

**THE INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL CULTURE ON MANAGEMENT STYLE:  
ARE MANAGERS IN ASIA BECOMING LESS AVERSE TO CHANGE?**

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**ABSTRACT**

The literature describes how institutional environments engineer certain behaviours and cites a number of theories to explain the institutional behaviour patterns exhibited by firms. Three of the theories, namely, ecological (Hannan, 1977, 1984); resource dependency (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978); and institutional theory (Scott, 1983; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Lincoln, 1978, 1986) share a common theme since they attribute business performance to environmental circumstances. The ecological explanation proposed by theorists, adopts a Darwinian approach to management since it posits a degree of "natural selection". It assumes populations operating in a free market institutional environment will adapt to the opportunities and constraints of the market place (Hannan, 1977, 1984; Childs, 2003). In contrast, the resource dependency view cites resources as a key determinant of performance and argues that national boundaries influence the way institutions behave because of the positive or negative influences that boundaries can and do exert on resources. (Pfeffer and Salancik; Childs, 2003) 1978) Institutional theory extends these theoretical explanations to the wider aspects of the environment and suggests macro-forces trigger institutional change. (Scott, 1983; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Lincoln, 1978, 1986; Rosenzweig, 1991; Mizruchi, 1999; Davis, 2000). In response, mimetic behaviours are observed between populations. (Haunschild, 1997)

Here, we examine the workplace environment in Japan and Singapore, both respected for their socio-cultural differences. The aim of the study was to investigate whether the differences in management behaviour that are exhibited in response to the cultural norms, beliefs and values of these two countries were showing signs of standardisation and of isomorphism.

The study used a mail questionnaire (Kanuk, 1975; Armstrong, 1977; Churchill, 1991; Diamantopoulos, 1996, Dillman, 2000; Burns, 2000; Slater, 2004) to investigate socio-cultural differences versus institutional change among managers in Japan and Singapore, asking questions about the internal structure of the organisation and the perception of organisational change that had taken place. The key question therefore, is whether the differences observed in culture, and management style between population groups are significant enough to prevent cultural congruence? This is important because if we take the DiMaggio and Powell (1983) perspective, we could argue that a degree of congruence is possible because globalisation will force population groups to respond to macro-environments in similar ways.

The findings of this study suggest that managers in Asia are becoming less averse to change as certain aspects of tradition continue to erode.

References Available Upon Request