LEARN TO CHANGE

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

DIGITAL STORYTELLING (DST): SPECIALIZED ASSIGNMENT 18

INTERCULTURAL LITERACY 4: LEARNING ABOUT CROSS-CULTURAL FRAMEWORKS FOR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

Phase 1) Think about how culture influences international business

- Read the following text to find out more about culture and international business.

As the world becomes more of a global village, internationalisation has gained much discussion in recent years. What is internationalisation, exactly? How can an (international) firm enter new foreign markets? What are the advantages and disadvantages of expanding internationally?

While internationalising, companies face a high level of uncertainty, connected to the lack of knowledge of the foreign market, and to the "soft factors," which can reduce profitability and create a situation of disadvantage with regard to local or already embedded competitors. Therefore, knowledge of the target market's culture is essential in adapting company's products, processes and practices, and in developing effective (digital) communication strategies to make the adaptation viable. Here's a brief overview of different aspects of culture that play a role in developing international digital communication strategy, and the tools businesses have at their disposal for analysing culture.

Culture has various definitions, but in the simplest terms, culture refers to the norms, values, beliefs, ideas, attitudes, and social behaviour of an individual or society. Cultural adaptation in international business encompasses organisational culture as well as national cultures and traditions. It helps the organisations to have a better understanding of how local businesses and the workforce function. Conducting international business involves entering new markets. Companies must display sensitivity towards different cultures when dealing with foreign clients (B2C) or planning a marketing campaign for their foreign subsidiaries (B2B). Business executives should start by studying the local market's beliefs, values, and customs. Most often, organisations focusing on the bigger picture overlook regional differences in emerging markets. Subcultures go beyond regional and ethnic variations to include other elements, such as differences in age groups, or consumer behaviour and thinking based on gender. Culture strongly influences consumer attitude and behaviour. However, many companies go by the one-size-fits-all approach without realising that personalization is the secret to creating a large and diverse customer base. They must restructure their business models to reflect local customs, habits, and preferences of different buyer personas.
(Adapted from the book *Internationalizing Firms* by Adriana Calvelli and Chiara Cannavale)

- Identify your key takeaways and discuss them with others. Summarise your notes on Padlet.
- Do you have any experience with B2C and B2B communication in international business? Share your ideas with others.

Phase 2) Learn about cross-cultural comparison frameworks

- A number of researchers have developed frameworks with which cultures can be compared with one another. They help businesses interpret differences and similarities between the behaviours and values of different national cultures, which can then be built into their internationalisation strategy. Probably the most commonly cited names in cross-cultural comparison in the field of international business are Edward Hall, Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner, Edward Schein. Despite some limitations of their research these experts have helped to raise awareness of

the importance of cross-cultural sensitivity in business and other fields. When used critically, cultural dimensions frameworks can augment the information you gather with insights into attitudes and values. This will, in turn, help you create international buyer personas, and enable you to make predictions about how a company might need to adapt its current communication strategy for the foreign market.

- Study the following links and find out more about:
  - **Edward T. Hall** at Hall's cultural factors
  - **Geert Hofstede** at Hofstede Insights and Hofstede Cultural Framework
  - **Fons Trompenaars** and **Charles Hampden Turner** at The Seven Dimensions of Culture and Trompenaars 7 Cultural Dimensions
  - **Edgar Schein** at Edgar Schein Model of Organization Culture and What is Culture?
- Based on your reading and watching, visualise (e.g., through concept maps) each of the frameworks you studied, give examples to demonstrate cross-cultural differences and similarities.
- Discuss your key findings with others, compare your visualisations, and post your takeaways on Padlet.
- Share with others how the frameworks relate to your own cross-cultural experience.
- Summarise your key learning/findings from this assignment.