our seniors or we can say more professional when it comes to seniority".

#### **Masculine**

Based on the Chinese correspondents, all of the interviewees except for CC2.2 indicated those females are given equal opportunity in their careers. However, two correspondents CC1.1,CC3.2 raised up that in the past females were treated differently in both career and education. From the figure 1.1 (Hofstede's dimension) we can see that Chinese scored rather high in masculine, even higher than India and world average. The higher the score is, the wider gap of male and female becomes but this dimension did not reflect on most of the interviewees' statements. CC 1.1 mentioned that since the opened up of Chinese culture, the chances have been distributed equally and female are performing well, supported by CC 1.2 , CC 2.1 who pointed out nowadays, females are outperformed males in certain task. So the high scores which indicated the wide gap between females and males have been narrowed down due to the globalization which given females equally chances to perform and rankings promotions (CC1.1). However, there are some concern raised up from the increasing number of female securing positions in teams males are expected to work with the increasing women workforce and these changes could create unusual working environment (CC3.2). Apart from that there is also a doubtful issue on the biasness of females "I am not sure if any people still have the bias towards female role in China" (CC2.1). In China, since its

economy is desperately require human resources and criteria have been based on the abilities and performance, There are campaign which aim to remove the bias of gender differentiation and promote women's role in working environment (CC2.1). In India, the general view from the correspondents have clearly define that there are certain gaps between females and males. Being a culturally oriented country, Indian females are less opened up to the society whereby males usually dominate in overall picture (IC2.2). IC 1.1 mentioned that due to cultural limitations, females prefer to act accordingly to the given order. In a working environment, Indian female team mates prefer to be more quite and calm during team discussions (IC2.1). There are some comparisons of Indian and American females in the working environment where American females are in level with the male where as in India, making decisions and team performance are still dominated by males (IC 22). The masculine and feminine of India on the Hofstede's dimension reflects the reality situation which Indian scored 56 over the world's average which was 50. In India where the nation cultural play an important role in genders differences, duties and jobs are seen as more suitable for males others as more for females. Generally, responsibilities towards different levels of decision making, strategic choices are based on the favorable gender which can be seen commonly in India. The operation of the organizations are based on the assigned duty to males more than female whom likely will be dominate in the organizations or teams, these are certain restrictions of female which can be seen visibly in India culture ( IC3.2)

### **Long term and short term orientation**

According to Chinese interviewees all interviewees indicated that Chinese are typically belong to the long term orientation which reflects truly on Hofstede's dimension. Chinese members vision results as something that will come eventually; they are more focus on the magnitude of the result than to look for the desire results (CC1.1). Being a traditionally and culturally oriented, people are concern over many factors such as seniority, relationship and risk taking, communication is conducted in a very careful manner taking those factors into consideration (CC1.2). Because Chinese prescribes to the values of long term commitments, they are committed to the team as mention by CC 2.2 "Chinese emphasized a lot on being committed to something permanent which is why we are not into risk-taking society" Being a high long-term orientation culture, communications are influenced by in fact that people tend to secure themselves to the

strong commitment in the team by avoid conflict such as in conversation or opinions. Mentioned by CC3.2 "Chinese tend to communicate in very careful manner among teams, as relations are seen as a core aspect in working career". Supported by CC1.2 "We see the importance of maintaining our relationships to the teams by compromising so that teamwork can ran though smoothly" In other word, Chinese are concern on the long commitment of the team, therefore they are taking precautions in their communication to avoid conflict. While in India, there is a mixed response on this particular aspect as some respondents (IC1.1, IC1.2 ) ranked India high on long term orientation while on the other hand some managers (IC.2.1) ranked India low on this scale while some believe the scenario is changing. The changes that most of our respondents feel are due to growing development and urbanization. There are changes in the view point of youth for long term orientation and short term orientation.

### **Uncertainty avoidance**

4 out of 6 Chinese correspondents described Chinese culture as a mid-high in risk avoidance. CC1.1 indicated that in their culture, people dislike changes and viewing changes as risk. Chinese people are concern for their future; therefore risks are being avoided at all time. In Chinese culture, people are known to be non-risk taking people (CC1.2) and because risk taking is not encouraged in Chinese culture, people are less open to new things such as innovations and first- mover is seen as risk (CC3.1). In the team of Chinese nation, members like to follow on the same old routine or similar strategies which consider the risk as a treat if changes occurred (CC3.2). However, the respondents from (CC1.1, CC1.2, CC3.1, and CC3.2) do not reflect Hofstede's dimension shown in Figure 1.1. The scores of the Chinese on uncertainty avoidance were considered low (30) which shows that they are open to changes and people feel less threatened by unpredictable situations which lead them to more become more opened minded. The low score of China shows that Chinese culture does not concern so much on the uncertainty and ambiguity. Chinese tend to have some amount of tolerance to the extent that they can listen to various ideas and opinions. Supported by the other 2 correspondents whom feel that Chinese are open for new things and changes as people are less concern on rules or formalities, therefore giving them flexibility while working with the teams and tend to react on changes than acting (CC2.1) This can indicate that in Chinese society which is less rule-oriented and ready to for changes and risk taking for example expanding its business to unfamiliar

industry. In India, where the level of uncertainty avoidance based on Hofstede's dimension is at 40 which is slightly more than China and lower than the world average. It describes Indian culture that is opened up to unstructured ideas and opinions with fewer rules which try to control unknown situations. What the correspondents have responded towards risk taking in Indian culture is that majority of Indians belong to high level of uncertainty avoidance where by people look at certainty as broadening minds and the providing opportunities for new ideas and changes. Mentioned by (IC2.1) where the high level of uncertainty avoidance is influenced by the national culture which crated risking taking culture. Therefore it helps to encourage innovations as a result; there are many global entrepreneurs from India there in today's business industry. While most correspondents (IC1.1, IC1.2, IC 2.1,IC2.2 ,IC3.1) stated that Indian as high uncertainty avoidance, IC 3.2 brought up a point that Indian has become a risk conscious culture. His argument was that Indian business is moving towards better risk covering aspect rather than avoiding it. Based on the majority of the responds, India's working environment seems to be flexible and lean towards short term goals as risk taking is encouraged. There are attempts to predict the ambiguity which perhaps very common seen in Indian organizations or teams.

### **Training for intercultural communications**

A very common phenomenon that we observed while interviewing our respondents were that there was no specific training for intercultural communications, there was generally a short program for understanding of some key information about the country specific but nothing specific about intercultural communications. This aspect we find in both China and India despite growing need for intercultural communication in both these emerging economies there is literally no specific training program for any of the managers who are either working in international teams or in multicultural teams in India or in china. As most of the managers( CC 1.1,1,2,2,1,2,2,3.1,3.2) agreed you have to learn on your own and have to brush your skills gradually. Each organization has its said program for employees but not for culture specific issues as one of the Chinese manager CC3.2 mentioned "No such training has been organized so far. But in beginning of every project, the members are gathered together for some non-work related orientation which briefly involved in introduction of themselves and getting to know the new members". While one manager CC1.2 said companies stress on team building, he claimed "We organize gathering functions outside working hours

among the project team members. We try to get full participation from the team members". But nobody mentioned anything about culture specific communication programs which shows a growing need for such training initiatives. On the other hand, in India there is training for team members to settle with work cultures but not with intercultural communications most of them agreed that they have general training but no specific training for intercultural communication. While one of the respondent IC2.2 mentioned there special training also deals with cultural aspect in teams, he said "from last 2 years our human resource department has started this special training for all new members working in any team which gives you an better understanding of work culture in our organization and the diversity involved and to deal with them." While one respondent IC1.1 agreed that he had been given specific cultural training but that was in US office and not in India, he said "there was training in US office but not in India, we were given 3 days of training to deal with all cultural adjustments, what to do and what not to do and a basic understanding of cultural diversity." So a need for in house training by companies on intercultural communication must be developed to cope with increasing globalization in these emerging economies like China and India.

### **Comparison of China and India on cultural effects**

#### **China**

In China, collectivism is more encouraged in team communication individualism is acceptable in some level in particular of project. In Power distance, strong emphasizes on the respect on seniority and superiors created a gap in communication. Masculine, increasing of female workforce that created threats of female dominances in team have led to communication problems between males and females. Uncertainty avoidance, risk is to avoid at any level, communications with team members are conducted in careful manner. High contexts and Low contexts, contextual misunderstanding take place often in the team/ society. Relationships are seen as an important aspect in communication in team or society. Better the relationship creates better communication. Means of communication- Face to face a preferred means of communication especially in importance issues. Non-verbal means of communication- less used in Chinese societies / teams. Intercultural training program, mostly by informal gatherings or activities which aim to improve communication in teams.

## India

Individualism is less dominant than team effort but under the influence of western culture the concept of individualism is gaining acceptance to prove itself. Power distance, due to cultural inheritance of respecting seniors the distance between seniors and juniors is prevalent. Masculine, traditionally a male dominated society Indian culture does have reservations with females prefer to take back seat but scenario is changing and they are increasing their participation. Uncertainty avoidance the assumption that India has normally been ranked at low levels in uncertainty avoidance is changing as generation wants better way to deal risk and other uncertainties. High contexts and Low contexts will remain to be the single most factor which will effect communication as language can be understood but to understand cultures it will take a lot of time. Relationship, as per our finding relationships rarely matter, and professionalism is preferred in business in India. Means of communication, Email continue to be the most important means of communication over other means. Non-verbal means of communication. Non verbal means of communication are getting

increasingly popular in India as almost all the managers agree to use it and have seen people using it quite often. Intercultural training program, there is a lack on part of multinationals in providing sufficient training program to employees to give a better understanding of intercultural communication.

## Conclusion

The increasing trend of globalization among developing countries has led to the advent of cross-cultural project activities. But still most of the literature lays little or no emphasis on cultural aspects. The lack of sufficient empirical data in this area triggered our research to investigate and explore cultural factors influencing communication in multicultural teams in India and China. Some researchers have shown evidence of the influence of cultural dimensions on communication (Muller et al, 2005). We have made an attempt to further explore the influence of Indian and Chinese cultures on communication in project teams in construction sector by conducting semi-structured interviews in 6 multinational organizations.



As mentioned earlier, and now again concluding that we have been able to determine that culture as an independent variable has considerable effect on communication which is a dependent variable while this effect of independent variable on dependent variable has been analyzed in a multinational organization settings, to be more precise in a multicultural team. And this attempt was made taking the national cultures of India and China. And the findings were quite significant in terms of both differences and similarities between these cultures. In order to complete our research we conduct a series of interviews. The interview responses were analyzed using coding principles of grounded theory with the objective to answer the research question “How does

*culture influence communication in multicultural team in China and India”* And the supporting research questions, *What are the key aspects of culture effecting the intercultural business communication? What cultural factors are making effective impact on communication process in multinational organizations? To Analyze and compare intercultural communication in China and India?* Our research findings have revealed some very important factors in cultural settings of both countries which make a significant effect on communication in multicultural teams. While there are some differences in conduct of Indian teams and Chinese teams but both have high impact of culture

on there communication. These differences can be discussed under as follows:

1. Respect for seniority – in China people from the lower ranking are very concern about how they communicate to their superiors. Emphasis on respect to the seniority is considered in Chinese working environment. Traditionally Indian sees hierarchy distance as a gap where by respects and formalities are to be given to the seniors but recent trends are gradually replacing knowledge with seniority for recognition and respect. Communication has to be more formal and professional with them as it is their culture to be more respectful and formal to their elderly.
2. Growing trend of individual performance – collectivism still dominates Chinese work culture as a more effective approach. While individualism is seen as an approach against teamwork. As for the Indian they prefer a mix of collectivism and individualism. They feel that collectivism is necessary in teamwork whereby individualism is required to prove oneself.
3. Masculine and feminine difference - In masculinity, majority of Chinese claim that feminism can affects communication in team working. Chinese feel it uncomfortable to work under female superiors, hence communication does not flow smoothly. In Indian culture, women are still being looked as less privileged compared to males in career perspective. Indian women have tendency to limit their communication with male team members and act accordingly to what has been assigned.
4. Changing traditional risk avoidance patterns –Chinese tend to resist changes as many people dislike the status of changing to somewhere they are not used to. The concern for the uncertain future is taken into main consideration which means the attempt to avoid any risk involved. While, Indian culture as a society traditionally has low level of uncertainty avoidance attitude but with time they are transforming themselves, whereby people are changing from being risk takers to risk managers and opening

themselves to new opportunities for changes.

5. Long term and short term orientation- Chinese people are ranked highly on this scale as we observe that they are more into relationships even in business they tend to avoid situations of conflict while there cultural values continue to persist in their professional life as well. In India, the respondents ranked long term orientation from high to medium. It shows some difference on long term orientation between Chinese and Indian cultures but we observed that the Indians tend to accept other cultures more quickly but they also have strong effect in terms of respects towards their cultural values in their professional life.
6. Contextual and language barrier - Contextual differences like language barrier and different interpretation of words do play a great role in both cultures, in India interpretation of meaning cause high degree of influence in communication but they tend to adjust quite fast to such differences, while in china most respondents consider language as well as interpretation has high degree of influence they cite the difficulty of language preferably English as a barrier compared to India where English has higher acceptance.
7. Cultural preference on Relationship - Relationships play a major role in Chinese culture in communication as they prefer to avoid disputes and give value to relations while Indian respondents were of the view that relationships doesn't matter when you are doing professional work, there was a angle of low degree of influence in Indians as far as relationship effect on communication is considered.
8. Means of communication - means of communication vary according to demand of the situation but in china face to face communication is generally preferred as they believe the output is more compared to written communication , while in India people preferred email as their choice some even preferred mobile or cell phone as they



find it more comfortable medium of communication.

9. Growing acceptance of non verbal communication - Non verbal communication has more acceptability among Indians and they advocate use of non verbal communication just as an alternative way of communicating yourself, Chinese believe silence and straight statements are preferred in their culture rather than body languages but agreed that use of non verbal communication is growing day by day specially among people working in multicultural atmosphere.
10. Requirements of intercultural communication in current scenario and need for training – it was common in both countries that there was no separate training for intercultural communication even with the growing scope of multicultural teams Chinese agree general induction is the only training imparted by the companies while in India no such intercultural training was provided, it is provided in western countries but not in India but all of them agree that need is growing and measures to meet the requirements are insufficient. So we have tried to sum up most of our research findings in these points giving a brief and factual idea about culture, their effect on communication and comparative analysis in India and china. In the following part we are going to discuss theoretical and managerial implications of our research.

### Theoretical implications

Our research on cultural dimensions and values influencing communication among multicultural teams in China and India shows that cultural dimension plays a significant role in influencing communication within multicultural teams. Some of these major cultural factors are as follows -:

Dimensions which influence communication in China and India

- Individualism
- Power distance
- Masculine
- Uncertainty avoidance
- Long term and short term orientation
- High contexts and Low contexts

- Relationship
- Means of communication
- Non-verbal means of communication

The study and analysis which were conducted on Chinese and Indians have shown difference perspectives of individuals on national and international team members towards communication aspects. Though, some of these factors are found to be common in Chinese and Indian teams' communication, there are also new discoveries and findings which might be able to enlighten researchers in greater dept of understanding cultural communication in China and India in order to formulate new theory on cultural communication in these countries.

### Managerial implication

The increasing development of economics globalization and internationalization especially in Asia's economic powerhouses such as China and India has brought forward the issue of cultural communication. International managers in China or India need to realize the fundamental of cultural differences and understanding. Therefore, the contribution of this study is to provide cultural understanding and improvement on communication. Based on the data analysis which was generated by 12 correspondents from China and India, several suggestions were identified for the top managers to consider in their work practices.

### China

Since Chinese are extremely concern on the seniority culture of the team, more flexibility should be given to the subordinates in order to achieve more effective communication. The collectivism is a common approach in Chinese working culture, which seen as a rigid process as more communications consumes more time. Individualism should be encouraged in certain part of the project/ task in order to gain better team performance. Due to the increasing number of female workforce in high positions, communications are conducted in unfavorable environment. Therefore, gender issue should not be overlooked. The concern over risk is highly existed such as one tends to avoid communication which can place them in trouble. Punishment or penalty due to miscommunication should be more lenient and reasonable. Official intercultural training program should be implemented as there are only informal gathering activities which do not focus much on understanding of intercultural communication.

### India

As indicated India is a male dominance society, Indian females should be encouraged in team communication such as discussions and opinions. The gaps of superiors and subordinates are relatively wide, which create distance in communicating among them. Working environment with less hierarchy system should be considered. Effective communication relies partly on good relationships of team members which are being overlooked in Indian society. Therefore, establishing good relationships among team members should be emphasized. In order to achieve better understanding of cultures and communication among team members, intercultural training program should be provided to all members.

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**Appendix:** At the end of the paper

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