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**LEVERAGING PERSONAS FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN
THE MANAGEMENT OF CROSS-CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN GLOBALIZED
ORGANIZATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

The present review paper aims to examine the idea of developing personas for intercultural communication in the management of cross-cultural diversity in globalized organizations. Huge workforce diversity is visible in firms where a wide range of cultures exist. A persona can basically be defined as a fictional character that has a name, a picture, and a narrative. Further, while creating international personas, globalization plays a significant role. The art of persona development has proved to be a modern way of introducing a new product into the market to represent the users with intercultural aspects for promoting the product globally. The expanding businesses all over the world have incorporated diversity within the co-workers and the organizations. HR plays a big role in managing these cross-cultural relations among the employees, and this is done with the implementation of personas to ponder the globalized organizations. The primary aim of this study is to develop a strategy that could help in forming a workforce with a global mindset. This paper deals with the identification and inspection of important differences in the attitudes and behavior of managers and employees belonging to distinct countries by using the concept of personas. This new technique of persona profiles can help in the development of businesses. Moreover, since most of the businesses evolve from intercultural communications in the organization, persona development plays a significant role in the quality development of businesses. Thus in order to comprehend the concept of persona, the management needs to implement content analysis strategies of personas to understand the behavioral and demographic patterns. Such patterns not only help in expanding diversity but also helps in making the business globally active. The analysis of professional and personal domains of the personas should be examined so as to select the best persona among all. As the personas act as the pillars of any

organization, this study contributes to the complete analysis of persona. This current paper examines the theoretical implications of cultures and intercultural communication to participate in the workforce diversity of an organization. It highlights the unique strategies and the challenges that one faces while working with international personas. The visual representation of the persona is the major issue in globalized organizations, and this can be avoided by analyzing personas broadly on a large platform. Hence the identification of them along with an evaluation of the cultural dimensions will incorporate variation among the workgroups. These changes affect the workforce diversity in the positive aspects to improve quality development and to enhance the business ideas at a broader level in globalized organizations. Further, the theory regarding Hofstede's cultural dimensions is also incorporated in the present study. The study concludes with the strategies required for the management of the cultural differences within an organization and providing cross-cultural training to the employees. For this purpose, the studies conducted in the past regarding the development of personas for intercultural communication in the management of cross-cultural diversity in globalized organizations have been critically reviewed, and inferences have been drawn accordingly in order to compose the review paper.

Keywords: cross-cultural diversity, persona profiling, diversity, globalisation, intercultural communication.

1.0 Introduction

The concept of personas development has gained immense attention among the designers in order to develop unique services, information technology systems and services. Initially, personas were exploited by the information technology designers, however, in recent years, this method has gained enormous popularity among various other fields. Further, it is found that a wide variety of personas development is influenced by the western perspectives, thus constituting the individuals belonging to the national culture at a time (Nielsen [18]; Li et al. [14]). Since the markets are expanding globally, the interest of the firms towards the creation of international personas is increasing rapidly. However, the concept of the development of personas has still not been explored fully. In simple terms, a persona can be defined as a fictional character that possesses a narrative, a picture and a name (Getto & Amant [6]). This is created based on the empirical data collected. The process of persona development is commonly popular among Information technology designers as it aims at keeping the users a priority during the process of designing. Thus the persona development enables the designers to counter their habit for designing as per their needs and aspirations (Jensen et al. [9]). The rapid proliferation of Internet access globally has enhanced online interactions internationally. During the start of the 21st century, approximately 360 million people could access the Internet facility but today, the number has increased enormously and has reached 2.4 billion. This owes to the significant gains that are made in the developing economies of the world (World Internet Usage Statistics [24]). The current review paper aims to examine the idea of developing personas for intercultural communication in the management of cross-cultural diversity in globalized organizations. It will try to draw inferences and compile the studies conducted previously regarding the topic of concern. The primary goal of the current study is to highlight the importance of persona development in the management of cross-cultural diversity in globalized organizations through a critical review of the literature.

2.0 Aims and Objectives

2.1. Aim: This study aims to highlight the significance of personas for intercultural communication in the management of cross-cultural diversity in globalized organizations.

2.2. Objectives: To study the significance, challenges, and management of Cross-cultural diversity in organizations.

- To examine the importance of International persona development for intercultural communication in globalized organizations.
- To comprehend the process of persona development in the organizations and management of cross-cultural diversity.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Management of Cross-Cultural diversity in Organizations

Stahl et al. [23] in their research paper explored the significance of distance, foreignness and cultural diversity in creating value for the organizations globally. The purpose of this study was to incorporate the concept of culture in the research regarding cross-cultural management. The research was conducted through the formulation of the hypothesis and the empirical testing of the literature related to cross-cultural management and international business. The researchers further highlighted the positive roles of diversity and distance across the cultural organizational, institutional and national domains. The results of the study suggested cultural differences positively affect the practices of global and international businesses. Moreover, the findings reveal that distance, foreignness and cultural diversity help in enhancing the performance and effectiveness of the organizations at multiple levels.

Dong and Liu [5] published a research paper in order to examine the issues related to cross-cultural diversity in Chinese organizations and highlight the cross-cultural management practices undertaken in China. For this purpose, the process of the meta-analysis was undertaken to inspect the cross-cultural management practices in China. The findings of the study revealed that there exist mainly two types of intercultural research concerning China. The first one emphasizes the foreign employees and managers and revolves around the aspects related to their adjustments in the Chinese culture. While the second kind of research focuses on the Chinese people who work with these foreigners in the MNC setup. Moreover, the current years have experienced a drift to inspecting the relationships among the same and different levels of variables rather than from inspection of the effects of culture on a single variable.

According to Ariss and Guo [1], as the economy is becoming integrated, a huge number of individuals are shifting from their native lands in search of job opportunities. This movement of individuals across borders has led to immense cultural diversity in the organizations. Ariss and Guo [1] conducted a research study in 2016 in order to examine the challenges that are linked to the management of the culturally distinct workforce and inspect the role played by the cultural aspect in the allocation of jobs among the employees belonging to different cultural backgrounds. For this purpose, a qualitative study was conducted which involved interviews at a personal level with 50 emiratus and the foreign employees working on managerial posts in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The findings of the study revealed that the organizations lacked effective strategies for management of the challenges and issues related to diversity. Further from the data collected through interview, showed that although the value of cultural diversity was acknowledged a common perception mentioned that the efficiency of the workplace was negatively impacted by the cultural diversity as it led to difficulties in interpersonal interactions cross-cultural collaborations and communications. Moreover, due to a lack of strategies regarding the management of cultural diversity, the organizations suffered from cultural isolation and closure on the basis of similarities thus discouraging the emergence of innovative ideas and suppressing the evolution of cross-cultural trusts and understanding.

3.2 Personas Development in organisations

Jung et al. [10] in their research paper made an effort to develop a methodology for the generation of persona for the distribution of their products using online platforms. For this purpose,

real-time data was collected from various social media platforms which contained approximately 30 million interactions from users across 181 countries. Further, around 4200 digital products were dealt in. The methodology developed in this paper primarily identified the impactful and distinct user segment and finally created the persona development by adding features like personal attributes, names, and photographs. This approach was further validated by the implementation of the methodology developed into the working system. The findings of the research study revealed that the developed method used real-time online user data to create realistic personas that actually represented real groups of people.

Lots of tools of workplace collaboration have been generated, but the adoption of these workplace tools by the whole group poses a major issue. The most prominent reason for this issue of adoption is the absence of techniques in the technology design for the consideration of the collaborative groups. Although, during the designing of collaboration tools, the designers recruit the techniques that only focus upon individuals. In order to resolve this issue, Matthews et al. [15] proposed a theory of collaborating personas which differed from the individual personas as they had interrelated and multiple individuals that own specific roles, the focus of these personas was on a cumulative goal and the new characteristics of these personas included collaborative aspects of the work of the groups.

Nielsen and Hansen [16] conducted a qualitative study on the companies in Denmark that possessed experience in the creation and utilization of personas. To find such Danish companies that had an experience, LinkedIn groups were used, further advertisements in newsletters were printed and word of mouth was used for the same. Moreover, Google searches were used to find companies outside the researcher's network. Finally, 13 small, large and medium-sized companies from both private and public sector were approached. Out of these 13 companies, 6 companies had experience in international personas. Interviews were arranged with 28 participants in such a manner that one on one interviews were conducted with 2-3 respondents belonging to the same company along with several interview sessions. The interview included questions like the process of working with the personas, the process of designing, the methods of use and collection of data, the techniques of sharing communicating and using personas. The findings of the study revealed that most of the companies undertaken for the study started using personas around 2008 to 2009, further two companies were new to this methodology. This methodology is considered satisfactory and very satisfactory by the respondents. The findings showed that only one firm was highly dissatisfied with this method and thus quit using the personas method. Further investigations revealed that the reasons for this failure were lack of management support and maturity, materials developed by the foreign departments and lack of knowledge regarding the use of personas.

The extensive changes in the technologies, globalization and demographics have impacts on the worker and the work. The last two decades has experienced the disruption in the practices of talent management. The companies pertaining to almost all sectors have realized that the talent management practices of their companies are unable to meet the needs of their workers. Claus [4] in his research paper highlighted on a new type of talent management practitioners in HR which includes agile management, design thinking, analytics and behavioural economics. Building of this unique talent management in an organization involves extensive designing so as to provide solutions which are generalized for different personas. For this purpose, interviews were conducted with the employees belonging to different personas. This is because employees belonging to different personas have different needs and wants. From the results of the study, it was visible that there existed various challenges and opportunities for the HR in reinventing and managing the talent. Further, the researcher found that the personas play a significant role in the performance and acquisition of the talent.

In the age of big data, the human resources play a significant role in the survival of the companies in a competitive market. Zhao et al. [26] in their research paper refined the concept of 'employee personas' based upon the inventive application of the big data in the human resource

management. The application of big data in the management of the companies has led to enormous progress in the market operations, enhancement of competition and development of business. Furthermore, the development of big data technology has altered the human resource management concept. The researchers in their paper examine the applications of big data in the human resource management businesses of the human resource management and ensures that employee personas play a major role in business of HRM and help in achieving the companies the concept of 'people-oriented'. The concept of employee persona was implemented on the human resource management and the suggestions and the ideas for the implementation of the employee representation in different HRM of the businesses was incorporated.

3.3 Significance for International Persona development on intercultural communication

The development of international personas has been a common topic of interest for various researchers. This concept is relevant since the creation of a national persona for the development of the product that is meant to be utilized and sold in the global markets. The concept of globalization can be defined as the scheme of changing and reversing processes according to various scholars. There exist two processes, the first is the global process, whereas the second process is the national or local process which emphasizes the unique aspects of each nation or culture (Jensen et al. [9]). A study was conducted by Cabrero et al. [2] in Namibia's three Herero settings in order to investigate the use of personas in the context of the non-western, educated, industrialized, rich, and developed (WEIRD). The researchers in their study examined the way the users belonging to the Herero tribe work with the design of persona development. Similarly, Snyder et al. [22] conducted a study on mobile users belonging to the US, Singapore, and India. The main aim of the study was to find the effect of cultural differences on the development of distinct personas. The study showed that the main objective of creating personas was to demonstrate the cross-cultural differences that existed among mobile users belonging to different countries. In their first attempt, it was not expected worldwide. While in their second attempt, they worked on the incorporation of culture in personas with a different approach. In this approach, the cultural differences were incorporated without the inclusion of distinct sections of cultural differences. The findings of the paper revealed that there existed more similarities than differences. Moreover, the researchers experimented with various approaches in order to incorporate the relevance of cultural differences in the creation of international personas.

3.4 A review of Hofstede's cultural dimensions

The concept of national culture plays an important role in identifying the differences in behavior management. Cultural beliefs and norms can be defined as the factors that influence the dispositions, behaviors, and perceptions of the people (Markus and Kitayama [14]). The researchers belonging to the field of accounts have integrated the differences regarding the cross-culture in the values of the society with the accounting phenomena and the management behavior (Han et al. [7]). Hofstede's cultural dimensions are known to affect the values of accounting like transparency, conservatism, and uniformity. Accounting research is highly affected by the national culture (Chand et al. [7]; Orij [18]; Salter et al. [19]; Khlif [11]). According to Hofstede [8], culture can be defined as the cumulative programming of the human brain that differentiates the individuals belonging to a community from another. The national culture may affect the financial reports of a country, the decision of allocation of resources, the leadership concepts, and further influences the psychological factors involved in decision making (Salter et al. [19]). Orij [18] recommends the cross-cultural dimensions as the values of the society that are visible in the situational factors and influence the characteristics of the management. The some studies propose that the concept of accounting cannot work in the vacuum thus it is a product of its surroundings. Furthermore, culture is considered as a significant component of this surrounding, thus cultural values affect the auditing and accounting practices significantly. According to Hofstede, there exist five dimensions of culture which includes masculinity vs femininity, long-term orientation, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism and power distance.

'Masculinity vs femininity' can be defined as the significance of gender in the allocation of social roles. If the masculinity score of a country is low, it means that the country gives more importance to aspects like caring for the weak people, the quality of life, relationships and modesty. The societies having a high masculinity score are known to provide extreme superiority to the operating performance as this provides the firm more recognition socially and boosts the self-esteem of the company (Zhang et al. [23]). The component of individualism can be defined by the degree to which a given country braces the collective or the individual approach. High rated individualism implies that the rights of an individual are more prominent in society. Thus the managers that operate in such societies are more likely to work for their self-interests rather than the interests of shareholder's requirements and the wealth of the stakeholders and thus the earnings are managed for fulfilling the interests of the managers (Zhang et al. [23]). Power distance can be defined as the equality and inequality between the people residing in a nation. A high score of power distance suggests that the inequalities regarding wealth and power are ruling in society. The managers that belong to this society take the major decisions of the firm and mostly take actions that are risky in nature as the entire power is concentrated in the hands of these managers. Further, uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which the citizens of a country tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty in a country. Thus a high score of uncertainty avoidance means that the citizens of the country do not prefer to tolerate much uncertainty and thus demand more law regulations and institutions in order to reduce vagueness. The managers in setup are more risk averse and highly concerned about the costs (Zhang et al. [23]). Lastly, the long-term orientation focuses on the aspect of time of taking decisions by an individual. A high score of long-time orientation means that the people belonging to a country try to initiate better associations with the shareholders in order to establish strong bonds in the future with them.

The identification of the personas along with the evaluation of cultural dimensions helps in incorporating variations among the workgroups. These changes have a positive impact on workforce diversity by improving quality development and enhancing the business ideas at a higher level in the globalized organizations.

4. Findings and Discussions

The development of personas is a new technique that helps the product to penetrate into the market by considering the intercultural aspects for the promotion of the product globally. The migration of people from their native lands in search of more job opportunities has led to an increase in diversity in the organizations at a global level. This diversity can be both a boon and a bane for the firms. Management strategies to manage workforce diversity can help in curbing the problems and the issues that arise through it. Further, cross-cultural diversity also proves to have positive impacts on the productivity of a business. The major goal of the current review is to study the strategy of persona profiling in order to broaden the way for business development. Such strategies help in expanding diversity and at the same time making the businesses globally active. Further, the management can choose the best pattern for the development of personas as per the behavior and demographics of its target audience, in order to survive the throat-cutting market competition globally. From the previous sections, various inferences can be drawn through the review of the existing literature. Many scholars have conducted exemplary studies in the field of personas development for intercultural communication in the management of cross-cultural diversity in globalized organizations. The findings of the study revealed that the distance and diversity across the various institutions and organizations play a positive role in the practices of global and international businesses. Further, certain scholars believe that if managed properly, cultural diversity, distance, and foreignness helps in enhancing the profitability of an organization. On the other hand, some scholars believed that the efficiency of the workplace was negatively impacted by cultural diversity. According to them, cultural diversity led to difficulties in interpersonal interactions, cross-cultural collaborations, and communications. Further, due to the lack of strategies regarding the management of cultural diversity, the organizations suffer

from cultural isolation and thus this leads to suppression of the evolution of cross-cultural trusts and understandings. Further, the study revealed the significance of persona development in intercultural communication and also explored the cases in which organizations used this method of persona development. The inspection of the literature affirmed that most of the companies were satisfied by the adoption of persona development while only a few companies were dissatisfied. Further, a critical review of the literature regarding the concept of international persona development showed that the creation of international personas was important as the concept of national personas are irrelevant while developing a product meant to be sold in global markets. Further, the study highlights the Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions. According to Hofstede, there exist five dimensions of culture. This framework helps in comprehending the differences in the process of business followed in countries with distinct cultures. Thus the Hofstede's cultural dimensions distinguish among the countries based on the cultural aspects and their influence on the business settings.

5 Conclusions

The present study aims to examine the development of personas for intercultural communication in the management of cross-cultural diversity in globalized organizations. The study of Hofstede's cultural dimensions to comprehend the behavior and culture in order to maintain the workforce diversity along with the analysis of personas has incorporated variations among the workgroups. This has affected the workforce diversity in a positive manner and thus has enhanced the business ideas at a much wider level in globalized organizations. The current study highlights the characterization of cultural dimensions among the personas. This study tries to compile the existing literature regarding the concept of leveraging personas for intercultural communication in the management of cross-cultural diversity in globalized organizations. This study will help the businesses in comprehending the importance of personas in enhancing their productivity and will also provide the management with ideas to incorporate this technique in their business strategies. Further, it will add to the existing literature and will also contribute to future research studies.

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