

**An exploratory investigation of demographic and cultural profiles, cultural awareness and approach to negotiation of Greek, Russian and British international marketing managers**

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## **Abstract**

Firms, including medium or even small ones, are increasingly focusing their attention to international markets they traditionally ignored. Even though some of these markets, such as the formerly communist countries of Europe have attracted some academic interest, others, such as the emerging markets of Southern Europe, are still rarely studied. Most importantly, little empirical research is directed towards understanding their complexities and the *modus operandi* of local business people and managers, despite the increasing volume of trade with the old and established market economies of the West. This paper explores a triad of European cultures: a typical 'Western' one, the UK; a post-communist one, Russia; and a Southern European one, Greece. It presents the approaches to negotiation of internationally experienced managers, paints their demographic and cultural profiles and presents their levels of awareness of each others' cultures. It demonstrates that, although the managers in the three countries are distinctly different from each other, both in their demographic and cultural characteristics they generally show very high impression accuracy and a very similar approach to the negotiation process. Avenues for further study are suggested.

## **Introduction**

Firms, including medium or even small ones (Lewis, 1990), are increasingly focusing their attention to international markets they traditionally ignored (McDaniel, 1990). An integral part of developing business in any market, especially a new one, is negotiation. As much as 20% of managers' time is spent in negotiations (reported in Stuhlmacher and Walters, 1999), and for those in sales and international business the proportion has been estimated to be as high as 50% (Adler and Graham, 1989). Despite their importance, however, little attention has been paid to the study of sales negotiations over national boundaries (Adler and Graham, 1989; Mintu and Calantone, 1991; Leung, 1997; Graham and Economou, 1998). The literature is still "normative and largely disjointed" (Simintiras and Thomas, 1998:10). Moreover, it is largely neglecting culture as a variable influencing the process as well as the outcome of cross-cultural negotiations (Pruitt and Carnevale,

1993). Yet the importance, and the need to empirically study culture in the context of negotiation has been repeatedly stressed (Hamner, 1980; Graham, 1985; Tse, Lee et al., 1988; Mintu and Calantone, 1991; Graham, Evenko et al., 1992; Graham, 1996). The need to explicitly address the cultural assumptions of existing models (Adler and Graham, 1989; Graham, Evenko et al., 1992; Gelfand and Christakopoulou, 1999) has also been widely acknowledged. The study presented in this paper represents a first step towards identifying aspects of cross-cultural sales negotiations that need further refinement and empirical research with an ultimate aim to develop a comprehensive cross-cultural negotiation theory.

The working hypothesis used for this empirical study was that the ability of negotiators from different cultural backgrounds to produce sustainable and profitable business relationships with each other through the process of negotiation depends on:

- (a) the compatibility of their demographic characteristics;
- (b) their own cultural norms and values;
- (c) each one's awareness and understanding of the other culture
- (d) the compatibility of their approach to the negotiation process.

It was also hypothesised that these factors are independent of each other but work synergistically to produce the negotiation and the long-term relationship building outcome.

First, a review of the existing literature on each one of the identified model dimensions was undertaken to establish their theoretically expected effect on impression formation accuracy and on the negotiation process. Then, an empirical investigation was undertaken to establish which of these dimensions were systematically different among experienced sales negotiators in different countries. The findings on Greece, Russia and the UK are presented in this paper. These three European countries have a long history of common, yet diverse cultural heritage and represent three typical combinations of religious and political influences. Greece is an almost exclusively Orthodox country, who, through a civil war determined its position in the Western European block but has traditionally had strong left-wing political parties. Russia also has an Orthodox tradition, suppressed under the Soviet regime and now resurfacing and currently struggling to disentangle itself from its communist past in order to join the capitalist world. Finally, the UK is a typical Western capitalist nation with a recent history of religious

toleration and multiculturalism. They are found at the points of a Euro-triangle, geographically, in terms of economic development and in their relationship to the EU.

It has been estimated that more than 90% (Triandis, 1994) of theories of how individuals think and behave in organisations reflect Western perspectives, primarily British and North American ones. Almost none of these theories, especially those related to negotiation behaviour, have been tested in the context of real-life relationships involving Greek or Russian managers. The neglect of the cultural dimension of negotiation (Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993) appears to reflect an unjustifiable assumption of universal applicability of theories and models (Gelfand and Christakopoulou, 1999). The predominant paradigm is that of time as a straight line from the past to the future, implying also linear patterns of communication, causality and interpretation of relationships and events. The adequacy of the paradigm, however, has been questioned, especially when cross-cultural interactions are examined (Limaye and Victor, 1991). Moreover, strong arguments have been made for an examination of the universal (etic) and culture-specific (emic) aspects of negotiation theory (Graham, 1985; Graham, Evenko et al., 1992).

The need to explicitly address the fundamental assumptions of negotiation behaviour models has been strongly advocated (Adler and Graham, 1989; Graham, Evenko et al., 1992; Gelfand and Christakopoulou, 1999) on the basis of the absence of common biological factors, ecological pressures, or social structures (Pepitone and Triandis, 1987)- the conditions of universal applicability of any theory. Managers operating in the international marketing environment share some characteristics irrespective of their specific nationality or heritage. At the same time, aspects of their heritage might influence parts of their cognitive and affective profiles in ways that make them distinct from each other. This exploratory study aims to identify the similarities in their profiles as well as the areas where differences might cause impediments to successful negotiation.

### **The role of negotiators' demographic profiles**

“What all Greeks have known since time immemorial ‘ομοιος ομοιω αει πελαζει’(omeos omeo aei pelaze) – like always seeks like – social and educational psychology have systematically demonstrated” (Zarkada-Fraser, 2001). People tend to identify with other members of the groups they

feel they belong to (Bhattacharya, Rao et al., 1995). This has been the basis of social identity theory, (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Dwyer, Orlando et al., 1998), and by extension, self-categorization theory (Hogg, 2000), which describe the ways in which membership of a group confers identity and influences behaviour. Identification with a specific group produces group-determined behaviours, such as conformity to norms (Asch, 1952), solidarity within one's group and discrimination against out-groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

Social and psychological dissimilarities can negatively affect people's ability to communicate with one another (Triandis, 1960; Padget and Wolosin, 1980) whilst shared understandings can reduce the need for explanations thus increasing the scope for efficient communication on which the conduct of business is dependent (Zarkada-Fraser, 2001). The process of self-categorisation based on shared common attributes (Stephenson and Lewin, 1996; Dwyer, Orlando et al., 1998) occurs during the formation of dyadic relationships (Benkhoff, 1997) and encourages development based on trust, a key component of relationship marketing (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). The creation of one's social identity involves a process of self-categorisation and the attachment of value to a given social category (Barak, Cherin et al., 1998).

Nationality or ethnic group membership as a self-categorisation criterion has been extensively researched and their effects have been largely documented in international business studies (for a review see Zarkada-Fraser, 2001). Other commonly applied criteria include religion, political beliefs, interests, occupation (Mackie, Hamilton et al., 1996), gender and age (Messick and Mackie, 1989). Social identity theory (explored in the context of marketing in Bhattacharya, Rao et al., 1995; Fisher and Wakefield, 1998) suggests that comparable demography will be likely to improve negotiation outcomes and relationship success by increasing interpersonal attraction (Dwyer, Orlando et al., 1998). The importance of interpersonal attraction based on similarities in the self-categorisation criteria has also been stressed by the similarity-attraction paradigm (Berscheid and Hatfield Walster, 1978). Demographic similarities are expected to decrease cognitive biasing (Linville and Jones, 1980), facilitate communication (Smith, 1998) and relationship formation (Churchill, Ford et al., 1985), and decrease interpersonal tension (Dwyer, Orlando et al., 1998). It can be even be argued that they could

help transcend the “natural “us versus them” social categorization of customers and suppliers, which, (...), is antithetical to the development of long-term relationships” (Steinman, 2000: 109).

It has been suggested that matching sales negotiators to the customer may offer the organisation a degree of competitive advantage (Cox and Blake, 1991; Dwyer, Orlando et al., 1998). Evidence has supported this line of argument by indicating that similarity between salespersons and customers as measured by variables such as appearance, status, and lifestyle (Crosby, Evans et al., 1990) or gender and life stage (Smith, 1998) was found to influence sales effectiveness. Similarity was also found to be associated with increased investment in relationships, open communication, trust and overall satisfaction (Smith, 1998).

### **Cultural norms and values**

Even though the cultural boundaries between nations are becoming increasingly “fuzzy” with economic integration (Fukuyama, 1995) experience and anecdotal evidence indicates that the three cultures of Greece, Russia and the UK are significantly different.

Culture, the “distinctive, enduring pattern of behavior and/or personality characteristics” (Clark, 1990: 66) governs the way people act as well as what they believe is important (values), and what they perceive as proper and acceptable conduct (norms) (Mead, 1994; Aquino, 1998; Brett and Okumura, 1998). Culture pervades economic life and cultural norms foster the creation of the social capital of trust which facilitates interaction (Fukuyama, 1995). At the same time they also create impediments to the development of interpersonal trust (Doney, Cannon et al., 1998), the function of groups (Millhous, 1999), the way people and organisations relate to each other (Hofstede, 1994; Fraser, 1999), the performance of sales people (Money and Graham, 1999) and managerial decision-making (Tse, Lee et al., 1988). Different approaches have been adopted in attempts to map the influence of culture on negotiation behaviour and expectations (for a comprehensive review of the extant empirical studies see Simintiras and Thomas, 1998). Irrespective of their methodological and conceptual approach, all studies seem to concur on one point: similar cultural backgrounds produce similar thinking and behavioural patterns which are distinct for each culture.

Another common element in all these studies is the application of cultural dimensions as labels (ie Asians are collectivistic, North Americans individualistic etc) to research subjects on the basis of their nationality and then used, without further testing in order to explain their behaviour. The approach adopted in this paper departs from this norm by presenting the self-reported measurements of manifestations of culture as advocated in recent studies (Tinsley, 1998; Gelfand and Christakopoulou, 1999).

An extensive literature review was undertaken in order to identify the specific dimensions and manifestations of culture that influence the choice of approach to cross-cultural negotiations. It synthesised cross-cultural comparisons (e.g. Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1980; Clark, 1990; Hofstede, 1994; Trompenaars, 1997) and negotiation theory (e.g. Lewicki, Saunders et al., 1997; Lewicki, Saunders et al., 1999). It was hypothesised that in resolving conflict and developing business relationships through sales negotiation exchanges, four aspects of culture are of particular importance: (a) norms of behaviour and expression of one's feelings; (b) norms of relationship building; (c) value of group relationships and the way people relate to in and out groups; and finally (d) the value of time and attitude towards the future.

### **Cultural awareness and impression formation accuracy**

It has long been acknowledged that negotiation skills are indispensable to all managers (Stuhlmacher and Walters, 1999), and especially those working in the international arena (Fayerweather and Kapoor, 1972). Equally necessary is the ability to understand, expect and deal with country to country variations in negotiation styles, norms of behaviour and expectations of relationship development (Ghauri and Usunier, 1996), the "scripts and schemas for negotiation" (Brett and Okumura, 1998: 495) that culture provides. This ability can also be fostered by training as well as exposure to other cultures and reflection on the experiences gained (Kumar and Graf, 1999).

In negotiation, the accuracy of perceptions formed regarding individuals is of extreme importance. It has been proposed that initial perceptions form the basis for the attitude and subsequent strategy adopted in a negotiation (Simintiras and Thomas, 1998). Cultural dissimilarities could potentially lead

to misinterpretations of behaviours and lead to inaccurate impression formation (Graham, 1985) which could be detrimental to the future of the negotiation (Weitz, Sujan et al., 1986). Negotiators from similar cultures, on the other hand, will find it easier to comprehend the patterns of communication used by each other and thus may be able to form more accurate impressions that will foster trust and closer personal relationships (Simintiras and Thomas, 1998).

Impressions about people and their culture, however, are not static. Expectations evolve among the participants to exchanges and norms of behaviour adapt and develop through an ongoing process (Millhous, 1999). For most people in business, knowledge about other cultures comes from books describing largely anecdotal evidence, with limited empirical and theoretical bases (Limaye and Victor, 1991), very often propagating long-held stereotypes. Travelling to other countries has been reported to increase propensity to export but it has not been empirically proven to decrease psychic distance (Stöttinger and Schlegelmilch, 1998). It has also been noted that stereotypes are not directly countered by interaction alone (Watson, Kumar et al., 1993). It is here argued, however, that repeated negotiation exchanges as well as business dealings over a prolonged period of time will promote accuracy of impression formation on variables that are directly related to the context and type of exchanges that take place. In a manner similar to group processes (Watson, Kumar et al., 1993), negotiation experience is expected to mitigate specific barriers created by cultural differences.

The 'contact hypothesis' postulates that interracial contact promotes harmonious race relations (Yancey, 1999). For negotiators involved in international business, direct contact with their foreign counterparts is an important aspect of their working lives. Moreover, it is possible that through common educational streams and work experiences, international sales negotiators develop not only behavioural patterns similar to each others' but also attitudes to the negotiation process that are compatible with those of their counterparts.

### **Approach to the negotiation process**

Every negotiation is in essence a conflict resolution exercise, where competing expectations are balanced against each other in order to produce satisfaction of the parties' needs. Assuming a simple



two-party sales negotiation, each one of the negotiating parties has to consider their own as well as the other party's potential outcomes in order to design a strategy that will allow a satisfactory conclusion of the process, and probably lead to a long-term business relationship. The possible approaches to reaching the conclusion of the negotiation have been classified into a simple five-fold typology, commonly referred to as the "dual concerns model" (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986). This model (summarised in Lewicki, Saunders et al., 1997; Lewicki, Saunders et al., 1999) classifies each party's approach according to the degree of concern shown about their own and the other party's outcomes.

Negotiators focused on their own outcomes and showing little concern for those of the other party are described as *contending*. At the other end of the continuum negotiators that have little concern for their own outcomes but strive for the other party to achieve what they want are described as *yielding*. When the negotiators show high level of concern for their own as well as the other party's outcomes they are described as *integrating* whilst when they show little concern for either they are described as *inactive*. Finally, moderate efforts to pursue one's own and the other party's objectives are described as *compromising*. Depending on the balance of power in the relationship, the importance of each particular issue to each party, time pressures and expectations of future development of the relationship and its perceived importance, each strategy can be appropriate or inappropriate.

Depending on their personality, negotiators might show a preference for one or some of the approaches over others. Some cultures might also foster a propensity towards a particular approach to conflict resolution or render another morally inappropriate. It is known, from previous research (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 1994; Georgas, Christakopoulou et al., 1997; Triandis, Chen et al., 1998), for example, that Greek society is a highly collectivistic one, whilst American society is an individualistic one. Thus, Greek negotiators' observed propensity to attend to the interests of others as opposed to Americans' focus on promoting personal needs and interests has been directly attributed to the two countries' collectivism and individualism levels (Gelfand and Christakopoulou, 1999). A feminine culture (as described in Hofstede, 1994) might increase the likelihood of yielding and integrating approaches whilst a masculine culture, which values competition, could make people more likely to attempt to dominate a negotiation and promote their own interests above those of others.

### **Sampling and Data Collection Procedure**

Most published studies (e.g. Aquino, 1998; Gelfand and Christakopoulou, 1999; Gelfand and Realo, 1999) of cross-cultural negotiations use samples of students with little or no real-life experience in dealing with counterparts from the countries under study in a sales context (see also the methodology section of Graham, Evenko et al., 1992). The bargaining behaviours of business people, however, have been found to vary from those of students (Fouraker and Siegel, 1963). Even students with some business experience have exhibited markedly different attitudes to those of professionals (Zarkada-Fraser, Skitmore et al., 1998). When examining culture, it has been strongly advocated that the closely linked sources of “mental software”, i.e. social class, education and occupation, should be controlled in studies comparing countries, and people of similar levels should be used (Hofstede, 1994: 29).

The research population of this study was defined as marketing or sales managers of exporting firms with at least 5 years experience and full responsibility for selling their firms' products to buyers in the UK, Greece and Russia. To be eligible to participate in the research, respondents were asked if they would describe themselves as being of the cultural background of the country they were in. Only people contacted in the UK, for example, that described themselves as British were interviewed.

A total of 150 individuals that fulfilled the research requirements were identified, initially through trade publications and personal networks in Greece, Russia and the UK and agreed to participate. Each of the respondents was asked to provide information about the business environment of their own country and their impressions of three countries that they said they were familiar with. The distribution of responses in the sample is summarised in Table 1. The columns indicate the country the responses were collected in and the nationality of the respondents. There were 43 Greeks (29% of the total sample); 42 Russians (28%) and 65 British (43%). The rows indicate the number of observations collected for each country and the columns the source of these observations. The row marked GR, for example shows that out of the 87 observations about Greeks, 43 were self-assessments, 10 were opinions about Greeks of Russian managers and 34 opinions of British managers.

**Table 1: Distribution of responses in the sample**

<b>ABOUT</b>	<b>SOURCE</b>			
	<b>GR</b>	<b>RU</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>GR</b>	43	10	34	87
<b>RU</b>	12	42	26	80
<b>UK</b>	32	26	65	123
<b>Total</b>				150

The respondents were asked to indicate if they thought that a set of statements was true about their own countries and about each one of the countries with which they had been doing business. The responses were coded by the interviewers in the respondents' presence and any ambiguities were resolved with their assistance. Finally the respondents also checked and approved the coding which was done on a scale of 1 to 5 with only the ends defined as 1 – if they strongly disagreed, and 5 if they strongly agreed.

### **Profile of the Respondents**

Details of the respondents' demographic profiles were also collected. A summary is presented in Table 2. The table presents the scales used for each demographic variable and the number of respondents in each group. The last column ('% of Total') shows the distribution for the combined sample. Under each one of the variables a row labelled 'MEAN' shows the mean for each country and in the last cell the countries where the Tukey's HSD test showed that the difference in means was significant at the 95% level. Thus, the means for age in Greece and Russia (2.7 and 3.0 respectively) are both significantly different from this of the UK (2.4) but not significantly different with each other.

**Table 2: Demographic profile of the respondents by country**

<b>SCALE</b>	<b>GR n=43</b>	<b>RU n=42</b>	<b>UK n=65</b>	<b>% of Total N=150</b>
<b><u>AGE</u></b>				
1 <30	1		4	3%
2 31-40	18	11	34	42%
3 41-50	19	21	25	43%
4 51-60	5	7	2	9%
5 >60		3		2%
<i>MEAN</i>	2.7	3.0	2.4	UK/GR&RU
<b><u>GENDER</u></b>				
1 female	6		32	25%
2 male	37	42	33	75%
<i>MEAN</i>	1.9	2.0	1.5	UK/GR&RU
<b><u>POSITION IN ORGANISATION</u></b>				
1 trainee				0%
2 junior	5	3	1	6%
3 middle	15	16	15	31%
4 senior	23	22	41	57%
5 executive		1	8	6%
<i>MEAN</i>	3.4	3.5	3.9	UK/GR&RU
<b><u>HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION HELD</u></b>				
1 none				0%
2 high school	9	16	28	35%
3 Graduate	20	23	27	47%
4 Post-grad.	13	2	10	17%
5 Doctoral	1	1		1%
<i>MEAN</i>	3.1	2.7	2.7	GR/UK&RU
<b><u>INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATION EXPERIENCE</u></b>				
1 novice				0%
2 little exp.	4	3	1	5%
3 some exp.	16	14	16	31%
4 very exp	20	18	31	46%
5 veteran	3	7	17	18%
<i>MEAN</i>	3.5	3.7	4.0	GR/UK
<b><u>LANGUAGES THEY CAN HOLD A CONVERSATION IN</u></b>				
only 1 language			56	37%
2	25	29	8	41%
3	16	9	1	17%
4	1	4		3%
5 or more	1			1%
<i>MEAN</i>	2.5	2.4	1.2	UK/RU&GR
<b><u>COUNTRIES THEY HAVE LIVED IN</u></b>				
only 1 country	11	40	45	64%
2	18	2	16	24%
3	10		4	9%
4	4			3%
5 or more	0			0%
<i>MEAN</i>	2.2	1.0	1.4	ALL

The demographic profiles of the respondents in each country appear very consistent with expectations formed through personal observations of the researchers, anecdotal evidence, as well as previously published research results. As such, the samples can be considered as representative of the populations of internationally active and experienced marketeers in the three countries.

#### *Age and gender*

The vast majority (85%) of respondents were in the 30-50 year old age group with most British being in their thirties, the Greeks split between the thirties and forties groups and Russians mostly in their forties. Overall, British managers were younger than the Greeks and Russians.

In Britain, half the managers were female, whilst in Greece and Russia they were all male with the exception of six women in Greece. The gender distribution in the samples is consistent with published survey results that indicated that the representation of women in managerial jobs in the UK in 1991 was higher than other countries, including Greece (Hammond and Holton, 1994 quoted in Petraki Kottis (1996)).

In Greece, the reported participation of women in management is 11% (Petraki Kottis, 1996). As the percentage of women managers is higher in Greek-owned firms than in subsidiaries of multinationals (Petraki Kottis, 1996) this sample which comprises 16% females and only included Greek-owned firms is accurately reflecting the gender distribution of the labour market in Greece.

The all-male Russian managers' group is consistent with observation made by researchers that have lived in Russia and Eastern Europe for many years. There are alarming reports of the increased gender discrimination in the new capitalist regime. Enterprises, are still bound by law to provide generous maternity and family responsibilities allowances to women but without the State support system to subsidise the costs, they "are unwilling to invest in workers who will cost them more" (Jordan, 1997:18). It has been reported that "the majority of [advertised vacancies] (...) are targeted towards men. Any advertisement that asks for an upper level manager, engineer, scientist, economist, or anyone for a high- paying position specifies that the applicant be male. The jobs available for women specify

that they be under the age of thirty and attractive, and the only positions [are] waitress, secretary, cashier, beautician, or escort” (Jordan, 1997:18).

#### *Position in the organisation*

The sample consisted mostly of senior managers (57%) and middle managers (31%). The British were overall more senior than their Greek and Russian counterparts. There was only one junior manager in the British sample but five in the Greek one. Also there were no executives in the Greek sample but there were eight in the British one. The composition of the samples confirms anecdotal evidence about the level at which international marketing and sales managers operate in Greece and Russia. It is also comparable to that of a study of British technical firms exporting to Russia, where approximately 60% of people in charge of international operations were at the top of their organisations (Zarkada-Fraser and Fraser, 2002).

In the British sample, position in the organisation was found to have a weak but significant correlation with age (UK .281, at the 95% level), thus indicating that it is more likely that older people will be in higher positions in the UK than in Russia or Greece where no correlations were observed.

#### *Education*

The respondents were asked to briefly describe their educational backgrounds and the responses collected were coded later as shown in Table 2. Overall, the respondents were fairly well educated as the majority (65%) have at least an undergraduate degree. Even though only the Greeks are significantly different from the other two groups, who are quite similar, the distribution of academic qualifications is quite distinct for each nationality group.

The Greeks are overall far better educated than both the Russians and the British, with a comparatively small number of managers (20%) that have not had a tertiary education, as opposed to 43% and almost 40% respectively. Masters degrees are also more common in the Greek than any other group. This finding is consistent with comparative studies of household expenditure that indicate that, despite universal access to free education, including tertiary education and even textbooks, spending is one of

the highest in the EU (Kanellopoulos and Psacharopoulos, 1997). The bulk of this expenditure is directed towards private tuition in foreign languages (Kanellopoulos and Psacharopoulos, 1997), some of which is aimed at preparation for foreign universities, a fact that also explains the much higher levels of language ability reported by the Greek managers in the present study.

#### *Cross-cultural communication training and experience*

The majority of managers in the sample had received some form of formal cross-cultural communication training. The highest proportion of formally trained managers was observed in Russia, (74%) but overall the split between trained-non trained managers was more or less uniform, with no statistically significant differences between countries.

A comprehensive review of 28 independent empirical studies (Black and Mendenhall, 1990) demonstrated the strong positive links between cross-cultural training and the development of the behavioural and cognitive skills, such as fostering relationships and correctly perceiving the environment and social systems of other cultures (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1986). Indeed, the managers in this study showed high levels of ability to describe the environments of the other cultures in terms very close to those used by the countries' nationals.

The respondents' linguistic abilities varied significantly between nationalities and conformed fully to expectations. The British confirmed the widespread stereotype of unilingualism as less than 15% could converse in any language other than English, a finding similar to that of other studies (Zarkada-Fraser and Fraser, 2002). Older Russians were more likely to have higher linguistic abilities than younger ones (correlation coefficient of age and language was .309, significant at the 95% level). All Greeks and Russians spoke at least two languages, which would be necessary for them in order to be able to operate in an international environment where Greek and Russian are two of the least popular languages. Over 40% of Greeks and 30% of Russians, however, reported that they can hold a conversation in three or more languages.

Apart from formal training courses, other means of direct exposure to other can contribute greatly to cross-cultural understanding and can also foster the ability to develop functional relationships across

national borders. Even more than being able to speak a foreign language, having had the experience of living in another culture increases one's awareness of differences and their impact on behaviour and expectations of relationships.

The Russian managers in the study did not, as a whole, have this experience. Some of the British managers had lived overseas, but the majority (70%) of them had only lived in the UK. The Greeks, however, as is expected from a nation with not only a long-standing tradition of emigration with high rates of returnees (Glytsos, 1995), but also a culture that perceives an education abroad as "prestigious and promising for economic and social advancement" (Kanellopoulos and Psacharopoulos, 1997: 73), had in their vast majority (75%) lived in at least one other country. It has been reported that 500 Greek people obtain MBAs or equivalent qualifications overseas (mostly, in US and UK universities) every year (Bourantas and Papadakis, 1997). Most of them return to Greece after graduation and are absorbed by private industry. In this sample, there is indeed an indication that this could be the case as the correlation between academic qualifications held and countries Greek people had lived in was a moderate but significant one (correlation coefficient of .334 at the 95% confidence level).

The managers that participated in this study had all considerable experience in negotiating in the international business arena. The most common description of themselves used was 'very experienced' with almost one in five managers describing themselves as 'veterans'. Only 5% of the sample had little experience in international negotiations. The British had, overall, significantly more experience than the Greeks with almost 75% of them being at least very experienced. A study of British managers of engineering firms expanding into Russia, conducted in the 1990's also found that over 50% of the respondents had at least 10 years of international experience (Zarkada-Fraser and Fraser, 2002).

International negotiation experience, as expected, was found to be highly correlated with the respondents position in the organisation (.713 for Russia and .708 for the UK at the 99% confidence level but not at all for Greece). It was also correlated with age (.460, .395 and .421 for Greece, Russia and the UK respectively also at the 99% confidence level). More experienced Russian negotiators were found to have relatively higher linguistic abilities (correlation coefficient of .317 at the 95% level). For



the British, however, the inverse, but weak, relationship was apparent. People in higher positions were less likely to speak foreign languages (correlation coefficient of -.246 significant at the 95% level).

### Schematic cultural profiles

The level of manifestation of each one of the selected variables (a total of 21 relating to (a) norms of behaviour and expression of one's feelings; (b) norms of relationship building; (c) value of group relationships and the way people relate to in and out groups; and (d) the value of time and attitude towards the future) was compared across the three samples. Only the responses of the nationals of each country about their own cultures were considered for this part of the analysis. Three group discriminant analysis was performed on the 150 responses collected about the respondents' own culture. Multicollinearity was not a problem as the pooled within-groups correlation matrix did not show any correlations between variables. The performance indicators of the analysis are summarised in Table 3. The results of the analysis indicate that the respondents clearly perceive their own culture to be significantly different and quite distinct from the other two.

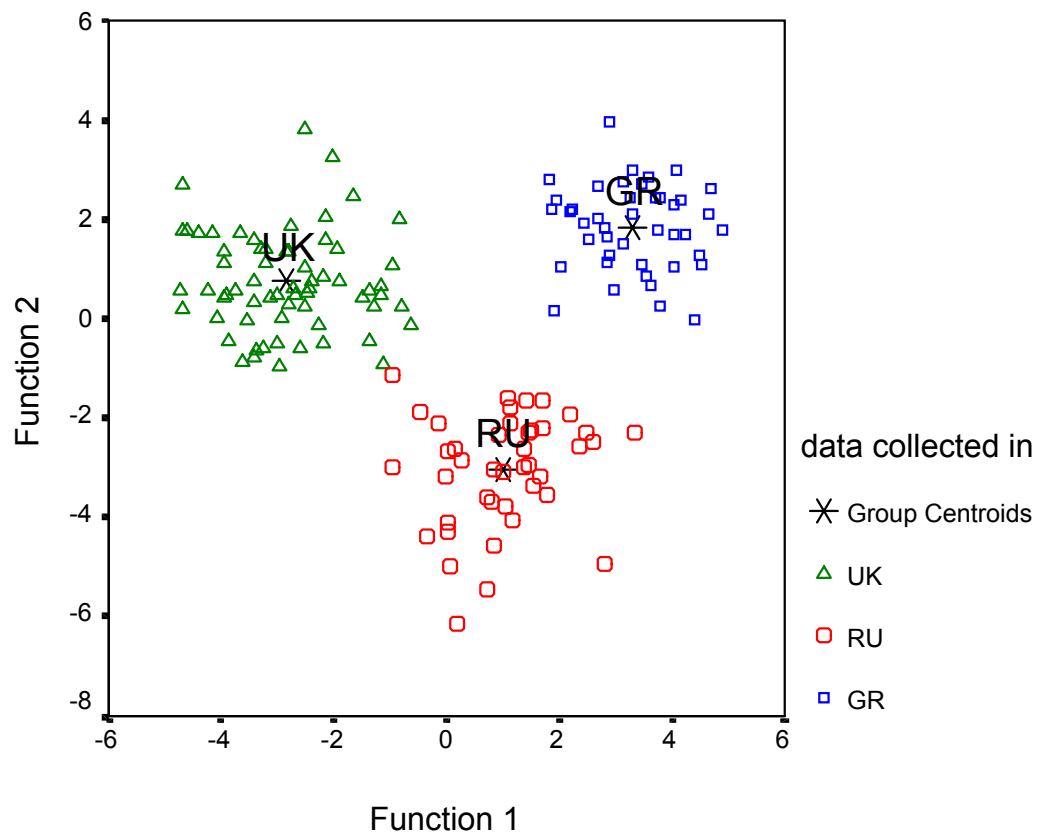
**Table 3: Comparison on aspects of culture between Greece, Russia and the UK - Summary of the discriminant analysis performance indicators**

#### Canonical Discriminant Functions

Fcn	Eigenvalue	% of variance	Canonical Correlation	After Fcn	Wilks' $\lambda$	Chi-square	df	Sig
				0	.025481	502.763	42	.0000
1	7.0495	64.53	.9358	1	.205112	217.035	20	.0000
2	3.8754	35.47	.8916					

The large Eigenvalues indicate that the variance in the data is attributed to between rather than within groups and clearly imply superior discriminant functions. Moreover, large Wilks' Lamdas, both significant at the .0001 level, indicate that the functions significantly discriminate between groups. Even when the superior function 1 is removed, function 2, which explains 35.47% of the variance in the data, still discriminates between the nationalities. Thus, the null hypothesis of equal group centroids cannot be supported. The null hypothesis that the covariance matrices for each group could be sampled from the same population is also rejected on the basis of the results of the Box's M test (Box's M= 719.74627, significant at the .001 level). Re-classification results, computed using prior probabilities calculated on groups size, perfectly distinguished between the three nationalities, with 99.3% of the

150 cases processed correctly classified (one Russian was classified as British). The perfect distinction between groups is demonstrated in the combined map scatterplot (Figure 1). Function 1 differentiates between all three groups whilst Function 2 differentiates between Russians and the other two nationalities.



**Figure 1: Comparison between Greece, Russia and the UK - Combined groups scatterplot on the discriminant functions**

#### **Levels of awareness of each others' cultures**

Each one of the respondents was, as explained above, asked about their opinion on how true each one of the statements about norms was in countries that they had had extensive experience of. The results about each one of the three countries were considered separately. One way ANOVAs with Tukey's HSD test were run for each country to compare self-image with the perceptions of out-group members. Thus, the responses of each country's nationals about their own country were compared with those of the nationals of the other two countries to establish how close their perceptions were.

The results of a simple count of the number of variables where the self-assessment of the respondents concurred with the images of the country held by the nationals of the other two countries (ie. the mean of the degree of agreement with the statement of the country's nationals was not significantly different with any of the means of the nationals of the other countries for the country under observation at the 95% confidence level) are summarised in Table 4.

**Table 4: Awareness of each country's culture measured by the impression formation accuracy of the other countries' nationals**

<i>ABOUT</i>	SOURCE			<i>AVERAGE</i>
	<i>GR</i>	<i>RU</i>	<i>UK</i>	
<i>GR</i>		90%	90%	90%
<i>RU</i>	67%		57%	62%
<i>UK</i>	52%	62%		57%
<i>AVERAGE</i>	59%	76%	70%	

Table 4 is organised in the same manner as Table 1. Both Russian and British manager's views of Greeks concurred with the self-assessment provided by Greeks in 90% of the variables. At the same time, Greeks agreed with the opinions of Russians and British about their own countries in 60% of the statements. Overall, however, it can be argued that the levels of awareness of each others' cultures were quite high for all groups of managers, thus indicating that despite their real differences there is high potential for effective communication and successful negotiation. This is to be expected by the fact that all managers had long-standing business relationships (of at least five years) with nationals of the countries they provided information about.

### **Approach to the negotiation**

The approach to the negotiation process was measured on a five point scale with only the ends defined as 1=never and 5=always using a simple description (as presented in 'Approach to the negotiation process' above) of the position in the dual concerns model. Descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVAs were run to establish if there were any systematic differences between nationalities in their approach to the negotiation. The findings of the analyses are summarised in Table 5.

**Table 5: Cross-cultural comparison of the respondents' approach to the negotiation process**

		Contending	Yielding	Compromising	Inactive	Integrating
ALL N=150	Mean	1.35	1.70	2.01	2.05	<b>3.31</b>
	Std Dev	0.52	0.82	0.77	0.98	1.33
	Minimum	1	1	1	1	1
	Maximum	3	4	4	5	5
GR n=43	Mean	1.40	1.63	2.19	2.28	<b>3.14</b>
	Std Dev	0.54	0.62	0.82	0.91	1.28
	Minimum	1	1	1	1	1
	Maximum	3	4	4	5	5
RU n=42	Mean	1.26	1.57	2.14	2.17	<b>3.50</b>
	Std Dev	0.50	0.74	1.05	0.99	1.27
	Minimum	1	1	1	1	1
	Maximum	3	4	5	4	5
UK n=65	Mean	1.38	1.78	1.83	1.83	<b>3.29</b>
	Std Dev	0.52	0.48	0.94	0.96	1.39
	Minimum	1	1	1	1	1
	Maximum	3	3	5	4	5
<b>ANOVA</b>						
Mean Squares	between gr	0.2453	1.0147	2.8319	2.8704	1.3922
	Within gr.	0.2706	0.6631	0.5669	0.9315	1.7626
F statistic	Ratio	0.9064	1.5302	4.9957	3.0815	0.7898
	Probability	0.4062	0.2199	0.008	0.0489	0.4558
Sign. differences between groups (.05)		no	no	UK with GR&RU	no 2 groups	no

The integrating approach (commonly referred to as seeking a 'win-win' solution) was by far the most popular in all countries, as expected. No systematic differences in the means were clearly distinguishable. Most of the variance for the inactive approach came from between rather than within groups but no two groups were significantly different from each other. The British were found to be significantly less likely to attempt to compromise than the Greeks or the Russians. Both the contending and yielding approaches appear to be unlikely to be used by the majority of the respondents.

Multiple runs of discriminant analysis by demographics (age, gender, position in the organisation and international negotiation experience) of the approach to the negotiation process failed to discriminate between demographic groups. Moreover, ANOVA tests and bivariate correlations showed no systematic differences or significant (at the 95% confidence level) and strong (higher than .3) correlations between demographic characteristics and approach to the negotiation. Thus it can be concluded that the source of the variance lies in the personality rather than the nationality or demographic profile of the respondents. More likely, the approach to the negotiation depends on situational variables that were not included in this exploratory study.

## **Implications of the findings and avenues for further study**

This paper has examined Greek, Russian and British international sales negotiators in terms of: demographic profiles; cultural dimensions; cultural awareness and approach to the negotiation process. The main findings and their implications are discussed below.

### *Demographic Profiles*

The systematic differences in the composition of the demographic profiles of the negotiators in Greece, Russia and the UK perhaps pose one of the most interesting challenges towards achieving integrated intra-European business success. Social identity theory and the similarity-attraction paradigm suggest that these differences might hinder the optimisation of the use of the negotiators' skills and characteristics by failing to provide the required match. In terms of establishing and building the relationship between negotiators, it is the explicit, instantly noticeable demographics such as age or gender, which may, initially at least, affect the negotiation.

In terms of gender, it has been strongly argued that the study of sex differences in role perception and performance of managers is "no longer necessary or advisable" (Panigyrakis and Veloutsou, 1998: 72). Indeed, this study found no differences in the perceptions of the dimension of Greek and British culture (there were no women in the Russian sample), and most importantly, no differences in the choice of negotiation tactics used by male or female managers. This finding coincides with the empirical findings of a comparison of male and female Greek and Italian managers in marketing related jobs (Panigyrakis and Veloutsou, 1998). The fact that men and women are not different in their business behaviour, however, does not necessarily mean that they are also seen as being the same. A female British manager would not treat a Russian client any different than a British man would but the question is: Would the Russian negotiator be aware of that or would his behaviour and expectations reflect his lack of experience in dealing with women in senior managerial positions?

Similar conjectures can be drawn up about Greece as well. Wide-spread stereotypes of women in management in Greece were found to include impressions that women are not interested in their jobs; that their nature or upbringing does not allow them to undertake responsibility or makes their decision making slow and their attitude less 'dynamic' (Petraki Kottis, 1996). Moreover, the typical structure of the Greek firm reinforces the perception that experience and skill do not always determine women's career paths as much as family connections. With such a frame of reference in the minds of Greek negotiators couldn't it be expected that they would be more likely to feel comfortable and communicate easier with a male counterpart than a female one?

The same argument needs to be studied with respect to age. There appeared to be no difference in the perceptions of the dimension of Greek, Russian and British culture and no differences in the choice of negotiation tactics used when the respondents' responses were grouped by age. But again, social identity theory suggests that perhaps there will be some negative effect on the relationship formation process if there is a significant age gap between respondents. Is it possible that the age difference may cause some impediment to successful relationship? Or conversely, can there be advantages to significant age differences? Or could the difference in age be, somehow used as an advantage of one party over the other?

The fact remains that this exploratory study has clearly shown that there are age and status differences. There are no clear indications in this data set of what effect these differences actually do have but future studies should address the possible consequences of this finding.

### *Cultural Dimensions of Greece, Russia and the UK*

Discriminant Analysis correctly classified 99.3% of the 150 cases. This clear and unambiguous distinction has clearly demonstrated that there can be little doubt that there are indeed unique characteristics inherent in each of the countries under study. This finding clearly confirms findings of earlier studies of Greece and the UK and provides some indications of the relationships between Russian and the other two cultures.

The study has also shown that self-reported measures of the four aspects of culture examined can differentiate between nationalities. Further development of the scales can lead to a more refined and detailed description of each nationality along these important dimensions.

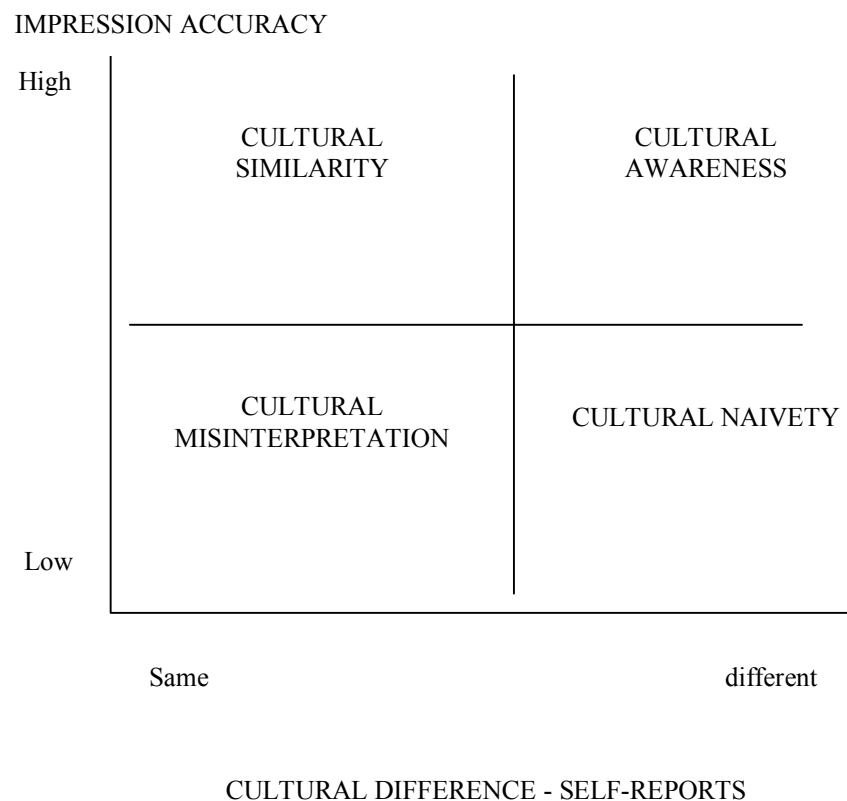
### *Cultural Awareness*

The data collected during this study can be used to measure the actual distance between cultures (the distance between self-reports provided by members of the two cultures being compared) as well as the impression accuracy of members of other cultures (the distance between self-reports and the opinions of members of other cultures about each culture). The outcomes of the comparisons of actual distance and impression accuracy can be classified into four different scenarios.

1. Cultural Misinterpretation - Where the actual difference between self-reports of cultural dimensions are small, but the members of other cultures perceive the differences as being large thus exhibiting low impression accuracy. In this case there appears to be some form of misinterpretation taking place. Perhaps there is a difference between the face and the reality of the situation. Country A may give out a false, perhaps unintentional, signal in relation to a particular issue. There could be either misrepresentation or misinterpretation by either from the sender or the receiver of the signal. It is reasonable to suppose that such a situation is not conducive to successful international business activity and a remedy may be required.
2. Cultural Naivety - Where cultural differences are high and impression accuracy is low. In such a situation it would appear that there is cultural naivety and a great need exists for a better understanding of the cultural dimensions of the country in question. The actual difference between the two cultures has the potential of creating misunderstandings whilst the low impression accuracy indicates that the members of the two cultures are unaware of the differences, perhaps perceiving similarities that do not exist. In this case, problems that may arise in the relationship are likely to be wrongly attributed to causes other than the real ones.

3. Cultural Awareness - Where cultural dimensions are reported as being different and are also perceived as being different. In this case members of each culture know that their cultures are different but they also know what to expect of each other. This situation would appear to be highly conducive to successful international business practice, with each party knowing what to expect from the other party. When differences are correctly identified, then tools to deal successfully with the differences are required to promote successful relationship building and negotiation.
4. Cultural Similarity - Where cultural dimensions are reported as being the same and the evaluations provided by other culture's members concur to that. This is another positive situation highly conducive to successful international business practice. Indeed, the literature appears to concentrate on cultural differences, but what about a greater consideration of cultural similarities – by capitalising on the cultural similarities negotiators can develop a degree of camaraderie with their counterparts.

These four scenarios can be shown graphically in Figure 2 below:



**Figure 2: Schematic representation of cultural difference and impression accuracy scenarios**



This paper has highlighted that in general, there is a high degree of concurrence of evaluations and self-reports, although there may be very large differences in the cultural dimensions themselves. This reinforces the need for training for the development of cultural awareness skills for salespeople so that they can anticipate and understand behaviours in the international environment and be aware of the cultural "tool kit" of culturally dissimilar buyers (Simintiras and Thomas, 1998).

### *Approach to the negotiation*

The integrating approach was by far the most popular in all countries, but not the only one used, and also unrelated to nationality and demographic profile. That would in itself imply, and needs to be further tested, that the chosen approach to each negotiation situation is primarily related to individual or organisational personality variables rather than inherent embodied constructs of national culture or demography. Further work therefore should perhaps consider organisational and situational variables rather than national culture. More details are also required of the participants training. It could be possible, that having had similar training (MBA courses using American textbooks, for example) the respondents to the research selected the 'correct' answer to a straightforward question. This, however, does not necessarily represent actual behaviour during their everyday business dealings.

In summary, before embarking on the in-depth study of the quality and outcome of specific dyadic relationships, an examination of the four broad dimensions of the model was undertaken. Being of an exploratory nature, this study investigated a large number of issues focusing on mapping broad generalisations rather than providing depth and detail of the specific circumstances surrounding a particular relationship. Having identified areas of interest, further study should now focus on a qualitative and longitudinal analysis of relationships that develop through a sequence of negotiation exchanges.

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