Japanese Cross-cultural Management in Indian Business-to-Business Marketing Situations: A Study of Evolving intra-Asian Differences in Cultural Values

Abstract

Purpose: Extensive research has been conducted on cross-cultural comparisons between Eastern and Western organizational cultures in major trading domains. However, there is a lack of examination of *intra-comparative* management nuances *within Asian regions*. This research paper focuses on the under-explored topic of the values, beliefs, and attitudes (VBAs) that influence the outcomes of East Asian (e.g., Japan) marketing strategies and operations when implemented in South Asian (e.g., India) markets and organizational contexts. The study aims to analyze the impact of VBAs on marketing effectiveness and provide insights for marketers in cross-cultural settings. The article analyzes the customer satisfaction orientation (CSO) of Japanese business executives and draws insights that offer lessons related to cultural VBAs for overall marketing strategy and foreign investors.

Methodology/ approach: The paper employs a social constructivist paradigm and gathers empirical research through multiple interviews. These facilitate novel and normally rare access and insights into Japanese business leaders' lived experience of CSO in B2B Indian intercultural situations.

Findings: Interpretivist data analysis reveals several push-pull factors that influence CSO practice. The research identifies shared values such as long-termism and harmony that have the potential to boost CSO as a marketing strategy in India.

Research implications: The paper develops a conceptualization of cultural VBAs that lead to successful CSO practice in India and is of relevance to foreign investors.

Practical implications: This study suggests that East Asian marketers should carefully consider the impact of VBAs on their marketing strategies. Our research sheds light on the ongoing discussion on static versus evolving nature of culture and highlights the need to pay attention to cultural change, particularly congruence and confluence in workplace values.

Originality: The intercultural study contributes to the literature on international marketing strategy by highlighting the nature and importance of understanding traditional and evolving cultural VBAs for appreciating receptivity to adoption and thereby efficacy of home country marketing strategy.

1. Introduction

Though Japan and India both locate within the vast area denominated as 'Asia', the intra-comparative cross-cultural management (CCM) nuances that may exist within, and between, such Asian cultures, though long-identified (Iacobucci & Onyemah, 2015), remain under-researched. This is especially the case concerning East Asian (e.g., Japanese) and South Asian (e.g., Indian) contexts, and furthermore, within these particular domains and sectors, for example, cross-cultural management and marketing settings. As Japanese multinational enterprises (MNEs) continue to seek returns through geographic diversification (e.g. Kawashima, 2020), India's allure heightens (Belk, 2021; Nayak, 2019). Not surprisingly, Indo-Japanese Business-to-Business (B2B) constitutes a substantial and growing sub-sector. The number of Japanese businesses in India has grown almost three-fold to approximately 1,500 companies in the last decade (Embassy of Japan in India, 2023). Therefore, this extensive market region is of national and international importance and encompasses Japanese companies which are manufacturers of industrial products (e.g., ball bearings) as well as consumer products (e.g., shoes, cars etc.). These firms and markets frequently deal with business buyers in B2B situations, which are different from normal consumer (Business-to-Consumer - B2C) marketing, *inter alia* in terms of the close working relationship of the seller and buyer (cf. Yu & Pysarchik, 2018). Nevertheless, despite India's economic growth, many foreign investors are finding it difficult to make money in India (e.g. Kondo, 2024; Saranga, Mudambi & Schotter, 2017). Part of the complex challenge is the cultural adaptation and adoption of their

2

management ways for the Indian local cultural context (Varma et al., 2024). By way of example, Ashta (2024) points to the cultural problem of the perceived longer decision-making process of the Japanese for product development. In terms of classical CCM theory this longer decision-making culture is often attributed to the Japanese proclivity for uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede et. al., 2010).

However, the present argument recognizes that while some perspectives on culture lean towards relatively categorized and static representations of culture (for instance Hofstede, 2007; Inglehart and Baker, 2000; Kotabe, 2020), other studies render culture in business and wider contexts as constantly evolving (Lichy and Stokes, 2017) - especially when the contemporary workplace is considered through the lens of everyday life (Nidumolu, 2013; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2020). In addition, we recognize from Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2020) the geographical (spatial) contingent nature of culture and infer that home country values (i.e., Japanese values underlying Japanese culture) might manifest and adjust differently in Japanese marketers away from home geographical settings, such as expatriate relocation to India. We agree with Mintz et al. (2022) on a national level customer orientation, and we propose that degree of cultural affinity (i.e. congruence or incongruence) and propensity—especially national foundational components of values, beliefs, and attitudes (VBAs)—can exert a strong influence on driving the implementation of home country marketing strategy. Furthermore, we recognize that the culture *actually experienced* in the intercultural context could variously both facilitate or impede, the infusion of the culturally derived home country marketing strategies in Indian settings. Consequently, we suggest that a social constructivist phenomenological approach to evaluate how cultural influences manifest in these lived experiences (Sanders, 1982; Van Maanen, 2011) and how this is pertinent to

understanding actors' (marketeers') perceptions of cultural phenomena in Indo-Japanese contexts (Belk, Ger and Askegaard, 2003).

The deeply embedded Japanese differentiating marketing strategy of 'focusing on the customer' is well-recognized (Kotabe, 2020; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2020), and, herein, we refer to this intensive alignment as *customer satisfaction orientation (CSO).* While an extensive body of literature exists on Japanese CSO and in Western (developed economy) settings (Elger and Smith, 2010), it has been generally under-commented in Indo-Japanese cross-cultural contexts. Moreover, following an individual lived experience (micro-foundational) VBA approach (Stokes et al., 2016), we understand that VBAs operate at an important confluence between individual and corporate behavior linked to the performance of customer satisfaction. In view of the above, we ask:

> *How do cultural VBAs manifest in the lived experiences of Japanese business leaders in*
>
> *intercultural CSO contexts at their Indian subsidiaries?*

Answering this exploratory cross-cultural research question (RQ) is timely and pertinent because, while China and Japan have remained broadly consistently authentic to their traditional cultures, India's workplace values have been taking a Western turn for some time (Ashta et al., 2018; Chakraborty, 1991). For instance, the Chinese construct of *Guanxi* reportedly remains an enduring and integral part of Chinese management culture (Yang and Wang, 2011); and, similarly, the importance of culture to Japanese relation-specific skills continues in contemporary times (Saeki and Horak, 2014). Thus, while East Asian countries, as instantiated by China and Japan, maintain traditional values, it is not widely considered how this may impinge on Japanese marketers' strategic behaviors when operating in South Asian situations, like the transforming India context.

The remainder of the paper progresses as follows: we begin with a literature review investigating CSO in Indian and Japanese contexts; we then establish our research methodology; proceed into data analysis; and, present the findings. The work ends with a discussion of the findings and presents implications, limitations, and conclusions.

2. Literature review

Our review progresses in stages. We first draw on cross-cultural management theory to set up the theoretical background for a Japan and India comparative evaluation related to CSO. Next, we delve into the historical philosophical underpinnings of the respective cultures. Finally, we consider contemporary Japanese and Indian management scholarship to bare and highlight the importance of the RQ.

2.1. Cross-cultural management theory: A comparative cross-national evaluation.

CCM studies may be categorized into three types: *unicultural*, which looks at business cultures in their home country; *comparative*, which compares culture, usually across nations, and *intercultural* which deals with the interaction of persons from different nations (Adler, 1983b). We infer that it is an intercultural study that would be most relevant to our RQ; however, in the absence of extensive existing intercultural research, following Bird and Mendenhall (2016), we turn to *comparative* literature for heuristics guidance (Patel, 2016). In the comparative CCM category, we review the Hofstede framework (Hofstede, 1983; Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010), because it is the most widely cited and impactful seminal work (Bird and Mendenhall, 2016; Romani et al., 2018), whilst remaining mindful of well-cited *caveats* (see McSweeney, 2002). Though there are more recent frameworks for understanding national dimensions of culture such as GLOBE (House

et al. 2004), we elect the Hofstedian framework because it continues to be praised by scholars of international business (e.g., Tomas et al., 2022), international marketing (e.g., Yang & Gabrielsson, 2018; Yu & Pysarchik; 2018) and CCM (e.g., Barmeyer et al., 2019).

For his comparative study, Hofstede (1983) surveyed over 100,000 employees at IBM offices across the globe to identify four dimensions of national culture; later a fifth and sixth were added. These six dimensions - power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation (LTO), indulgence - form the basis of an India-Japan comparative analysis seen in Table 1. (see also Exhibit 1 for details of generating these inferred predictions)

Insert Table 1 here

Three points need to be noted here, with respect to the comparative study reviewed. First, due to inter-dimension impacts, it would be insufficient to judge an innate propensity to CSO based on a single dimension. As an example, it was Hofstede noted that masculinity in Japan was tempered by a tendency towards moderate collectivism (Hofstede et al., 2010). Second, the relative degree of contribution of each dimension towards a CSO remains unmeasured. By way of example, the predictions of Table 1 do not indicate which, uncertainty avoidance or LTO, contributes more to CSO. Nevertheless, a Hofstede comparative summary advances a general heuristic understanding of a disparate push-and-pull and the contribution of the different dimensions. Figure 1 captures the prediction offered by the Hofstede framework in Table 1, in terms of congruence (facilitating forces) and incongruence (impeding forces). Though both India and Japan are located in Asia, the

Hofstede-enabled visualization of Figure 1 leads to a *prima facie* perspective that Japanese business leaders' CSO in an Indian intercultural context will be impacted by a combination of facilitating and impeding forces.

Insert Figure 1 here

The third point is that though the Hofstede comparative framework has provided a useful lead with respect to the general objective, nevertheless, what remains elusive with respect to the RQ is an *intercultural* understanding of the lived Japanese business leaders' experience in India. And this is especially so in the context of CSO and the underlying VBAs – the latter serving as micro-foundations for a culture's national dimensions (Foss and Pedersen, 2019). The study now turns to consider the important origins and roots of Indian and Japanese VBAs (Ronen and Shenkar, 2013).

2.2. Historical spirituality angles on Indian and Japanese VBAs

Indian VBAs originate from the Vedas inspired traditional[1] Upanishads. Therefore, following that: "dominant religion is a valid proxy for culture because religions are a primary source of moral injunctions and beliefs" (Siegel, Licht and Schwartz, 2011 p. 623) accordingly, use of Upanishadic philosophy as being representative of traditional Indian values is appropriate. Similarly, though Japan, too sees a multitude of religions observed (i.e. Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism), Buddhism constitutes the major religion influencing management practice (Barkema et al., 2015). Japanese Buddhism traces its roots to Indian Upanishads (e.g. Ashta 2021; Nakamura,

---

[1] For the purpose of this paper the term traditional Indian philosophy refers to the philosophy enshrined in the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita.

1964/1991). Furthermore, parallels between traditional Indian philosophy and contemporary Japanese management (Ashta et al., 2018), point to a potential for cross-cultural marketing facilitation in India. Such potential parallels auger a plausible inference on expected similarities in the spiritual values underlying Indian and Japanese cultures (Ronen and Shenkar, 2013).

Turning to specific VBAs, the injunction *Atithi Devo Bhava* in Sanskrit (translates to 'treat your guest as God') can be found in the Taittiriya Upanishad (one of many Upanishads). Equally, in Japan, *the customer is God* (McCreery, 2001; Winsted, 1999) – 'The spoken Japanese word for customer is *Okyaku-sama*, which also translates as "honorable guest."' (Laroche et al., 2004: 75). Therefore, one might understand a Japanese marketer (sic: East Asian marketer) finding common understandings of 'customer' and 'guest' in India settings (Ghosh and Khatri, 2018; Kelkar, 2010). Indeed, Chattopadhyay (2012) explicitly asserts: "Indian philosophy regards work as worship and the customer as God himself. Serving the customer is equated with serving God" (p 116). Therefore, it can be reasoned that the supremacy accorded customers is a '*traditional*' value common to the two nations' cultures.

A second VBA of relevance to Indo-Japanese contexts is 'harmony'. This is an important spiritual value in the Indian context (Das, 2014; Prabhavananda, 1962/2013) and it is also an integral value of Japanese business (Hall and Hall, 1990; Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1997; Hatvany and Pucik, 1981). By extension, Stokes et al (2016, p 45) also found empirical evidence of the concept of harmony functioning even among British employees at a Japanese manufacturing subsidiary in the United Kingdom, indicating potential portability of this value to, for example, non-Indo-Japanese settings.

Finally, exploring the underlying common Indo-Japanese VBAs, Chung, Sternquist and Chen (2006) noted that Japanese cultural value of harmony led to the adoption of a long-term

orientation, which in turn was an antecedent to trust and customer satisfaction (Ndubisi and Nata-raajan, 2018). In relation to long-term thinking, Mahadevan (2008), noted in the *Bhagavad-Gita*[2] (identified by scholars as the spiritual essence of the Vedas and Upanishads (Narasimhan, Bhaskar and Prakhya, 2010; Prabhavananda, 1962/2013, Reddy, 2012)) - a dialogue-style between the teacher Krishna and the disciple Arjuna. The first lesson to Arjuna is to train his mind to a notion of time that is essentially long-term. Thus, a third important underlying VBA, *long-term orientation*, is common to India and Japan, and anticipates that Japanese CSO could be practiced readily in the Indian context.

Thus, in sum, in terms of VBAs, at the most historical level, in both India and Japan a reverence can be seen for the customer, harmony and long-termism VBA-informed individual values that drive CSO (Sousa and Coelho, 2013). The next stage of the argument presents a contemporary management and organization perspective in relation to India-Japan CSO congruence.

2.3. Contemporary Japan–India management and organization view

The term "Japanese Management" has commonly been associated with human resource practices (Hatvany and Pucik, 1981; Olejniczak, 2013; Ouchi, 1987) including, for example: life-long employment; consensual decision-making (*nemawashi*); and seniority-based pay. However, as Endo, Delbridge and Morris (2015) point out, with the waning of Japanese economic dominance on the global scene (post-1990s national economic troubles onwards), the benchmark status of such practices has diminished. Meanwhile, Wang (2009) commenting on contemporary Japanese corporations and leaders at the CEO level noted: "Corporate value-orientation is usually formed

---

[2] A sacred text, the title Bhagavad Gita translates literally as the Song of God (Prabhvananda & Isherwood, 1944/2002). Recognizing that it embodies the essence of the Vedas and Upanishads, it syllologically follows that it, too, represents traditional philosophy. The Bhagavad Gita is commonly equated with The Holy Bible of Christianity and the Holy Quran of Islam

through top-down processes, initially in the mind of the top leader, and gradually shared and spread out by employees" (Wang, 2009 p. 2). This examination of 152 companies from the electrical machinery sector revealed that the leading value-orientation in the corporate management philosophy of the companies studied was *customer orientation* (Wang, 2009). More specifically, recognizing the more contemporary association of "Japanese management" with marketing strategy CSO, Poropat and Kellett (2006) usefully proposed links with spiritual VBAs:

> "… the examination of the spiritual assumptions of Japanese culture seems to have quite specific implications. *It may prove useful for future cultural researchers to consider analyzing underlying spiritual assumptions* for compatibility with management philosophies as a way of predicting the outcomes". [Emphasis added] (page 15)

Meanwhile, Indian VBAs- in the *contemporary* workplace are discernibly evolving. It is sometimes said that traditional Indian VBAs are 'checked-in to the locker room' as one enters the corporate environment (Nidumolu, 2013) and Srinivas (2012) suggested that workplace Indian business leaders VBAs are influenced by Westernized modern academia. Consequently, he contrasts that while the Japanese manager appears to remain authentic to traditional VBAs, the Indian manager increasingly seeks the West as a referent. Indicative changes in Indian VBAs include transitions: "from selflessness to selfishness, patience to haste and humility to arrogance" (Chakraborty, 1991 p. 139). Another evolving VBA pertains to the strong work ethic espoused in traditional Indian philosophy (*Bhagavad Gita*, Prabhavananda and Isherwood, 1944/2002: 46). In contemporary Indian society, while work may be valued if part of a positive, personalized relationship, generally speaking Indian culture can also be prone to rest and relaxation (Ranjan Kumar

and Sankaran, 2007). This contrasts with Japanese society which retains a diligent work-orientation prescribed by Buddhism (Olasky, 2004), and a thrust for continuous improvement – a CSO quality. Thus, common Vedic-Buddhist influences would indeed facilitate Japanese business leaders' CSO in India, though there may be impeding forces too. Therefore, this issue requires empirical exploration of Japanese business leaders' CSO perspectives in Indian intercultural contexts and whether they are likely to be impeded by differences between traditionally espoused and contemporary VBAs of the Indian workplace.

Finally, it is important to consider how Japanese business leaders view feasibility of carrying VBAs over to an Indian environment. Varma et al. (2015) studied three alliances formed by Japanese companies in India and found that, even in the Indian context: 'from the Japanese point of view, the service to the customer is the center of all activity and becomes the central focal point of all decision-making' (p 436). We infer Japanese (East-Asian) business leaders' predilection towards implementing (Japanese) home country marketing strategy (sic: CSO) in South Asian markets, such as India. One example of successful implementation of Japanese CSO is found in *Maruti Suzuki* (Joshi, 2010), a Japanese automobile manufacturer's joint venture in India. In the auto-industry, traditionally dealers are where end customers purchase their vehicles. Joshi explains that dealers who previously used to drive the cars from the factories to their showrooms effectively delivered cars with up to 500 kilometers on the clock. Maruti introduced the practice of special trailers to deliver cars to dealers so that customers could be given truly brand-new vehicles. A second CSO action was to reduce prices of spare parts to facilitate the car's positioning as a low maintenance vehicle. These are just two customer satisfaction creating actions, illustrative of a Japanese-influenced CSO that propelled Maruti to enjoy over 50% market share in a major global automotive market. It must be caveated here that not all Japanese CSO actions are perceived

warmly. By way of example, the world automotive leader Toyota had to withdraw its Yaris car model from the Indian market because it did not resonate with customer perceptions of value for money (Nag, 2023).

In summary, by drawing on historic common VBAs of Japan and India and reviewing the development of CSO-related literature and their application to Japanese and Indian business and marketing contexts, an emergent discussion of the role of traditional VBAs can be observed. This remains primarily conceptual, though, as indicated, there is some emerging evidence of successful practice. It is therefore felt that the issue of the underlying values, and their antecedence to successful practice, would benefit from stronger empirical examination and the next section of the discussion outlines a methodology with which to generate empirical data.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

Following a social constructivist epistemology, we deployed an inductive phenomenological paradigm (King, 2012; Sanders, 1982) fitting to the topic under study and the nature of the research question (Knight et al., 2022). The choice of using an inductive methodology in this research derives from the theme under study and the exploratory nature of the research question. The theme, Japanese CSO receptivity in a South Asian (Indian) intercultural situation, remains a relatively novel idea. Additionally, in terms of the research question, the impinging of VBAs on a manager's lived *intercultural* experience defies a standardized framework (Bird & Mendenhall, 2016) as explained above. Inductive methodology is useful for addressing such novel ideas and difficult-to-measure constructs in "unexplored settings" (Eisenhardt, Graebner & Sonenshein,

2016: 1119). Additionally, when prior theory is absent or limited, inductive methodology is useful for theory building (Pratt, 2009).

We understand that the phenomenological paradigm defies a precise methodology (vom Lehn, 2019): it is a "broad stream with many currents" (Sanders, 1982 p. 354). Nevertheless, the phenomenological paradigm's research methodology puts at its core the study of 'lived experience' (Sanders, 1982, Van Maanen, 2011; vom Lehn, 2019) - useful for addressing novel ideas and difficult-to-measure constructs (Sanders, 1982) such as CSO and VBA, and thematic analysis of interview data is a useful method in this regard (Cassell and Bishop, 2019). Previous research on difficult-to-measure phenomena using such thematic analysis of lived interview data (e.g., Chatrakul Na Ayudhya et al., 2019; Kakabadse et al., 2018) provides evidence on the successful use of our chosen methodology in kindred research settings.

Our research design also considered the appropriate unit of analysis. Of course, culture operates at various levels *inter alia*: national, organizational and individual. We chose to conduct the study at the individual leader level for two reasons. First, regarding CCM, Adler (1983a) highlights the significance of the individual experience as follows:

> 'Cross-cultural management deals with traditional organizational behavior issues … concentrating primarily on the micro level - the study of the people within organizations - rather than on the macro-level - the study of the organizations themselves.' (p 7)

Second, it is long recognized that it is leaders who play a significant role in setting the tone for their organization's culture, including a customer orientation (Ifie, 2023; Wang, 2009). Hence, the use of individual leader as the unit of analysis, and a study of leaders' lived experience in the field is appropriate to address the purpose of this paper.

Finally, our research design is compatible with the research team's competencies. One team member has extensive experience working in Japanese companies (as manager and CEO at the Japanese major subsidiary level) and is fluent in Japanese, and another has conducted significant research with Japanese companies boosting capacity in the situation/ data interpreting ability (cf. Sanders, 1982) within the team. These points reinforced our conclusion that an interpretivist approach specifically, and our research design in general is well-suited for this study's purpose.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

The study followed ethical standards of our institutes and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Free-flowing interviews were deployed to investigate empirically what underlying VBAs drive (impede or facilitate) the CSO of Japanese business leaders in India. We followed guidance from the phenomenology literature that: "sufficient information may be collected from three to six individuals" (Sanders, 1982, p. 356), and commensurately in-depth interviews were held with six senior Japanese business leaders - CEOs or project leaders - who have operated in the Indian B2B environment to gain insights from their lived experiences. The respondents chosen had two or more years of experience with India to ensure sufficiently long-term interaction enhancing the depth of experience and sufficient acculturation (Belhoste and Monin, 2013). Two years is the minimum time required to be certain of completing a financial year, and therefore related full profit responsibility, a measure of significance to senior leaders. The respondents' background is shared in Table 2. Moreover, and importantly, these constituted 'elite' interviews and therefore access was rare and difficult to negotiate and secure. Consequently, when dealing with elite interviews, sample size will always be concentrated (Moore and Stokes, 2012; Kraus et

al, 2023). Robustness was facilitated by the information power of the senior business leaders interviewed (Malterud et al., 2016).

Insert Table 2

The lead author, bilingual in Japanese, personally met each of the respondents in Delhi or Tokyo. First the research imperative was explained in Japanese to motivate the respondents, in line with Lehu (2004). As such, there was a degree of social capital (Putnam, 2000) and extant relationship building between the participants and the interviewer that guarded against superficial responses (leveraging the relationship-orientation of Japanese to commitment, cf. Hofstede, 1983). Explanation was made of the general intention of the research: to facilitate success of foreign investors in India. "What could it take to succeed in organizations in India?" is a common frustration they too had puzzled over, and quickly empathy was generated towards the objective of our research.

Allowing business leaders to use their native Japanese facilitated sharing of experiences (Schedlitzki et al., 2017). Japanese transcripts were translated and back-translated (Brislin, 1986) between Japanese to English to facilitate understanding of the data by co-authors not familiar with Japanese. Initial probes and lines of questioning are mentioned in Exhibit 2. Complementing face-to-face meetings, follow-up was done through email exchange. Further, and especially during the pandemic, the lead author could access the respondents through video-enabled calls to check on clarifications required at subsequent translation or analysis stages.

To examine the interview data, given that the study follows a social constructivist epistemology, we were mindful to use *organic* thematic analysis, as opposed to positivism-influenced

thematic analysis of qualitative data that are concerned with issues of thematic saturation, and generalizability (Braun and Clarke, 2016; King 2012; Sanders, 1982). Following Stokes and Wall (2014), given the interpretive phenomenological approach of this exploratory research, and especially the high-status level of the respondents, convenience sampling was used. All respondents were known to the first author through previous professional interactions in the Delhi area; the responses could be therefore tainted. On the other hand, such researcher-respondent familiarity facilitated the repeat interview process facilitating a cross-check on consistency of what the respondents were reporting (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020). The data offer abundant vignettes to draw inferences that can help assess how CSO practice is influenced in the intercultural setting.

To examine the interview data, we were mindful of using *organic* thematic analysis, as opposed to positivism-influenced thematic analysis of qualitative data that are concerned with issues of thematic saturation, and generalizability (Braun and Clarke, 2016; King 2012; Sanders, 1982). The data set was manually examined and re-examined following Sanders' (1982) phenomenological taxonomy of objective facts and their correlated subjective reactions and meaning-making, and subjected to the researcher's intuitive and reflective interpretation to arrive at the "essence" of meaning. The reliability and validity of data generation and analysis were reinforced by members of the authorial team individually assessing the plausibility of the interpretations offered by the first author and making adjustments through discussions of the manuscript drafts. Below we offer a set of findings from this theory-driven constructivist thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012) and we present the plausibility of the interpretivist process.

4. Findings

This exploratory study is a response to the gap in scholarship on how cultural VBAs are experienced in intercultural interactions influencing the implementation of East Asian marketing strategy, more precisely, Japanese B2B CSO in India. It explores this objective by examining the extent to which common Indian and Japanese traditional VBAs surface in Japanese business leaders' organizational lived experience in India in the context of CSO practice in contemporary times. In the spirit of this exploration, the research seeks to develop an interpretive understanding contextualizing its approach in relation to prior pertinent scholarship which developed a number of perspectives. The empirical data collected respond to these perspectives, and with respect to driving Japanese CSO in India, our analysis reveals a combination of impeding and facilitating forces operating through VBAs congruence of Japanese lived experience in India and also impeding forces emerging from incongruent VBAs. Such theory-driven thematic analysis (cf. Braun and Clarke, 2012 for the deductive driven portion of constructivist methodology) is found in prior marketing research (e.g., Koponen and Rytsy, 2020). Our findings that correspond to our literature review are reported below first the findings of impeding forces followed by findings of facilitating forces.

4.1. Impeding forces (frustration from VBAs incongruence)

Despite common cultural foundations (Ashta et al., 2018) Japanese business leaders in India encounter a difference in opinion of what is considered reasonable for achieving customer satisfaction. As a result, they face challenges in introducing and implementing the values that would help replicate their world class service levels. All interviewed Japanese business leaders

expressed frustration with low customer orientation in Indian business environments, which can be identified in their Indian colleagues' internal interface as well as the client external interface.

4.1.1. Colleagues interface challenges

In trying to introduce CSO Japanese business leaders had to manage expectations of their Indian colleagues which were often quite different from what they were used to in Japan. Such differences can be seen in the use of contrast-laced phrases such as: "However, my Indian colleagues…" (HI). While the Japanese tend to foster harmony, Indians tend to be assertive (Vijaya and Tiwari, 2010). This would create hurdles, and indeed such differences were expressed in empirical evidence. As explained by respondent YI:

> 'In organizations where many people gather, there are many cases where opinions and ideas are varied. In such cases, in the spirit of "harmony" sometimes the ego is abandoned and everyone cooperates and works towards a common goal. Especially in India I think it is very difficult to create sense of unity by applying such Japanese-style harmony'. (YI)

Such narratives show the difficulty experienced by the Japanese business leader in creating the sense of unity and harmony, and accordingly our interpretation that this is an expression of experiencing cultural difference, which in 'essence' is an impeding force for the phenomenon under examination. Furthermore, we find that Japanese business leaders' experience an interaction with Indian colleagues that is non-yielding. As revealed by respondent HI:

> 'Indians are highly self-assertive and cannot accept a situation where they are disadvantaged.' (HI)

These comments illustrate what may be interpreted as challenging experiences by the Japanese business leaders in terms of getting Indian colleagues to yield personal advantage. This would be prerequisite to accepting the underlying tenet of "customer is God". Even though the

Japanese marketer might speculate it to be part of Indian traditional culture based on extant literature (Chattopadhyay, 2012), counterintuitively, this attitude is not experienced in the contemporary Indian workplace by some Japanese business leaders, which makes it challenging for them.

4.1.2. Customers' interface hurdles

Similarly, Japanese business leaders experienced hurdles on the customer interface, too. Respondents often expressed incompatibility: "Could not establish give-and-take relationships" (YI), "rather than hospitality, the image is more like groveling before a king" (KTK), which are evocative of VBAs incongruence and may be interpreted as corresponding to frustration. In some cases, this lost business. The Japanese business leaders interviewed indicated foundational level issues with values as shared by respondent SS:

> 'Sometimes there are companies that are exploitative. It is our responsibility to assess the other party's thinking. It is difficult for us to build relations with such companies, when we strive for coexistence and co-prosperity honoring harmony'. (SS)

Placing great importance on fundamental values, Japanese business leaders distinguish 'right' from 'wrong'. In a sense, they do business with carefully selected clients who display God-like attributes that would justify "Customer is God" thinking, and by concentrating on the right customers, they can ensure the right kind of CSO for which they strive. Thus, in our analysis, respondents highlighted differences in cultural VBAs of the Indian counterpart as hurdles. Conversely, and closely related to the research question (on how VBA's surface), it can be seen that when Japanese business leader cannot build relations it impacts negatively on the business.

4.2. Facilitating forces (fulfillment from values congruence)

4.2.1. Traditional VBAs backing home country CSO

Belief in the importance of the customer is a micro-foundational step towards developing a CSO. Consistent with literature (Laroche et al, 2004; McCreery, 2001), Japanese business leaders in India also displayed a mindset of the divine nature of the customer, expressing: "I think that I am going too far with the expression, but there is a Japanese proverb, Customer is God" (YI). As explained by respondent SS:

> 'The expression, "customer is God" is quite common in Japan, especially among Osaka merchants in the Kansai area. I too am in full agreement with this feeling' (SS)

The importance of long-term orientation in the context of CSO is established in extant scholarship (e.g., Waal, 2012) and this was also found in the data set. Respondents expressed that: "weight is placed on sustaining a long-term relationship with the customer" (TM), As elaborated by respondent KTH:

> 'We do not think of one time only business deals, or in other words, we do not run away. This is a concrete example of corporate culture that adheres to concepts like, "spirit of challenge", "do what you say" and "customer first". We have a long-term customer, Company SD. With a focus on their long term plans we see how we can contribute and thus we too can get good business – this is of fundamental importance I believe' (KTH).

Moreover, an underlying value of Japanese-style CSO is harmony (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1997). Significantly, harmony is a state achieved between two or more parties. There was a plethora of references to harmony by the respondents, for example: "I could feel strong rapport when working with the Organization N and Institute M teams" (KTH) and: "when shaking hands with my Indian counterparts at my farewell, I could experience a never-before crescendo of

fellowship" (SS). This importance of harmony between seller and buyer was confirmed by respondent KTK:

> 'Customer is God", "Customer is self-important", The customer also understands the seller's mentality, and that is the Japanese way that gives rise to harmony.' (KTK)

How to achieve harmony was described by HI:

> 'I think 'harmony" is achieved when everybody puts in their best effort to help each other achieve jointly agreed goals, which are decided based on exchange of opinion and discussion on the optimum path.' (HI)

There were fulfilling experiences too. As mentioned by YI drawing on his lived experience:

> 'I interacted with many people in India. Buddhism has its origins in India, and together with the fact that it is a polytheist society I often felt that the people's mentality is quite close to that of the Japanese. Going forward I think people can understand the concept of harmony. However, in society this is a method to build team spirit, and the possibility is higher when the members can choose. Within white collar workers in India, we could create harmony by sharing about problems and issues in regular meetings.' (YI)

These findings at the VBA individual level—harmony, customer is God, long-term thinking—are integral to corporate level CSO, and respond to the RQ. We interpret that these home-country VBAs of Japanese business leaders sustaining in their intercultural business situations in India, point to congruence between the traditional VBAs of Japanese in Japan, with VBAs surfacing in intercultural situations in contemporary India. These are shared values with the Indian hosts on a traditional cultural level. Overall, it can be seen that respondents underscore experiencing traditional VBAs, such as long termism and harmony for backing implementation of home country CSO. Thus, as suggested in extant literature (Ashta et al., 2018) we find scope for CSO practice in India, because Indian business leaders can now be interpreted through a Japanese-Indian cultural lens.

4.2.2. Tenacity to persist assisting home country CSO

Additional data concerning successful solutions was also identified. Persevering with obtaining understanding of colleagues can be useful, both for the Japanese business leader as well as to establish harmony. By way of example: "When I explained the circumstances behind my request, many Indian colleagues understood my status and helped me" (HI). Also as elaborated by SS:

> 'As a Japanese living with my family in India, I certainly worked on maintaining harmony in various relationships in the local Japanese society in Delhi. However, it was the Indian co-workers who were my strongest pillar of support till the end.' (SS)

We interpret that, for Japanese business leaders in India, the immediate circle of colleagues is a key first step in establishing the foundational harmony that can be leveraged to raise CSO levels.

Japanese business leaders are aware of the archetypal self-assertive/self-centered nature of Indians and see that as bottleneck. Yet, there is divergence of opinion on the possibility of overcoming this bottleneck, and change potential is identified. Pertinent to CSO practice, and with respect to a common Indian and Japanese traditional value, as explained by respondent TM:

> 'I don't think that the concept of harmony changes from place to place – different in India and different in Japan. It cannot change with the environment. However, since many Indians are strongly self-assertive about their opinions, it seems that what is required is to listen carefully to everybody first. Then, after that, many cases will require a somewhat laborious process of searching for and pursuing common goals.' (TM)

In the above datum we note the respondent's observation to listen carefully first. Japanese business leaders experience laborious processes, which we interpret as requiring resolve. Hence, based on our analysis, respondents stress tenacity to persist with traditional approaches for assisting home country CSO implementation.

To summarize, we present our empirical evidence guided by the thematic phenomenological argumentation in Table 3. Scrutinizing our findings, we observe traditional Japanese values across historical and contemporary times resonate with traditional Indian values, but conflict with contemporary Indian workplace values as experienced by Japanese business leaders. Thus, we notice a push and pull consistent with our previous Figure 1. In terms of cultural VBAs this push and pull allows us to develop an illustrative schema of how cultural VBAs manifest in the lived experiences of Japanese business leaders in intercultural CSO contexts at their Indian subsidiaries, which we elaborate on next.

Insert Table 3

4.3. A process model of three-category VBA schema surfacing in India (Japanese business leaders' lived experience)

To recapitulate, our above analyses show traditional VBAs of Japanese and Indian managers regarding CSO are congruent, but that Japanese business leaders struggle with contemporary VBAs of Indian workers regarding CSO that are more Western-oriented (such as self-centered, assertive behaviour). The themes emerging from Japanese business leaders' lived experiences show a continuity of the traditional VBAs of the Japanese even when they locate to India. Based on their own consistency, the Japanese therefore might find it counterintuitive to experience a more variable relationship with the local workplace culture (South Asian market), where Indian workplaces have broadly adopted a Western VBA inclination. Therefore, from the thematic analysis of our Findings (also shown in Table 3), three categories of VBAs can be found as shown in

the induced process model in Figure 2: a) Japanese traditional and contemporary (because they show continuity in India) b) Traditional Indian and c) contemporary Indian workplace VBAs.

Insert Figure 2

In terms of the RQ, the themes and resulting process model responds to the perspectives developed in the literature review. The first perspective concerns predictions of values congruence for driving CSO in India. Delving into traditional Japanese values these are 'lived' by the Japanese in contemporary Japanese business practices and there is an expected congruence with traditional Indian values. This would normally facilitate driving CSO and answer to the second perspective that relates to CSO facilitation. Next, one cue with the push-and-pull perspective developed through the literature review identified that traditional Indian values do not manifest in Indian contemporary workplaces. Such a variation seen between traditional and contemporary Indian workplace values related to potential impediments to driving the CSO signaled in the third perspective of the literature review.

The process model provides valuable insight into Japanese business leaders lived experience in India – coming from Japan where they are normally accustomed to seamless continuity of VBAs in the workplace. Although our focus is on traditional culture-derived VBAs which should normally have engendered smooth congruence, our empirical evidence finds discontinuity between traditional values and the contemporary workplace in India. Therefore, we argue that traditional and contemporary workplace values in the South Asian setting (India) may manifest variations in Japanese business leaders' implementation of CSO-derived marketing strategy in India. Thus, we infer the usefulness of understanding traditional and evolving VBAs in the host country

for appreciating receptivity to adoption and thereby efficacy of home country marketing strategy (in the case CSO).

5. Discussion

The West-versus-East categorization remains strong in the highest echelons of management research, (e.g. the Academy of Management, Barkema et al., 2015). If that is the case at the sophisticated level, then certainly to the casual reader and everyday practitioner, intuitively, Japan and India would share values and would seem to be in the *same Asia*. Indeed, previous research provided empirical evidence for parallels between traditional Indian philosophy and contemporary Japanese management. (e.g., Ashta et al. 2018). This present study drew on the previous research, and investigation was initiated with a consideration of previously identified parallels that might be observed in current practice through noticeable ease of practicing Japanese customer satisfaction methods. This has not emerged as neatly as envisaged, and it may be because Indians tend to leave their spirituality when entering the workplace (e.g., Nidumolu, 2013).

Our data analysis finds that the Japanese experienced directness, assertiveness and self-centeredness in the contemporary Indian workplace. Such findings align with previous scholarship that weighed in on the evolving nature of Indian values (Chakraborty, 1991; Nidumolu, 2013; Srinivas, 2012). Though extant literature signals tensions between 'push and pull' (Hofstede et al., 2010), the inhibiting forces are noticeably strong. The findings of the empirical data are illustrated in Figure 2. The findings from this data set have proven counterintuitive because the traditional does not equate with the modern, at least not in the contemporary workplace. However, it should

be qualified that against this backdrop, our Findings also found that some Japanese business leaders experienced latent traditional Indian values, such as the "Customer is God", in line with Chattophadyay (2012).

This paper aimed to advance understanding of how culture influences the implementation of East Asian marketing strategies in South Asian national contexts by examining the example and extent to which common Indian and Japanese traditional VBAs surface in Japanese business leaders' lived experience in the major market of India in the context of CSO practice in *contemporary* times. Using perspectives developed from extant research on sources of VBAs and management and organizational subject matter, as well as the two themes constructed from the empirical data, this paper delineated three categories of micro-foundational VBAs: 1) contemporary Japanese and traditional Indian common VBAs; 2) VBAs underpinning Japanese CSO; and 3) contemporary Indian workplace VBAs. These three categories in turn help us to understand polar-opposite aspects of values' congruence and incongruence, which lead to various ways in which East Asian (Japanese) marketers with different VBAs experience intercultural situations in host South Asian (Indian) intercultural situations. The framework presented in Figure 2 suggests that VBAs can significantly affect East Asian marketers' perceptions of intercultural situations, and consequently their coping strategies in responding to intercultural situations in the South Asian host country (India). Moreover, we argue that East Asian (Japanese) marketers remain heavily influenced by traditional Buddhist philosophy and that they seek to transport this to the South Asian market (India), where contemporary workplace values are evolving.

Thus, this research suggests that while East Asian business leaders encounter intercultural differences in South Asian settings, this appears to be dealt with in the way intercultural situations impact, and are responded to, and depends on the micro-foundational values of the East Asian

manager at the individual level, notwithstanding the generally recognized homogeneity of the Japanese manager cohort (e.g., Reisel, 2017; Sekiguchi et al., 2016) at the national level of analysis. The experiences shared by the respondents lend support to the process model on the VBA schema shown in Figure 2.

5.1. Contributions to theory

This paper contributes to an evolving body of research on how values influence intercultural marketing actions (e.g., Ashta, 2023; Ellis and Iwasaki, 2018; Ndubisi and Nataraajan, 2018) by considering a comparative view of East Asian and South Asian cultures and examining the role of the individual manager/marketer's values in the context of intercultural CSO situations. The process model of three-category VBA schema and the explicative experiences of the respondents present the case for the influence of VBAs on intercultural situations.

This research emphasizes the micro-foundational values underpinning intercultural differences that delve into a deeper understanding than available from extant '*comparative*' (Adler, 1983b) cross-cultural management research. Therefore, this research can be positioned in the realm of the 'pioneer' in terms of identifying the influence of values on marketers' response to intercultural situations in the context of the business leader at the high level, East Asian– South Asian dyad in general, and the Japan-Indian dyad in particular. Furthermore, this work provides empirical evidence that the East Asian (Japanese) leaders interviewed, perceived intercultural situations differently. The findings emphasize the joint influence of values and the given dyadic situation in shaping the marketers' methods in dealing with intercultural differences—a vital concept in international marketing.

Second, recent research has begun to explore the importance of traditional East Asian culture on international marketing strategy (Yang and Wang, 2011). This study extends this thread of research by offering empirical evidence and a contextualized understanding of the influence of values in examining the role of intercultural differences on international marketing actions. By examining the individual East Asian marketer's perception of intercultural differences in dealing with host Asian markets, the study on CSO extends prior work on international marketing contexts (e.g., Ellis and Iwasaki, 2018) and provides a process model of a three-category VBA schema. Future researchers could extend the body of knowledge on this important marketing strategy driver. This study reveals the importance of values influencing marketers' behavior and possible responses to intercultural situations. Thus, the empirical evidence of this study contributes to the literature on international marketing strategy by demonstrating the potential of understanding *traditional* as well as *evolving* VBAs for appreciating the driving and efficacy of East Asian B2B cross-cultural marketing.

Third, the findings demonstrate a particular need in international marketing research and theorizing to consider carefully the interaction effects between cultures and marketers' felt VBAs in order to fully understand how firms can succeed in international marketing contexts, not least with respect to ensuring a strong CSO. Valuable future directions for research in this area to extend international marketing theory and understanding further would be to (a) engage with network theory and social capital theory to unpack the dynamics of intercultural situations, and (b) factor in the interplay between managers and marketers' cultural backgrounds and VBA in any discussions of failure in international marketing so that practitioners and companies can be best advised on how to approach these situations.

5.2. Contributions to practice

Previous research has traced identifiable Indian origins in contemporary Japanese management VBAs, and this is the indicated congruence shown in our process model. However, empirical evidence has now pointed to a clash with contemporary VBAs in the Indian workplace and market. The new light shed on impeding forces adds to emergent theory being developed in extant literature (Ashta et al., 2018), and simultaneously, leads to insight for practice. International marketers and business leaders are aware of cross-cultural challenges to implementing global best practices. However, traditional scholarship (e.g., Hofstede, 2007; Schwartz, 1999; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2020) has tended to focus on national cultural dimensions. We now address what we believe are the VBAs at the foundations of such national dimensions. This will allow the practicing manager to address these fundamental issues. For example, with reference to the developed process model, a practicing manager (East Asian–Chinese, Japanese, Korean or any other foreign business leader) can understand the importance of harmony to achieving B2B CSO. They could then appeal to the value of harmony in traditional Indian culture so that the South Asian Indian counterpart relates to the concept being introduced—viewing best practices through an Indian traditional VBAs lens—facilitating a reverse adaption of the Indian counterpart. This should then facilitate acceptance and adoption of the global best practice, facilitating business success in India.

In more general terms, this research implies that East Asian business leaders need to pay close attention to the influence of values on their marketing strategies. In the debate on the static versus evolving nature of culture, our findings point towards a need to heed evolution, especially of workplace values. Evolving values in their target South Asian markets such as India can shape the buyer-seller relationship. Sensitivity to the evolving nature of cultural values (e.g., Lichy and Stokes, 2017) would be an important facet of business leaders, as would be the ability to cope with

such different values. Conversely, local business partners in South Asian markets such as India would benefit from seeking marketers (investors) from East Asian countries (such as Japan) who can adapt to such values differences. In terms of policy implications, given the need in South Asian markets such as India to attract East Asian investment, it might be important for policy makers to go beyond the usual financial incentives, such as tax incentives, but also address softer societal issues. One such long-term issue could be management education systems authentic to Indian culture.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

The paper also has some limitations that could be addressed by future research. First, all the business leaders interviewed were on deputation to the Delhi area, which means North India. It is quite possible that the VBAs in another geographical area such as South India display some variation to lead to a different assessment level in the prognosis. At the next step, it would be useful to consider business leaders who were stationed in other parts of India. A similar point could be made about type of industry – would Japanese business leaders in finance related businesses offer similar responses?

Second, this paper has identified some of the underlying VBAs for CSO in B2B contexts. This was important and sufficient for the scope of this paper and covering also extant literature. However, use of a larger sample might have generated some other tertiary level themes, adding to the VBAs not addressed in the extant literature reviewed and thereby increasing comprehensiveness of the boxes in Figure 2.

Third, as mentioned in the introduction, this exploratory first step has considered the Japanese business leaders' experience, important in the context of Japanese MNEs that are looking to diversify. However, the cross-cultural management situation comprises that other side of the dyad too. At the next step, the noted research gap on Japanese cross-cultural marketing would benefit from an examination of the Indian employees and customers - the receivers of value-based messages that Japanese business leaders (marketers) might be trying to drive.

Finally, a limit of the phenomenological paradigm is regarding generalizability. Though we develop a model of how our respondents experienced values that impacted their CSO in India, we cannot generalize that other business leaders beyond this group will experience the same values impinging on their CSO. Thus, though our model brings closure to the RQ, there naturally remains scope to know more – what can we learn from the lived experience of East Asian marketers in other South Asian markets? We advocate that future research validate this initial qualitative work by conducting big-scale empirical investigation and also investigate other dyads. We are optimistic that the novel beginning pioneered by our research will hopefully spur further interest in this under-researched domain.

Disclosure statement: No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Ethics statement: The research adheres to standards advocated by and was in accordance with the ethical standards of authors' institutional and national research committees. It has followed the guidelines laid out in the online resource, "Code of Conduct for Scientists" (Jan. 2013). (available at https://www.scj.go.jp/en/report/code.html)

References

Adler, N. J. (1983 a). Cross-cultural management: Issues to be faced. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 13(1-2), 7-45

Adler, N. J. (1983 b). Cross-cultural management research: The ostrich and the trend. *Academy of Management Review*, *8*(2), 226-232

Ashta, A. (2021). Postulation of India-Japan Vedic-Buddhist cross-cultural management cluster: conceptualizing a spiritual philosophy-based explanation for emerging theory. *Management Research Review*. 44 (7), 1029-1041

Ashta, A. (2023). Marketing, Value Creation and Values Dynamics: Gazing Out to Asia and Europe from Kitakyushu. Journal of Creating Value, 9(1), 124-132.

Ashta, A. (2024). Perlmutter visited. Japanese international business strategic orientation transformation in India: progress made and forces against. *Journal of Asian Business and Economic Studies*. 31 (1), 27-39.

Ashta, A., Stokes, P., and Hughes, P. (2018). Change management in Indo-Japanese cross-cultural collaborative contexts: Parallels between traditional Indian philosophy and contemporary Japanese management. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 31(1), 154-172.

Ashta, A., Stokes, P., and Hughes, P. (2019) Logic or Smiles?: International talent management across advanced and emerging economic contexts - Japanese expatriates' cross-cultural communication friction in India. In Y. Liu (Ed.), *Research Handbook of International Talent Management*. Edward Elgar. P 213 – 246

Barkema, H. G., Chen, X. P., George, G., Luo, Y., and Tsui, A. S. (2015). West meets East: New concepts and theories. *Academy of Management Journal*, 58(2), 460-479

Barmeyer, C., Davoine, E., and Stokes, P. (2019). When the 'well-oiled machine' meets the 'pyramid of people:' Role perceptions and hybrid working practices of middle managers in a binational organization – ARTE. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, *19*(3), 251–272

Belhoste, N., and Monin, P. (2013). Constructing differences in a cross-cultural context: National distance, social differentiation or functional distinction. *Human Relations*, 66(12), 1529-1561.

Belk, R. (2021), "Commentary – Look east young sojourner!", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 38 No. 4, pp. 660-670.

Belk, R. W., Ger, G., and Askegaard, S. (2003). The fire of desire: A multisited inquiry into consumer passion. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *30*(3), 326-351.

Bird, A. and Mendenhall, M.E. (2016) "From cross-cultural management to global leadership: Evolution and adaptation." *Journal of World Business,* 51(1), 115-126.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper (Ed.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology: Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. 57–71). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2016). (Mis) conceptualising themes, thematic analysis, and other problems with Fugard and Potts'(2015) sample-size tool for thematic analysis. International *Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 19(6), 739-743.

Brislin, R.W. (1986). The wording of translation of research instruments. In: Lonner WJ and Berry J.W. (eds) *Field Methods in Cross-Cultural Research.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 137-164.

Cassell, C. and Bishop, V. (2019). Qualitative data analysis: Exploring themes, metaphors and stories. *European Management Review*, 16(1), 195-207.

Chakraborty, S. K. (1991). *Management by values: Towards cultural congruence*, Oxford University Press

Chatrakul Na Ayudhya, U., Prouska, R. and Beauregard, T. A. (2019). The impact of global economic crisis and austerity on quality of working life and work-life balance: A capabilities perspective. *European Management Review*, 16(4), 847-862.

Chattopadhyay, C. (2012). Indian philosophy and business ethics: A review. *Advances in Management and Applied Economics*, *2*(3), 111-123

Chung, J.E., Sternquist, B. and Chen, Z. (2006), "Retailer- buyer supplier relationships: the Japanese difference", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 82 No. 4, pp. 349-55.

Das, M. (2014). Indian view of peace and development leading to global harmony and unity. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19(8), 42–49

Donthu, N. and Yoo, B. (1998). Cultural influences on service quality expectations. *Journal of Service Research*, *1*(2), 178-186.

Eisenhardt, K. M., Graebner, M. E., and Sonenshein, S. (2016). Grand challenges and inductive methods: Rigor without rigor mortis. *Academy of Management Journal*, *59*(4), 1113-1123.

Elger, T., and Smith, C. (Eds.). (2010). *Global japanization?: the transnational transformation of the labour process* (Vol. 4). Routledge.

Ellis, N., and Iwasaki, A. (2018). Making sense of global key account management (GAM): a case study from Japan. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*.

Embassy of Japan in India (2023), "Embassy of Japan in India", available at: https://www.in.emb-japan.go.jp/PDF/2019_co_list_en_pr.pdf (accessed 28 January 2023)

Endo, T., Delbridge, R., and Morris, J. (2015). Does Japan still matter? Past tendencies and future opportunities in the study of Japanese firms. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 17(1), 101-123.

Foss, N. J., and Pedersen, T. (2019). Microfoundations in international management research: The case of knowledge sharing in multinational corporations. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 50(9), 1594-1621.

Ghosh, K., and Khatri, N. (2018). Does servant leadership work in hospitality sector: A representative study in the hotel organizations. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, *37*, 117-127.

Hall, E. T., and Hall, M. R. (1990). *Hidden differences: doing business with the Japanese*. New York: Doubleday

Hampden-Turner, C., and Trompenaars, A. (1997). *Mastering the infinite game: how East Asian values are transforming business practices*. Oxford: Capstone

Hatvany, N., and Pucik, V. (1981). An Integrated Management System: Lessons from the Japanese Experience. *Academy of Management Review*, 6(3), 469-480.

Hofstede, G. (1983). The Cultural Relativity of Organizational Practices and Theories. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 14(2), 75-89.

Hofstede, G. (2007). Asian management in the 21st century. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 24(4), 411-420.

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., and Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and organizations: software of the mind: intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival*. McGraw-Hill.

House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., and Gupta, V. (Eds.). (2004). *Culture, leadership, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies*. Sage. Thousand Oaks.

Iacobucci, D., and Onyemah, V. (2015). JBBM at 21: Variety of theories, methods, and countries while giving further voice to emerging markets within Africa. *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing*, *22*(1-2), 73-85.

Ifie, K. (2023), "How and when does top management interaction with customers impact customer satisfaction?", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 57 No. 5, pp. 1380-1406.

Inglehart, R., and Baker, W. E. (2000). Modernization, cultural change, and the persistence of traditional values. *American Sociological Review*, 19-51.

Joshi, V. (2010). The Maruti Story: How a Public Sector Company Put India on Wheels. *Vision*, 14(4), 331- 334.

Kakabadse, N. K., Tatli, A., Nicolopoulou, K., Tankibayeva, A., and Mouraviev, N. (2018). A gender perspective on entrepreneurial leadership: female leaders in Kazakhstan. *European Management Review*, 15(2), 155-170.

Kawashima, S. (2020, May 14). Is Japan pulling its companies out of China? *The Japan Times*. p.7

Kelkar, M. (2010). SERVDIV: A Vedic approach to measurement of service quality. *Services Marketing Quarterly*, *31*(4), 420-433.

King, N. (2012). Doing template analysis in Symons, G and Cassell, C. (2012) *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges,* London, Sage, 426-450.

Knight, G., Chidlow, A., and Minbaeva, D. (2022). Methodological fit for empirical research in international business: A contingency framework. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 1-14.

Kondo, M. (2024). India's Economic Development & Japan-India Relations. *Economy, Culture & History Japan Spotlight Bimonthly*, *43*(2).

Koponen, J.P. and Rytsy, S. (2020), "Social presence and e-commerce B2B chat functions", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 54 No. 6, pp. 1205-1224.

Kotabe, M. (2020). Japanese management and the climate of the time. *Asian Business & Management*, 19(1), 25-35.

Kraus, P., Stokes, P., Moore, N., Ashta, A., and Britzelmaier, B. J. (2023). An elite perspective on interviewing entrepreneurs–methodological considerations for the entrepreneurship field. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, *30*(5), 857-879.

Laroche, M., Ueltschy, L. C., Abe, S., Cleveland, M., and Yannopoulos, P. P. (2004). Service quality perceptions and customer satisfaction: evaluating the role of culture. *Journal of International Marketing*, 12(3), 58-85.

Lehu, J.M. (2004). Back to life! Why brands grow old and sometimes die and what business leaders then do: An exploratory qualitative research put into the French context. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *10*(2), 133-152.

Lichy, J., and Stokes, P. (2017). Questioning the validity of cross-cultural frameworks in a digital era: The emergence of new approaches to culture in the online environment. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 48(1), 121-136.

Mahadevan, B. (December, 2008). Management lessons from the Bhagavad Gita, *The Vedanta Kesari* 558-561.

Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., and Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: guided by information power. *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1753-1760.

McCreery, J. L. (2001). Getting to persuasion. *Anthropological quarterly*, 74(4), 163-169

McSweeney, B. (2002). Hofstede's model of national cultural differences and their consequences: A triumph of faith-a failure of analysis. *Human relations*, *55*(1), 89-118.

Mintz, O., Currim, I.S. and Deshpandé, R. (2022), "National customer orientation: a framework, propositions and agenda for future research", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 56 No. 4, pp. 1014-1041.

Moore, N and Stokes, P. (2012) Elite Interviewing and the role of Sector Context: An Organizational Case from the Football Industry, *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 15(4): 438-464.

Nag, S. (2023, December). *India loves Toyotas, So Why Did Yaris Fail?* CarToq. Retrieved May 25, 2024, from https://www.cartoq.com/india-loves-toyotas-so-why-did-yaris-fail/

Nakamura, H. (1964/1991). *Ways of thinking of eastern peoples: India, China, Tibet, Japan*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.

Narasimhan, N., Bhaskar, K., and Prakhya, S. (2010). Existential beliefs and values. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *96*(3), 369-382.

Nayak, J. K. (2019). An exhibitors perspective: Factors affecting selection of industrial trade shows in India and the importance of spot sales. *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing*, *26*(2), 125-140.

Ndubisi, N. O., and Nataraajan, R. (2018). Customer satisfaction, Confucian dynamism, and long-term oriented marketing relationship: A threefold empirical analysis. *Psychology & Marketing*.

Nidumolu, R. (2013). *Two birds in a tree. Timeless Indian wisdom for business leaders*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Olasky, M. N. (2004). *The religions next door: what we need to know about Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam-- and what reporters are missing*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman.

Olejniczak, T. (2013). Japanese Management: 50 Years of Evolution of the Concept. *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensi*a, (26), 23-43

Oliver, R. L. (1980). A cognitive model of the antecedents and consequences of satisfaction decisions. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 460-469.

Ouchi, W. G. (1987). *Theory Z: How American business can meet the Japanese challenge*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Patel, T. (2016). Promoting multi-paradigmatic cultural research in international business literature: An integrative complexity-based argument. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 29(4), 599-629.

Poropat, A., and Kellett, D. J. (2006). Buddhism and TQM: An alternative explanation of Japans adoption of Total Quality Management. In K., J., & Di Milia, L. (Ed.), Presented at the 20th ANZAM (Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management) Conference: 2006, Yeppoon, Queensland (2006).

Prabhavanda, S. and Isherwood, C. (1944/ 2002), *The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita*, Signet Classics, New York, NY.

Prabhavananda, S. (1962/2013), *The Spiritual Heritage of India*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras

Pratt, M. G. (2009). From the editors: For the lack of a boilerplate: Tips on writing up (and reviewing) qualitative research. *Academy of Management Journal*, *52*(5), 856-862.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. In *Culture and Politics* (pp. 223-234). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Ranjan Kumar, M., and Sankaran, S. (2007). Indian culture and the culture for TQM: a comparison. *The TQM Magazine*, 19(2), 176-188.

Reddy, M. S. (2012). Psychotherapy-insights from Bhagavad Gita. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, *34*(1), 100.

Reisel, M. (2017). From "Galapagos Syndrome" to Globalization: Japanese Businesses between Tradition and Virtual Reality. *International Journal of Business Anthropology*, 7(2), 1-21

Romani, L., Barmeyer, C., Primecz, H., and Pilhofer, K. (2018). Cross-cultural management studies: state of the field in the four research paradigms. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 1-17.

Ronen, S., and Shenkar, O. (2013). Mapping world cultures: Cluster formation, sources and implications. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 44(9), 867-897.

Saeki, Y., and Horak, S. (2014). Trust and the cultivation of relation-specific skills. Evidence from a multinational automotive supplier in Japan and Germany. *Management Decision*, 52(8), 1433-1450.

Sajid Khan, M., Naumann, E., Bateman, R., and Haverila, M. (2009). Cross-cultural comparison of customer satisfaction research: USA vs Japan. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, *21*(3), 376-396.

Sanders, P. (1982). Phenomenology: A new way of viewing organizational research. *Academy of Management Review*, 7(3), 353-360

Saranga, H, Mudambi, R and Schotter, A (2017) Mastering the Make-in-India Challenge. *MIT Sloan Management Review*; Cambridge 58.4(Summer 2017): 59-66.

Schaefer, S. M., and Alvesson, M. (2020). Epistemic attitudes and source critique in qualitative research. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 29(1), 33-45.

Schedlitzki, D., Ahonen, P., Wankhade, P., Edwards, G., and Gaggiotti, H. (2017). Working with Language: A Refocused Research Agenda for Cultural Leadership Studies. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 19(2), 237-257.

Schwartz, S. H. (1999). A Theory of Cultural Values and Some Implications for Work. *Applied Psychology*, 48(1), 23-47.

Sekiguchi, T., Froese, F. J., and Iguchi, C. (2016). International human resource management of Japanese multinational corporations: Challenges and future directions. *Asian Business & Management*, 15(2), 83-109.

Siegel, J. I., Licht, A. N., and Schwartz, S. H. (2011). Egalitarianism and international investment. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 102(3), 621-642.

Sousa, C. M., and Coelho, F. (2013). Exploring the relationship between individual values and the customer orientation of front-line employees. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 29(15-16), 1653-1679.

Srinivas, N. (2012). Epistemic and performative quests for authentic management in India. *Organization*, 19(2), 145-158.

Stokes, P., Baker, C., and Lichy, J. (2016) The Role of Embedded Individual Values, Belief and Attitudes and Spiritual Capital in Shaping Everyday Postsecular Organizational Culture. *European Management Review*, 13: 37–51

Stokes, P., and Wall, T. (2014). *Research Methods*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tomas, G., Hult. M., Morgeson III, F. V., Sharma, U., and Fornell, C. (2022). Customer satisfaction and international business: A multidisciplinary review and avenues for research. *Journal of International Business Studies*, *53*(8), 1695-1733.

Trompenaars, A., and Hampden-Turner, C. (2020). 4th Ed. *Riding the waves of culture: understanding diversity in global business*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Van Maanen, J. (2011). Ethnography as work: Some rules of engagement. *Journal of Management Studies*, 48(1), 218-234.

Varma, A., Patel, P., Malik, A., and Mishra, S. (2024). Managing People, Markets, and Businesses in the New India. *Asian Business & Management*, *23* (2), 165-179.

Varma, S., Awasthy, R., Narain, K., & Nayyar, R. (2015). Cultural determinants of alliance management capability – an analysis of Japanese MNCs in India. *Asia Pacific Business Review,* 21(3), 424-448.

Vijaya, V. and Tiwari, B. (2010). Elements in Cross–Cultural Communication Competence: Derivative of a case study comparing Indian and Japanese Communication. *The IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, 4(3), 22–38.

vom Lehn, D. (2019). Phenomenology-based ethnography for management studies and organizational analysis. *British Journal of Management*, *30*(1), 188-202.

Waal, A. D. (2012). Characteristics of high performance organisations. *Business Management and Strategy*, 3(1)

Wang, Y. (2009). Examination on philosophy-based management of contemporary Japanese corporations: philosophy, value orientation and performance. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 85(1), 1-12.

Winsted, K. F. (1999). Evaluating service encounters: A cross-cultural and cross-industry exploration. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 7(2), 106-123.

Yang, M., and Gabrielsson, P. (2018). The interface of international marketing and entrepreneurship research: review, synthesis, and future directions. *Journal of International Marketing*, *26*(4), 18-37.

Yang, Z., and Wang, C. L. (2011). Guanxi as a governance mechanism in business markets: Its characteristics, relevant theories, and future research directions. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40(4), 492-495.

Yi, Y., and Nataraajan, R. (2018). Customer satisfaction in Asia. *Psychology and Marketing*, 35(6), 387-391.

Yu, J. P., and Pysarchik, D. T. (2018). Theoretical perspectives of supplier–buyer long-term relationships in India. *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing*, *25*(1), 31-50.

Exhibit 1: Inferred predictions of CSO impacts of the different Hofstede dimensions

First, the power distance dimension indicates the degree to which society in the country is accepting of power distance or inequality in society (the higher the score the higher inequalities). India scores 77 and Japan 54, implying that Japan is relatively egalitarian. In terms of CSO, in the case of India, any economic supply-demand imbalance that yields a power-deficit party would then be 'accepting' of the loss in power. Thus, the implication would be that in case of supply shortages, the customer would be 'accepting' of the lower value offered by a business (supplier), with implications of lower 'expectations'. 'Expectations' is a primary level construct in Expectations Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) forming the basis on which perceived performance of a service (through tangible or intangible product) is evaluated (Oliver, 1980). Under EDT, satisfaction is high when perceived performance (service level) is above expectations and positive disconfirmation happens. Because of the lowered expectations in a high power distance society (one where power distances are accepted), EDT would syllogically suggest that the same level of service (tangible or intangible product) would yield a higher customer satisfaction level in a high power distance society, and this has been confirmed by empirical research (Donthu & Yoo, 1998). Indeed, until the economic liberation initiated in 1991, India had been a supply-constrained market, and with respect to EDT, one might therefore expect a culture of lowered customer expectations. The converse implications would hold for Japan and the power distance would not interplay as much on CSO.

The second dimension is of individualism and refers to the extent of independence displayed by members of the society. India and Japan score a rather middling 48 and 46, pointing to a similar mildly collectivist nature of society. This indicates an interdependence between members of society, which would point inter alia towards a caring for the customer. Indeed, research (for

example by Sajid Khan et al., 2009) reveals that Japan's collectivist culture emphasizes the need for harmony accounting for the attention to customer satisfaction. This is observed in Japan (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2020) and a similar score raises potential for it to be applicable to the Indian scenario. It may be noted that the middle-ranging values also point to an individualistic streak and the implications for CSO are murkier.

The third dimension is 'masculinity' referring to the degree to which competition and winning are drivers of the society. A lower score refers to a preference for caring for others and quality of life. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), India's score of 56 points to masculine culture; however, in comparison Japan's score of 95 makes it much more masculine, and this is informed by their intermediate collectivism which results in a drive for excellence and perfection – such a drive would also point towards a penchant for customer satisfaction. Having said so, a case could also be made that *au contraire* the 'caring for others' – a quality associated with 'femininity' (opposite of masculinity) - might be the quality more favourable to CSO.

The fourth dimension of uncertainty avoidance pertains to the degree to which a society tries to avoid ambiguity in the future. Japan scores a high 92. Going by classical EDT on customer satisfaction it would follow that Japan is a country driven by fulfilling expectations, and therefore of the customer too. Meanwhile, the low score of 40 for India suggests that imperfection is tolerated (Hofstede et al., 2010)

The fifth dimension is of long-term orientation (LTO) which refers to the tendency to prioritize the future and prepare for it. CSO is a future oriented strategy (Yi & Natrajan, 2018) and therefore a high score of 88 in Japan would imply an expectation of higher CSO, compared to India with a score of 51, which Hofstede et al. (2010) suggests is accepting of unfolding of fate.

Finally, the sixth dimension is of indulgence and refers to the propensity in society to yield to gratification of desires. India scores a low 26 pointing to a pessimism in society (Hofstede et al., 2010). In the context of EDT that would point to a lower level of expectations in the first place. The Japanese score of 40 may also be considered as low (as assessed by Hofstede et al., 2010), but relatively higher than India.

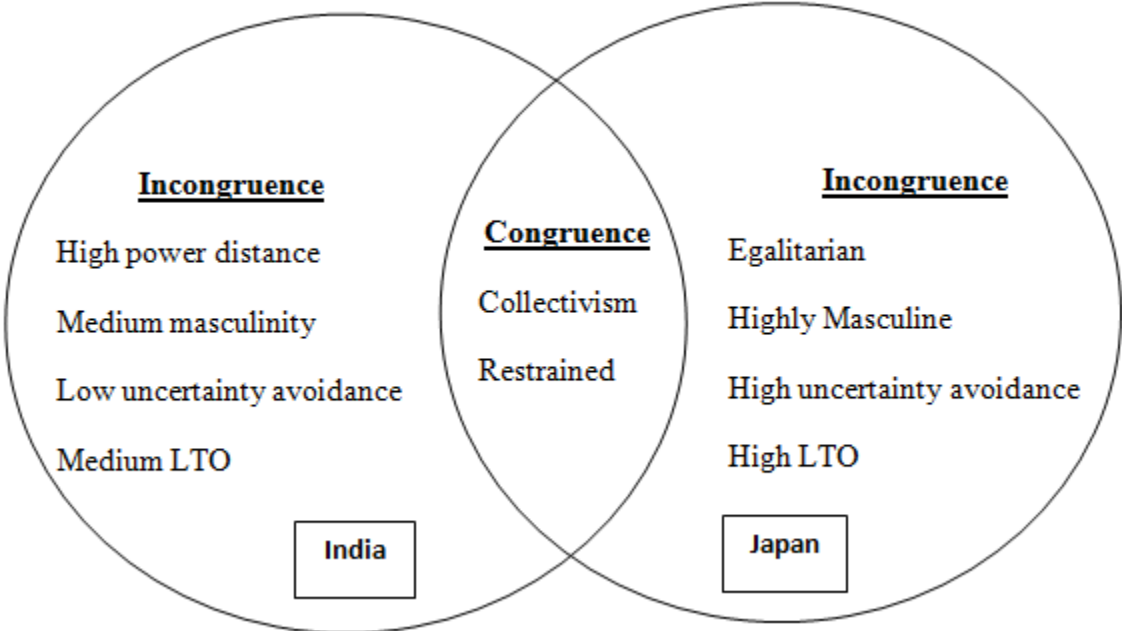**Exhibit 2: Sampling of interview questions and probes**

Opening questions:

1. Would you please share about your experience of developing the Indian market, especially how you experienced any differences compared to your previous work in Japan?
2. Which three incidents from your engagement with Indian customers remain top of mind? Please describe them.

Sample follow-up probes (depending on above responses):

1. Harmony (wa) is an important value in Japan. What does it mean to you at the individual level? and how do you relate to it in the work setting, especially in India?
2. A guest/ customer (okyaku-sama) is shown tremendous respect in Japan. What does it mean to you at the individual level? and how do you relate to it in the work setting. How did you feel about this in your India related business experience?
3. Japan is associated with long-termism, as exemplified by your long association with your current company (after checking). This employee–employer relationship can be seen as an example of a seller buyer relationship. Why do you think this long-term engagement has happened? How do you feel about such long termism for organizational customers? What do you think about long termism in terms of the Indian customer relations context that you experienced?

Figure 1: Visualizing the CSO push and pull emergent from the Hofstede framework

Incongruence

High power distance

Medium masculinity

Low uncertainty avoidance

Medium LTO

India

Congruence

Collectivism

Restrained

Incongruence

Egalitarian

Highly Masculine

High uncertainty avoidance

High LTO

Japan

Authors' diagram (2023)

Figure 2: Congruence, incongruence and confluence experienced in customer satisfaction orientation VBAs – illustrative schema from B2B situations
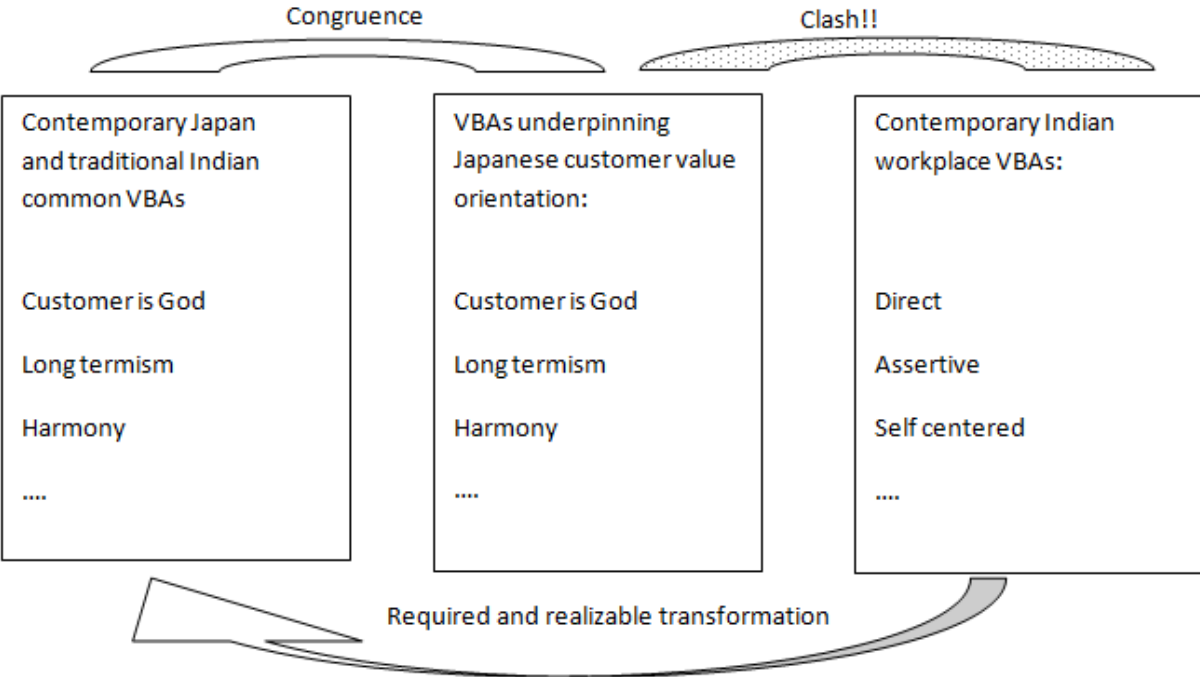
Table 1: India and Japan CSO comparison based on Hofstede framework (detailed development in Exhibit 1)

Dimension	Score		Predicted implication for CSO
	India	Japan	
Power-distance	77	54	Japan would show higher orientation
Individualism (collectivism)	48	46	India and Japan should be similar
Masculinity	56	95	No predicted implication
Uncertainty avoidance	40	92	Japan would show higher orientation
Long term orientation	51	88	Japan would show higher orientation
Indulgence	26	40	No predicted implication

Table 2: The B2B respondents background

Respondent Code	Nature of industry	India exposure	Position in India
KTH	Manufacturing conglomerate	Over 2 years	Project leader
KTK	Materials manufacturer	Over 10 years	CEO
SS	Raw materials supplier	Over 5 years	CEO
YI	Manufacturing conglomerate	3 years	CEO
HI	Services	3 years	CEO
TM	Automobile manufacturer	2 years	Project leader

Table 3: Japanese B2B leaders' experience of cross-cultural influences with respect to CSO (illustrative thematic phenomenological analysis of the data, cf. Sanders, 1982)

		←------------- Induction		
Essence (phenomenon of cultural impact)	Interpretation (researcher's ontological subjectivity)	Lived experience		Selective empirical evidence
		Respondent's Subjective apprehension of that experience	object as perceived	
Impeding ramification	Respondents emphasized perceived differences with colleagues, such as over basic workplace values regarding centrality of the self	faced challenges	Underlying standards were different	In India, most of my customers were Japanese origin companies. Obviously, they were looking for detailed service with the spirit of "customer first". This was not at all unreasonable to me; rather it was the obvious correct way. However, my Indian colleagues' thinking was different, and since underlying standards were different, we faced challenges in differentiating the normal from abnormal. (HI)
	Respondents highlighted differences such as self-assertion of the Indian counterpart as hurdles	Unfortunate experience	Could not establish give-and-take relations with other (local) companies	In my India experience, unfortunately we could not establish give-and-take relationships with other companies. This is because Indian companies are less trusting of verbal promises and assert their viewpoint into formal contracts. (YI)

Facilitating influence	Respondents underscore traditional VBAs, such as long termism and harmony for backing home country CSO	we were eventually positioned as an important supplier	there were many cases where we were able to achieve stable supply and long-term relationships	Indian customers tend to press for price reduction and that results in spot orders. However, there were many cases where we were able to achieve stable supply and long-term relationships, and then over time the customer could understand the superiority of our product led to overall cost reduction for them. As a result, we were eventually positioned as an important supplier. (SS)
		We could achieve harmony	My Indian colleagues could begin to empathize with my ways	Over the course of time as I explained about my circumstances many of my Indian colleagues could begin to empathize with my ways and we could achieve a kind of cooperation in our actions. (HI)
	Respondents stress tenacity to persist with traditional approaches, such as prioritization to customer for assisting home country CSO	Basic conditions of customer satisfaction and delight are met even in India	we incessantly surveyed customer trends, tastes and obsessions. Additionally, even post-launch, in order to boost sales, and introduce new variants we would venture into the field to thoroughly investigate customers' dissatisfaction and desired improvements	I believe that customer satisfaction and delight are basic conditions for ensuring sustainability of all businesses. Even in India, and especially for the product development work I was engaged in, we incessantly surveyed customer trends, tastes and obsessions. Additionally, even post-launch, in order to boost sales, and introduce new variants we would venture into the field to thoroughly investigate customers' dissatisfaction and desired improvements (TM)