

*A Perception Study of Multicultural Values:  
Applying Hofstede's Values Survey Module in the Thai Setting*

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**Abstract**

This paper aims to track the changes in Thailand's cultural dimension score over a decade. The research methodology includes the target dissemination of Hofstede's Value Survey Module 2013 to collect data online from corporate employees with 264 usable responses. Demographic data of respondents are majority female (54%), age 36 years and above (77%), graduated with a master's degree (66%), and having a managerial title (54%). Data analysis consists of the formula calculation of mean scores into the dimensions, including power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence. The dimension scores further require a designated constant computed from the shift, using seven particular Asian countries as a reference region. The final dimension score results show an increase and decrease from the originals. The surveyed power distance score is 40, a 24 points reduction from the original score of 64, indicating a shift in the lower value of seniority and hierarchy among the respondents. The remaining dimensions have higher scores than the previous, ranging from 8 to 34. The highest changed score is masculinity changing from the original 34 to 68, reflecting an increase in competitive and winning value. The minimal change score is uncertainty avoidance, from 64 to 72, indicating a slight increase in how people value the necessity of rules. Perceived benefits of this study include updated perceptions of Thai respondents as a fresher view after the original and how to apply the VSM formula index to obtain a new score in the future study.

Keywords: Multicultural Dimensions, Hofstede's VSM, Thailand's Cultural Dimension Scores

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## Introduction

As time passes along with significant disruptions and changes, such as financial instability, pandemic, and political conflicts, it may be time to reinvestigate how people's perceptions may have changed. Therefore, this research assumes that changes may inevitably occur during the past decade. Hofstede's Multicultural Dimensions has been popular among those interested in learning about cross-cultural values. Six dimensions include power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence. A set of questions and manual of Value Survey Module or VSM 2013 have been available for researchers to conduct a replicate study.

## Research Methodology

The study aims to track the changes in the cross-cultural perception of Thai people over time. The research uses a survey question from Hofstede's Value Survey Module or VSM 2013, a 30-item questionnaire developed by Geert Hofstede and Michael Minkov, to compare culturally influenced values of countries. The manual clearly stated that the VSM2013 is not for the individual level, not for comparing organizations, nor for disapproving the published scores. The reason is that comparisons must use matched respondents from an original IBM subsidiary population. All questions require the target groups to give their perception rating on a five-point scale (1-5). There are formulas set to compute each dimension as follows:

### 1. Power Distance Index (PDI)

The extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a society expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.

Index Formula:  $PDI = 35(m07 - m02) + 25(m20 - m23) + C(pd)$

Note:  $C(pd)$  is a constant (positive or negative) chosen to shift the found PDI scores to values between 0 and 100.

### 2. Individualism Index (IDV)

Individualism reflects a loose tie between individuals; a person is expected to look after themselves and their immediate family only; Opposite is collectivism, in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which continue to protect them throughout their lifetime in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

Index Formula:  $DV = 35(m04 - m01) + 35(m09 - m06) + C(ic)$

Note:  $C(ic)$  is a constant (positive or negative) chosen to shift the found IDV scores to values between 0 and 100.

### 3. Masculinity Index (MAS)

A society in which social gender roles are distinct: men are supposed to be more assertive, challenging, and focused on material success; women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.

Index Formula:  $MAS = 35(m05 - m03) + 35(m08 - m10) + C(mf)$

Note:  $C(mf)$  is a constant (positive or negative) chosen to shift the found MAS scores to values between 0 and 100.

#### 4. Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)

The extent to which the members of institutions and organizations within a society feel threatened by uncertain, unknown, ambiguous, or unstructured situations.

Index Formula:  $UAI = 40(m18 - m15) + 25(m21 - m24) + C(ua)$

Note: C(ua) is a constant (positive or negative) chosen to shift the found UAI scores to values between 0 and 100.

#### 5. Long-Term Orientation Index (LTO)

A society that fosters virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular, adaptation, perseverance, and thrift; the Opposite is a short-term orientation that enables virtues related to the past and present, in particular, respect for tradition and fulfilling social obligations

Index Formula:  $LTO = 40(m13 - m14) + 25(m19 - m22) + C(ls)$

Note: C(ls) is a constant (positive or negative) chosen to shift the found LTO scores to values between 0 and 100.

#### 6. Indulgence versus Restraint Index (IVR)

A society that allows relatively free gratification of some desires and feelings, especially leisure, merrymaking with friends, spending, and consumption; restraining is a society that controls such gratification and where people feel less able to enjoy their lives

Index Formula:  $IVR = 35(m12 - m11) + 40(m17 - m16) + C(ir)$

Note: C(ir) is a constant (positive or negative) chosen to shift the found IVR scores to values between 0 and 100.

### Demographic of Respondents

The total 264 respondent profiles are as follows:

Gender: Male 121 (46%) ; Female 143 (54%)

Age: 21 -35 Years 202 (77%); 36 Years and above 62 (23%)

Education: Bachelor Degree 89 (34%); Master Degree and higher 175 (66%)

Position: Operational Staff 121 (46%); Managerial Staff 143 (54%)

### Data Gathering and Analysis

The questionnaires were administered online to company employees, with a total usable response of 264. Data analysis includes each question's mean score and the index formula calculation.

The sample calculation is as follows:

Notes: VSM recommends a two-decimal mean score.

Q7 Be consulted by your boss in a decision involving your work Mean score = 3.43

Q2 Have a boss you can trust Mean score = 1.00

Q20 Subordinates afraid to contradict their boss Mean score = 4.48

Q23 Two bosses should be avoided at all costs Mean score = 1.53

Formula Index for PDI =  $35(m07 - m02) + 25(m20 - m23) + C(pd)$

The first score derived from the formula for Power Distance without the constant C(pd) is 159.

As the VSM manual recommends applying a constant to shift the score to values between 0 and 100, the researcher has to calculate the constant through reference to others. For the PDI index, the reference score used is 76, thus making the constant C(pd) equal to minus 119. The final PDI score becomes  $159 + (-119) = 40$ . In this regard, the newfound PDI for Thailand is 40, which is less than the original Hofstede score of 64.

Details of dimension index constant and final scores are shown in the following tables.

PDI	Shift +?	Thailand	Reference Others
Found Scores		159	76
Shift + ?	25	183	100
Hofstede Scores		64	
Distracted to get Constant		- 119	

PDI	Mean Score	Constant C(pd)	NEW PDI	H.PDI	Difference
Q7 PDI_be consulted by your boss in decisions involving your work	3.43				
Q2 PDI_ have a boss you can respect	1.00				
Q20 PDI_subordinates afraid to contradict their boss	4.48				
Q23 PDI_two bosses should be avoided at all costs	1.53				
Net PDI Scores	159	-119	40	64	25

Table 1: Calculation of Power Distance Dimension Scores

IDV	Shift +?	Thailand	Reference Others
Found Scores		97	25
Shift + ?	-25	72	0
Hofstede Scores		20	
Distracted to get Constant		- 52	

IDV	Mean Score	Constant C(pd)	NEW IDV	H.IDV	Difference
Q4 IDV_ have security of employment	2.90				
Q1 IDV_ have sufficient time for your personal or home life	1.50				
Q9 IDV_ have a job respected by your family and friends	3.40				
Q6 IDV_ do work that is interesting	1.50				
Net IDV Scores	97	-52	45	20	-25

Table 2: Calculation of Individualism Dimension Scores

MAS	Shift +?	Thailand	Reference Others
Found Scores		114	34
Shift + ?	-34	80	0
Hofstede Scores		34	
Distracted to get Constant		-46	

MAS	Mean Score	Constant C(pd)	NEW MAS	H.MAS	Difference
Q5 MAS_have pleasant people to work with	3.40				
Q3 MAS_get recognition for good performance	1.50				
Q8 MAS_live in a desirable area	3.40				
Q10 MAS_have chances for promotion	1.50				
Net MAS Scores	114	-46	68	34	-34

Table 3: Calculation of Masculinity Dimension Scores

UAI	Shift +?	Thailand	Reference Others
Found Scores		127	8
Shift + ?	-8	119	0
Hofstede Scores		64	
Distracted to get Constant		-55	

UAI	Mean Score	Constant C(pd)	NEW UAI	H.UAI	Difference
Q18 UAI_your state of health these days	3.90				
Q15 UAI_feel nervous or tense	2.00				
Q21 UAI_be a good manager without answer to subordinate's question	3.90				
Q24 UAI_rules should not be broken even for the company's interest	1.50				
Net UAI Scores	127	-55	72	64	-8

Table 4: Calculation of Uncertainty Avoidance Dimension Scores

LTO	Shift +?	Thailand	Reference Others
Found Scores		139	30
Shift + ?	-30	110	0
Hofstede Scores		32	
Distracted to get Constant		-78	

LTO	Mean Score	Constant C(pd)	NEW LTO	H.LTO	Difference
Q13 LTO_ do a service to a friend	2.90				
Q14 LTO_ thrift (not spending more than needed)	1.00				
Q19 LTO_ proud to be a citizen of your country	4.40				
Q22 LTO_ persistent efforts are the surest way to results	1.50				
Net LTO Scores	139	-78	62	32	-30

Table 5: Calculation of Long-term Orientation Dimension Scores

IVR	Shift +?	Thailand	Reference Others
Found Scores		127	31
Shift + ?	-31	96	0
Hofstede Scores		45	
Distracted to get Constant		-51	

IVR	Mean Score	Constant C(pd)	NEW IVR	H.IVR	Difference
Q12 IVR_ have security of employment	2.90				
Q11 IVR_ have security of employment	1.00				
Q17 IVR_ have security of employment	3.90				
Q16 IVR_ have security of employment	1.50				
Net IVR Scores	127	-51	76	45	-31

Table 6: Calculation of Indulgence vs. Restraint Dimension Scores

## Results and Discussions

The final result of the study is shown in the followings:

Cultural Index Score	This study	Hofstede Score
Power Distance Index (PDI)	40	64
Individualism Index (IDV)	45	20
Masculinity Index (MAS)	68	34
Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)	72	64
Long Term Orientation Index (LTO)	62	32
Indulgence vs. Restraint Index (IVR)	76	45

Table 7: Summary of New Found Index Scores

Perception of 264 respondents showed a 24 score decrease from the original Hofstede in the power distance index, indicating less acceptance of the distribution of power in society. Concerning the individualism index, the respondents moved toward a loose tie in the community where the concentration is on their immediate family, not all others. The masculinity index score increased toward a more assertive, competitive, and concerned-for material. The uncertainty avoidance index showed a slight increase from an already moderately high threat of risks. The long-term orientation index was on the rise to a more concern towards the future. Lastly, the indulgence versus restraint index showed increased leisure and free gratifications.

## Conclusion

As reminded by the VSM, the results found are not comparable to published scores due to the changing time, places, and sample groups. It is, therefore, virtually impossible to make a complete comparison. However, the VSM is still a good tool for enthusiastic researchers to explore cultural dimensions following Hofstede's trail of thought. Though there is no means to change the original score, the researcher thinks this study may serve as a preview of what has been happening in society. As the faithful witness of the world, the researcher agrees with the found scores in all six dimensions. Much appreciation for the VSM tool; there should be more studies of this kind elsewhere in the future.

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