

Immanuel Azaad Moonesar

Mohammed Bin Rashid School
of Government
United Arab Emirates
Immanuel.moonesar@mbrsg.ac.ae

Lionel Thibaud

Toyota Middle East
United Arab Emirates
thibaudl@yahoo.fr

Cross-cultural Communication and Language Perspective: Moving from Localization to Glocalization

ABSTRACT

Objective: This is a case study on how a French firm went from Localization to Glocalization from a cross-cultural communication and language perspective.

Methodology: The method used was a case study approach. Lionel Thibaud, the General Manager, Impression et Enregistrement des Résultats (IER) (a French firm) based on the Middle East thought about achievements and challenges faced by the company within the Middle East region over the period of 2007–2013 in relation to various cross-cultural and multi-national issues.

Findings: The problem faced by the decision-makers in this region was how to do business with the different Middle Eastern countries while handling and striking a balance with all varying

cultures and customs. In addition, to meet the needs of the customers, a key strategic mission was to establish long-term relationships and collaborations with suppliers and customers. This 'way of doing business' was made all the more difficult as the Middle Eastern culture was perceived similar from the outside.

Value Added: Culture in Middle East was a good way to create discussions and healthy debate to understand how to do business in the Middle East and gain a competitive advantage through the relationships that IER developed through trust from the customers. IER Middle East continued to strive successfully on how to do business within the Middle Eastern region in handling and striking a balance with all varying cultures and customs. In addition, to meet the needs of the customers, IER had a long-term mission to establish long-term relationships and collaborations within the Middle East region.

Recommendations: IER Middle East was to continue being the preferred vendor of airlines and airports while providing innovative ideas and solution as well as to continue to offer outstanding customer support.

Key words: Cross-cultural, Localization, Glocalization, Multi-national issues

JEL codes: F6, O4, O53

Introduction

Founded in 1962, Impression et Enregistrement des Résultats (IER), the world's leading supplier of printing terminals and IT Solutions for the air transportation industry is 100% owned by the Bolloré Group (IER, 2018a) and ranks among the top 200 European companies (*refer to* Table 1 for details about Bolloré Group). IER is active in different service and industrial sectors. IER employs over 850 employees worldwide; 250 of which are in the headquarters and about 100 employees are dedicated to the Research & Development department showing how important this area is for the company. IER has branch offices in China, Germany, Singapore, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America (IER, 2018b; Moonesar & Thibaud, 2015).

Table 1. Bolloré Group Summary Profile

Bolloré, a family owned group, employs 30,000 people around the world in 104 countries and generates approximately 6 billion Euros turnover per year.
Bolloré’s service and industrial sectors:
· Plastic films for capacitors and packaging
· Thin papers
· Transport and logistics
· Fuel distribution
· Dedicated terminals and systems
· Media & Communication

Source: <https://www.ier.com/en/>.

IER consistently generated a majority of its revenues from international sales outside France and developed a unique combination of technical and industrial expertise in order to support its own product development and marketing activities. IER’s company structure includes one of the industry’s largest R&D departments and a 150,000 square foot manufacturing facility, making it an attractive partner to many airlines and airports looking for an experienced and reliable supplier with the resources necessary to deliver innovative solutions. IER developed its mission and strategy (*refer to* Exhibit 2) in relation to its focus on its markets (*refer to* Exhibit 3). The potential for growth is immense as there are over 43,750 airports (Central Intelligence Authority, 2013) and 2,104 airlines (A-Z Group Ltd trading as AZura International, 2018) worldwide, with 1,482 airports and 121 airlines in the Middle East region. Table 4 illustrates the breakdown of the airports and airlines respectively across the Middle East region.

Table 2. Mission & Strategy

Mission: IER, a subsidiary of Bolloré Group, develops solutions to optimize operational efficiency and enhance security in the processing of streams of people, vehicles and goods in the transportation and logistics industries. Commitment to our customers and ensuring the satisfaction of our shareholders and employees are the basic principles on which our corporate strategy is based.
The objective of our strategy is:
- to provide our customers with an overall offer that includes software, hardware solutions, as well as high added value services,
- to reinforce our position on our various target markets,
- to look for opportunities for external growth,
- to increase the synergies between our various activities.
With this in mind, stimulating innovation is an ongoing concern which leads us to sustained efforts in research, development and technology watch.
Our objective is to master the latest technologies and incorporate them into our products and services, in order to always provide a better response to the needs of our customers.
The success of this strategy also involves the ongoing adaptation of our production and development system towards greater flexibility, responsiveness and versatility to satisfy the industrialization requirements for our new products, both in terms of mechanical design and software integration.
Our company and employees are committed to deploying this overall strategy while ensuring the complete satisfaction of our customers, every single day.

Source: <https://www.ier.com/en/>.

Table 3. IER Focused Markets

IER has experience developing and implementing the following systems:
· Self-service kiosks for airlines, airports (CUSS), rail operators, post offices, Government Bodies
· Self-service check-in software for telephone, the internet, kiosks
· Boarding pass and bag tag printers compatible with 2D barcodes
· Boarding Gate Readers
· Access control equipment for pedestrians, and vehicles
· Bar code and RFID tracking systems for baggage management, retail, logistics

Source: <https://www.ier.com/en/>.

Table 4. Airport and Airline Data within the Middle East North Africa

Middle East Countries ¹	# of Airports ²	# of Airlines ³
Algeria	142	3
Bahrain	4	3
Djibouti	13	2
Egypt, Arab Republic of	84	19
Iran, Islamic Republic of	324	13
Iraq	104	3
Jordan	18	7
Kuwait	7	5
Lebanon	7	4
Libya	144	13
Morocco	56	4
Oman	130	2
Qatar	6	1
Saudi Arabia	216	3
Syria	99	2
Tunisia	29	6
United Arab Emirates	42	28
Yemen, Republic of	57	3
Total	1482	121

Sources: ¹Academy of International Business- Middle East North Africa (2013). Middle East North Africa Countries as defined by the Academy of International Business–Middle East North Africa Chapter. <https://aib.uowdubai.ac.ae/>.

²Central Intelligence Authority (2013). Total Number of Airports by Country, The World Factbook 2013, ISSN 1553-8133, Washington, DC, USA. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2053.html>.

³A-Z Group Ltd trading as AZura International (2018). *AZ World Airports: the leading source of airport information*. Surrey, United Kingdom. https://www.azfreight.com/directory_and_tools.html.

Over the years IER has entrenched itself deeply in the air transportation industry. IER has been an International Air Transport Association

(IATA, 2013) strategic partner since 2002. Over these last 10 years, IER has been actively involved in the IATA program of fostering cost reductions and efficiency gains for the industry through the Baggage Improvement Program (BIP), Fast Travel and Bar Coded Boarding Pass (BCBP) projects (Bar-Coded Boarding Passes, 2013).

IER has been delivering products and technologies for the airline industry for more than 30 years worldwide. IER has established itself as the main supplier of printing and boarding pass reading equipment. IER equipment has been installed in more than 70% of commercial airports around the world as of 2012. Some recent examples of their products include the delivery of Radio-frequency Identification RFID baggage tag printers for Las Vegas McCarran Airport; dedicated and Common Use Self Service (CUSS), check-in kiosks with middleware and monitoring software deployment for the Airports such as British Airport Authority (BAA), Madrid, Brussels, Paris, San Francisco, Nice, Split Airports; and airlines such as Easy Jet, ANA, Iberia, Singapore Airlines, Turkish Airlines, Midwest Airlines, Royal Air Maroc, Air Europa, Binter Air, Finnair, Norwegian Air Shuttle, Flybe, Air New Zealand, China Airlines, TravelSky BCIA to name a few, CUSS Airline Application development for numerous CUSS Kiosk Projects such as Cathay Pacific, Singapore Airlines, TravelSky and even China Airlines. Additionally, IER has also equipped airports with self-boarding gates for instance the Munich, Frankfurt and Paris Charles de Gaulle Airports. IER serves over 1500 customers on a yearly basis.

To ensure dedicated service, at a global level, IER has established service partners or distributors in the following countries: Australia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Guadeloupe/Martinique, Guam, Guyana, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, La Reunion, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Russia, Senegal, Slovak Republic, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, and Ukraine. More specifically, in the Middle East, IER has partners in Jordan, India, Pakistan, Lebanon, Yemen, Kuwait, Iran, Qatar, Oman, and Saudi Arabia (refer to Figure 1 for IER Main Offices; Table 5 for IER Major Projects & Highlights and Appendix 1 for IER Achievements).

Figure 1. IER Main Offices Worldwide



Source: <https://www.ier.com/en/>.

Table 5. IER Major Projects & Highlights (2012)

IER has been working on various projects around in airline and other industries with the following highlights:
- 800 airports equipped.
- 200 airlines customers.
- 20,000 travel agencies installed worldwide.
- More than 250,000 systems installed.
- 7,500 railway stations equipped.
- Air New Zealand: Complete self-service check-in solution with 111 kiosks on 11 airports
- Norwegian: 100 Kiosks deployed in 14 airports.
- Flybe: 103 kiosks in 13 airports.
- San Francisco Airport: 39 kiosks deployed.
- Autolib in France: Deployment of kiosks for the rent of Electrical cars (1500) in Paris with 250 rental stations.
- Societe Nationale de Chemins de Fer (SNCF, 2015), French Railway 1500 Ticketing kiosks for the sales of Train tickets.

Source: <https://www.ier.com/en/>.

Materials and Methods

The method was a case study approach. Lionel Thibaud, the General Manager, Impression et Enregistrement des Résultats (IER) (a French firm) based in the Middle East thought about achievements and challenges faced by the company within the Middle East region over the period of 2007–2013 in relation to various cross-cultural and multi-national issues. This case studies approach involved in-depth investigations of the General Manager and his employees. The case study approach for this study is not a research method itself but the authors selected methods of data collection and analysis that generated material suitable for teaching case studies.

Current state of knowledge

IER – Middle East and Sub-Continent Operations

IER had been doing business within the Middle East since 1997, and in 2002 established an IER-Middle East office based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). In the IER Middle East region, there were 15 employees. Over the last 10 years, Lionel worked in IER, initially as the Project Manager and then as the General Manager (GM). To manage operations, Lionel divided his time between the Middle East and sub-continent region markets as shown in Table 6. Lionel traveled at least 50% of his time per month. The time Lionel spent between the Singapore and the Paris offices (France) was to build and propose solutions needed by his customers. Table 7 and Figure 2 show some of the major projects in the Middle East and some examples of IER Check-In Kiosks solutions respectively. Figure 3 illustrates the IER key milestones.

Table 6. Percentage of Time Lionel spent in locations in his region on an annual basis

Country group	Country List	% of time spent on Business
GCC	Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait	50%
North Middle East	Jordan, Syria, Lebanon	10%
Iran	Iran	10%
Sub Continents	India, Pakistan	10%
Others	Singapore, Paris	20%

Source: own work.

Table 7. Middle East and Sub-Continent Major Projects

2007: First CUSS self-service kiosk's check-in in the middle in Jordan with Royal Jordanian.
2008: First CUSS kiosk deployed in India in Hyderabad airport.

2009: Setting of first big Scale Pilot, RFID Bag tag solution in Dubai airport in conjunction with London Heathrow airport.
2010: Deployment of check-in equipment in 22 airports over Saudi Arabia.
Pilot of first self-boarding solution in the Middle East.
2011: Installation of the first self-check-in solution in Iran.
Deployment of first Self Check-in Kiosks in Lebanon, in Beirut.
Abu Dhabi: Completing check-in and boarding equipment deployment.

Source: own work.

Figure 2. IER Check-In Kiosks Solutions



Source: <https://www.ier.com/en/>.

Results

Doing Business in the Middle East and the Sub-Continent

For Lionel, as a business developer in IER for Middle East and sub-continent region, the key factors for success were adaptation to the cultural differences and developing patience. Lionel managed business operations in 22

different countries. Each project required an understanding of local culture, adapting to the way of doing business in those markets and dealing with multiple nationalities. Over the years, Lionel saw that the culture across the Middle East, though it seemed complex, was not well defined in certain blocs of countries yet. The culture was hard to observe and difficult to explain. It could be defined as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society” (Hall et al., 1976).

Factors affecting Business Development and Management

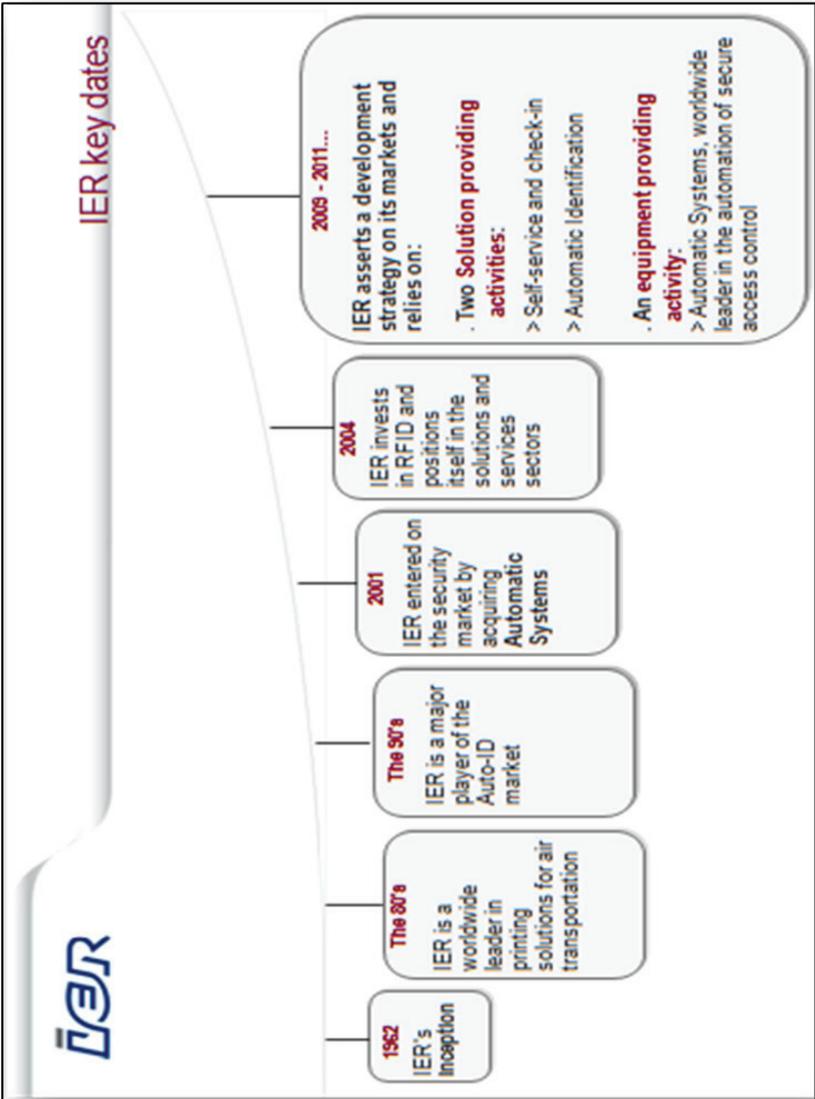
IER regional customers included airlines such as Emirates, Qatar Airways, Etihad Airways and Saudi Arabian airlines and airports such as Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Manama, Jeddah, Beirut and Amman. To do business with these clients required understanding of the ways of conducting business, how to network, present the product and services, achieve invitation for the participation in Request for Proposals (RFPs), procurement process, price negotiation process, contract negotiations, and project implementation. In Lionel's experience, there were two main success factors at IER Middle East to successfully work with these clients:

- 1) Process Factors,
- 2) Human Relation Factors.

Process Factors: How culture impacted processes and practices

There was a common misconception that Middle Eastern countries were similar throughout the region. This was not true. According to Lionel it was possible to classify groups of countries in the region based on how you needed to adapt the Business to Business (B2B) process (*refer to* Figure 3).

Figure 3. IER Key Milestones



Source: <https://www.ier.com/en/>.

Table 8. Classification of Countries in the Middle East & Sub-continent

Group	Group name	Countries
Group A	GCC	Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, Kuwait, Saudi, Oman
Group B	North Middle East	Lebanon, Jordan, Syria
Group C	Out of GCC	Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan
Group D	Iran	Iran
Group E	Sub-continent	India, Pakistan

Source: own work.

Doing business in the B2B category varied within the region based on local culture, number of expats, language of business etc. Doing business in Lebanon was totally different from doing business in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). In KSA, business culture was strongly anchored in the Muslim Arabic roots while Lebanon had a business culture similar to Europe. Doing business with women customers in the Middle East was very different than in Europe. For example, greeting women in KSA would require no bodily contact and a humble demeanor while in Lebanon; women could be greeted similar to France with a hand shake and even with a kiss on the cheek if you knew the person very well. Country greetings would be different even between men. Interaction between men would be friendlier in the Middle East than in Europe often with a hug or a kiss, while a tap on the shoulder or a long hand shake in the Indian subcontinent was quite usual. The number of expats varied across the countries, there were subtle differences in cultures and customs between the Arab countries and the rules and regulations in the way of conducting business could be quite different. Countries like UAE and Qatar had a significant number of expats in the companies which you would interact with to do business. For example, the ratio of UAE locals (Emiratis) versus expats could reach up to 20:80 ratios in a city such as Dubai. This was important as the negotiator would have to have a different approach in doing business with an expat versus a local native.

The process elements Lionel considered important were: method of getting contacts, how easy it was to get a meeting with a customer or potential

customer, how the language barrier affected relationship with the customers, the value of time, the project time approach and communications (*refer to* Table 9). Getting new contacts was one of the success factors for business in the Middle East, in terms of developing networks and collaborations. The business culture in the Middle East was to have a lot of meetings before the deal was signed. These could be both formal and informal meetings. The language of business in the Middle East could be quite challenging especially as Lionel did not know the Arabic language and his mother tongue was not English. Value of time referred to the importance of the time given to discuss and meet. In general, the value of time was quite similar within the region. For example, price negotiation, an important step was never rushed, making contract negotiations very difficult and time consuming. The project timeframe referred to the time taken from sales presentation to project deployment and could vary widely. Projects could take more than three years to be finalized while similar projects in Europe would take two to three months. The overall process of implementing a project from the sales presentation to the delivery was very long in the Middle East countries when compared to the European countries such as France. Typically, major projects in the Middle East would take two years from beginning to implementation while European projects would take around eight months.

Table 9. Lionel's ranking of process factors in relation to conducting business in the Middle East & its Sub-continent

Elements	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E
Getting contacts	Relatively Easy	Easy	Communication and language barrier issues	Communication and language barrier issues	Easy
Getting Meetings	Start with Middle Management before meeting the top management	Easy	Difficult	Accessible	Accessible

Language of Business	No issue, English spoken widely. Arabic is useful for Saudi Arabia	English is immediate; Arabic is useful	Arabic is required	English not spoken everywhere, there is a great need for a translator to speak Farsi	English is immediate
Value of time	Quick meetings	Long meetings	Normal meeting	Really long meetings	Quick meetings
Project timeframe	6 to 8 months	8 months to 1 year	1 to 2 years	1 to 2 years	1 to 2 years
Communications	Phone then email	Phone then email	Mainly phone	Mainly phone	Phone then email

Source: own work.

Process Factors: How communication impacts business processes and practices

IER Middle East preferred to use direct communications like face-to-face meetings, conference calls or mobiles calls (*refer to* Table 10, Alder & Elmhurst, 2013). Email was considered as second means of communications. One of the reasons was because in the Arabic culture, a key success factor in the “art of negotiation” was to be available in person so you would have more impact, show respect for the customer by making the time to be physically present and it made it easier for a customer to understand and explain what he wanted. In written communications, the language barrier would be greater as people may understand differently the meaning of words and expressions used in an email since most of the time the language used was English which may not be the native language of most people in Middle East region. Written communication came in a variety of forms such as letters, bulletins, reports, or memos. Written messages such as reports tended to be easier to understand, could be composed in advance and were less prone to errors.

Table 10. Considerations for the communication channel in IER Middle East team

Communication channel	Time required for feedback	Richness of information conveyed	Sender's control over how message is composed	Control over receiver's attention	Effectiveness for detailed messages
Face-to-face	Immediate, that is, after contact is established	High; both verbal and non-verbal cues	Moderate	Highest	Weak (listeners are likely to forget details of complicated messages)
Telephone	Immediate, that is, after contact is established	Vocal, but no visual cues	Moderate	Less than in face-to-face settings	Weakest
Voice mail	Delayed	Vocal, but no visual cues	Higher; since the receiver cannot interrupt	Low	Weak
Email	Delayed	Lowest, text only, no formatting.	High	Low	Better
Instant messaging	Potentially quick once contact has been established	Lowest, text only, no formatting.	High	Modest	Weak
Hard copy (e.g. handwritten or typed message)	Delayed	Words, numbers and images, but no nonverbal cues	Highest	Low	Good

Source: own work.

Importance of creating human relationships factors

Lionel knew that it was vital to understand the role of culture and its impact on management practices especially like negotiation. The mechanism he employed was through the creation of good human relations. There were major differences in the process especially when you compared the way of doing business in the Middle East to Europe. Typically, the number of rounds of price negotiations would be double in the Middle East. For instance; if it was four rounds of negotiation in Europe, there were usually eight negotiation rounds

in Middle East. This impacted the pricing and sales strategy. While bargaining you had to be able to concede at strategic points, and this meant that with longer negotiations you would start at a higher price or had to be prepared to throw more value items in to close the deal. This skill would often be embedded in the strategic relationships you developed. The different ethnicities of customers in the Middle East made it a real challenge for a manager to adopt the best and more effective management style. Europeans or American styled management techniques would not be effective where a majority of employees came from the Middle East as their expectations were different when it came to work style, career expectations and salary negotiations.

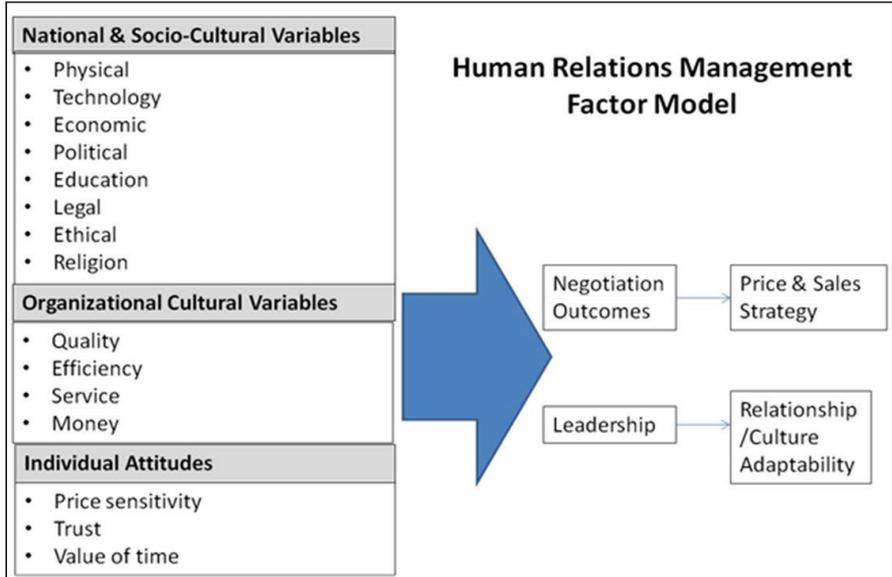
Lionel identified many factors that impacted human relationship when doing business with customer which were illustrated in Exhibit 14. These could be divided broadly as macro-variables (national and socioeconomic variables); organizational cultural variables and individual attitudes. The final impact was on negotiations and leadership, in terms of the price and sales strategy. Cultural adaptation usually started at the product and solutions level, requiring customization for the local market where the various factors referred to in Figure 4 had a stronger influence and impact upon the decision-making process.

National and socio-cultural variables

The national and socio-cultural variables (*refer to* Figure 4) were a product of the macro-environment, uncontrollable but important factors to consider when doing business. It required the contextual understanding of the place; such as the location and its characteristics, the availability and access to technological, knowledge of economy, legal and political environment. For example, for physical location, UAE was promoting itself as an aviation hub. There were some Middle Eastern countries where the political situation was unstable and this made it difficult to travel via air and therefore business expectation was less. Socio-cultural variables took into consideration things like education and language. Due to the fact multi-national expats

and locals had varying degree of education, exposure to other cultures and preferred languages.

Figure 4. Human Relations Management Factor Model



Source: Immanuel Azaad Moonesar, 2018.

Understanding legal requirements was important because the expectation in Arab countries normally began with the business ritual of being able to compromise or "meet the negotiations halfway." Some important discussion points at the contract stage were for example, by Request for Proposals (RFPs), direct purchase order, the payment terms and the choice of country jurisdiction for a contract. Group A and B countries tended to be really particular in outlining the terms and conditions, making sure all finer aspects were discussed before signing the contract. Even after negotiations were completed, at the final signing stage, the negotiations could be reopened to resolve previously discussed points. For technological know-how, for instance, the country of Iran, had very limited access to internet, resulting in the communication being disrupted from time to time.

Understanding the religious aspect was important, especially as Lionel who was European had never been exposed to the significance of this point of view. For example, he had to understand the implications of doing business during the Holy Month of Ramadan (30 days of prayer and fasting resulting in shorter work days from 8.5 hours to 6 hours). Non-Muslims were required to respect the Holy Month and prayer times by appropriate etiquette (for example no eating and drinking in public during Ramadan). Lionel highlighted his first experience of Ramadan in Dubai as a culture shock. He remembered at his first meeting during the month of Ramadan, there were no refreshments provided during the meeting and the meeting was interrupted by time of prayer. Therefore, Lionel familiarized himself with the schedule of the time of prayer and arranged business meetings accordingly to minimize interruptions.

This was important also from product development point of view. Lionel would not advise customers to use the same solutions available in the European markets for the Arab countries. There were many reasons. First of all because the local habits and customer expectations were different between the regions; secondly, the customer would find this suggestion arrogant as it would indicate, according to them, that there is a lack of the full understanding of the local culture. Furthermore, the end customer was also important and IER would have to profile airport passengers, their expectations of service and their ability to adapt to automation with self service solutions.

Organizational cultural variables

Lionel realized each organization had a different organizational culture and this impacted the way of doing business. He narrowed these factors down to four key perspectives, i.e. approach to quality, efficiency, service, and to money.

Quality: The approach to maintaining quality and standards were different across the Arab countries and in Europe. Lionel found he had to comply with different quality standards, policies and procedures across the Arab countries. To ensure quality despite the need to cut costs IER always recom-

mended that the customer use only genuine parts from IER as buying fake parts or second hand parts would compromise the equipment and hence the end customer experience. Creating a trust with the customer very often translated to trust for the organization (rather than the other way around).

Efficiency: In the Middle East; the projects tended to focus mainly of project outcomes as opposed to high productivity. Lionel's main focus was geared towards being more process-oriented and solution-oriented. Though good planning was needed for the success of the project, the Middle East tended to work more on an emergency mode, a last minute type of process. Usually in GCC countries, the decision making process took time. But once the decisions were taken, there was an expectation of a super-fast delivery, leaving little room for planning and organizing. Implementation teams were usually very reactive and adapted fast while in Europe, the project would be planned to have a longer period of implementation, giving time to make any new the changes if required. This was not the case in the Middle East which was a bit disruptive when changes were required that were not planned for. A good example, when migrating systems for an airline, the project would have to peak in such a way that the final implementation could only be done at the last stage instead of doing it in phases to avoid disruptions in the business. It needed to be planned so that their migration was seamless. Another example to consider was when an airline opened a new destination and had a short deadline to get ready in time. The purchasing process was usually long and would always be delayed by price and term condition negotiations which when finalized were usually one or two weeks before the opening of the destination and made it really difficult to deliver the products in time. IER teams needed to be flexible to handle this and have a reasonably good relationship with their customers to be able to explain the delivery times.

Service: There was a need for more emphasis on the service level across the Middle East. Lionel always extolled the value of high and good service and its benefits to the customers of IER. Planning, organization, leading and controlling was definitely a way of work; however, there were high expectations

of good service in terms of the fast delivery of urgent orders which would disorganize set plan and schedules. Furthermore, Lionel had to know the level of service expectations when dealing with his customers in the Middle East. A good example was to respond promptly to emails effectively, phone calls and make last-minute trips to the customers, providing the best service possible. Additionally, as part of providing the best service to the customers in the long term, Lionel gave warranties, fast repairs and fast delivery of spare parts. This built a stronger relationship bond with customers.

Money: The Middle East had a reputation for making major infrastructural investments. In certain projects, meeting deadlines were more important than the cost of the project. For example, the opening date of an airport in the Middle East was critical to handle the increased passenger capacity versus the cost of the airport in general. New airports and terminals in the regions would have pressure to finish fast and not have any delays in delivery, which usually had consequences of an increase of cost. Lionel needed to have a good relationship with the customer to understand the strategic pressures behind the decision and plan accordingly.

X.3.4.3 Individual attitudes

In addition to all the above factors, it was important to understand at the personal level what were the individuals' attitudes and values. Values were the basic conviction that a person had about right and wrong, good and bad, important and unimportant. For example, a person's price sensitivity and past experiences would affect the final price's negotiation and this meant Lionel needed to recalibrate his expectations of the time spent to negotiate and expectation of discounts/reduced rates and prices.

It was important to know a person's trust level. Trust in the Middle East was a major requirement by customers. It was quite usual for a customer to ask IER to do some work while the official paperwork and purchase order (PO) were still in the working process. Basically, you were expected to work without the security

of an official contract and in interest of long-term business, it was important that the company took risk. For Lionel, it meant educating his counterparts in France as this was not a convention practice internationally. Lionel required developing a strong understanding of not the individual but the organization and whether they would be able to keep up their end of the contract.

The value of time affected the way of working. While the expectation was that projects could be delivered quickly, time at a personal level was seen differently. For example, punctuality (for meetings) was not deemed as important in the Middle East as it was in Europe. On the other hand, Middle East customers expected the company to adapt really quickly to new needs and this was considered very important. It was very typical to be notified for a minute meeting the day before or even on the same day of the scheduled meeting and the customer expected the company would come in well prepared. Similarly, when working on a project, it not unusual to have requests for early delivery despite agreed time frames in the contract. Constraints of working hours (shorter hours during Ramadan), customer requests for last minute changes (and time to organize to these changes) were not seen as a problem to be overcome from a customer point of view. This way of doing business was different from that of European clients. To manage projects in the Middle East, it was paramount to have flexibility through a local team which was able to meet the customer expectation and fill the gap between the Head office expectations (R&D was in Paris-France and so was the Head Office) while meeting the customer expectations within the Middle East.

Every meeting was a challenge and an adventure of learning more from your customer, local politics and local customs. Lionel's experiences were illustrated with Exhibit 15 in terms of the culture affecting management practices and processes as a comparison of the United States of America, France and Middle Eastern culture of management and its influences upon its' processes and functions. It is important to highlight that connections and 'wasta' which is an Arabic expression for designing the use of personal connections in order to obtain job or businesses as a personal favour (Khaleej Times, 2015).

Table 11. Culture affects management practices & processes

Management Process & Function Affected & Influenced	Country Comparison		
	United States of America Culture	France Culture	Middle Eastern Culture
Planning, scheduling	Individual influences future	Life is preordained/destined	Life is pretty unstable and changes really fast
Morale, productivity	The environment is changeable	People adjust to the environment	The environment is changeable and employees adjust to the environment
Motivation, rewards	Hard work leads to success	Education, experience and maturity leads to success	Connections and Wasta tends to over-rule hard work
Promotions, recruitment	Employment can be ended	Employment is somehow stable and secure	Employment is rather unsure and can be ended quickly

Source: own work.

So while all the factors mentioned above impact the strategy of the organization, Lionel also needed to manage the organizational culture. Lionel ran a multicultural team of 15 people and in this region change was constant. The employee attitudes and job satisfactions had to be met, in terms of the work ethics; time and change (*refer* to Figure 4).

Lionel as a manager was responsible for handling the way in which he communicated with his clients and team members, especially at each stage of the project as it moved forwards. Managing change was an integral part of managing projects and it was seen that GCC countries accepted change better than European countries. Corporate culture was an important priority area for IER Middle East as it impacted not just business with the customer but morale, cross-cultural management and functioning of the team Lionel put together over the years. Some countries in the Middle East region would

have less acceptance of change (and this was usually linked to local cultural habits) such as countries in groups C, D and E (refer to Table 8). According to Kotter (2007) change can impact individuals by:

- Feelings of uncertainty based on the unknown,
- Reduction in personal need fulfillment,
- Real or perceived stress,
- Loss of status or “personal comfort zones”,
- Loss of equilibrium and personal power.

Critical in a multi-cultural environment was to make the team work together in the best possible way. To do this was ensuring there was an equal mix of nationalities without one being higher in the number than another. This would ensure that all work conversations took place preferably in one language so that the team worked well together and that nobody was left out. Direct and clear instructions helped in overcoming language barriers and comprehension issues to guarantee getting the expected results. Balancing different points of view was important when organizing and executing the work. Europeans or American styled management techniques would not be effective where a majority of employees came from the Middle East as their expectations were different when it came to work style, career expectations and salary negotiations. Lionel believed in using Kotter’s eight stages (2007) of successful change management to overcome resistance to change across the company:

- 1) Establish a sense of urgency: Lionel acted on this principle by creating the awareness for the need of change, in terms of management communications through policies and procedures and having staff inputs.
- 2) Form a powerful guiding coalition: Lionel worked together with the Headquarters in Paris and the Singapore Office in the light of attaining the top management commitment to service quality.
- 3) Create a vision: Lionel was able to envision that the Middle East branch was to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- 4) Communicating the vision: Lionel communicated this vision to the customers, staff and its stakeholders.

- 5) Empower others to act on the vision: Lionel created the desire among the staff to participate in and support the new vision, in terms of enhancing job security, career advancement through job autonomy and even compensations.
- 6) Plan for and create short-term wins: Lionel equipped his staff with the appropriate competencies and skills by providing training and development and using more quality tracking tools such as Oracle.
- 7) Consolidate improvements and produce more change: Lionel monitored the staff's ability to implement the required skills for the projects through coaching and mentoring.
- 8) Institutionalize new approaches: Lionel reinforced the importance of sustaining the change through positive feedback, rewards, recognition and measuring performance of the staff.

Final Remarks

IER Middle East believed that culture was learnt through a shared experience by a group and was not specific to an individual. It was patterned, having the same norms and rituals. IER Middle East understood that this was trans-generational (passed down from one generation to another, from one society to another and being symbolic, abstract, and complex) which meant that the knowledge Lionel had acquired was important for the long-term success of the organization. Culture in Middle East was a good way to create discussions and healthy debate to understand how to do business in the Middle East and gain a competitive advantage through the relationships IER developed through trust from the customers. The challenge was knowing how to manage the communication and the consideration to adapt constantly to local rules, governing laws and customs while keeping the IER values and morale of the team high. IER Middle East continued to strive successfully on how to do business within the Middle Eastern region in handling and striking a balance with all the varying cultures and customs. In

addition, to meet the needs of the customers, IER had a long-term mission to establish long-term relationships and collaborations within the Middle East region. Overall, Lionel's future objective for IER Middle East was to continue being the preferred vendor of airlines and airports for passengers' solution while providing innovative ideas and solution as well as continuing to give outstanding customer support. How could Lionel increase his business in the Middle East and subcontinent region?

This case study is suitable for undergraduate and postgraduate students studying topics related to cross-cultural management, decision-making, managing in multinational companies and leadership and management. A few questions for forward thinking would include:

Q1: What are the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) facing IER Middle East in relation to cross-cultural management?; Q2: What are the current management strategies of IER Middle East in the prioritization of cross-cultural management, communication, negotiation and human relation issues?; Q3: What are your recommendations for the future cross-cultural management strategies of IER Middle East?; Q4: If IER wanted to hire a new sales executive for both Saudi Arabia and Qatar, what career profile and background would Lionel need to look for?; Q5: Reflect what has happened in terms how the cultural experiences have made you learn or become more aware of the cultural values observed in this case, how the incidents made you become more sensitive to others or to the culture you had experiences with and lastly how the incidents made you behave more appropriately at that time or after you have learned about it; and Q6: Take Hofstede's (2001), Trompenaars Hampden-Turner's (2013) or the GLOBE (2018) cultural dimensions and relate the characteristics of the same to the classification Lionel used for group countries. Are there research gaps in these typologies? What other variables do you think must be introduced? Look at other sources like the World Value Survey (2018).

Appendix 1. IER History Achievements

1962: IER means “Impression et Enregistrement des Résultats”– meaning Printing and Saving Results, a company producing and marketing peripheral equipment for the scientific instrumentation market which was created.
1967: IER developed satellite-mounted magnetic recorders for all the European programmes.
1973: The first ticket printer -IER 221- was mass-produced.
1977: IER positioned itself in the air transport market when it launched the first air ticket printers. Its first customers were Air France and Swissair.
1987: IER presented its first full range of ticket printers and became, in just a few years, the world leader in ticketing for major transport networks.
1997: IER joined the Bolloré Group.
2002: Creation of Dubai office and repair center to cover the all Middle Eastern countries
2003: IER was chosen by the SNCF to renew its automatic ticket machines for main lines, involving a first rollout of 1,150 terminals.
2005: IER was chosen by BAA, the leading global airport operator, to supply the seven British airports with automatic check-in terminals over five years.
IER developed its RFID inlay design business and supplied Marks & Spencer with almost 20 million RFID inlays.
2006: IER wins a significant reference in United States with a contract for San Francisco airport to provide its new self-check-in kiosk IER 918.
2008: IER deployed over a hundred self-check-in kiosks for Air New Zealand and celebrated the installation of its 4000th self-service postal kiosk In France.
2009: Partnership with India Company in Mumbai to perform Maintenance of IER equipment over all India.
2013: IER MiddleEast merged with IER Pte Ltd Singapore.

References

Academy of International Business – Middle East North Africa (2013). Middle East North Africa Countries as defined by the Academy of International Business – Middle East North Africa Chapter. <https://aib.uowdubai.ac.ae/>. Access: March 2013.

Adler, R. B., & Elmhorst, J. M. (2013). *Communicating at Work* (11th ed.). Boston: Mc Graw-Hill International Edition. Access: March 2013

A-Z Group Ltd trading as AZura International (2018). *AZ World Airports: the leading source of airport information. Surrey, United Kingdom.* https://www.azfreight.com/directory_and_tools.html. Access: March 2013.

Bar-Coded Boarding Passes (2013). <http://www.iata.org/whatwedo/stb/bcbp/pages/index.aspx>. Access: March 2013.

Central Intelligence Authority (2013). Total Number of Airports by Country, The World Factbook 2013, ISSN 1553-8133, Washington, DC, USA. Access: March 2014. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2053.html>.

Grove, Cornelius N. (2013). Introduction to the GLOBE Research Project on Leadership Worldwide. GROVEWELL L.L.C. <http://www.grovetwell.com/pub-GLOBE-intro.html>. Access: March 2013.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, ISBN 0-8039-7323-3. <http://www.geerthofstede.com/>. Access: March 2018.

Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond Culture*. Garden City, NJ: Anchor Books Doubleday.

Impression et Enregistrement des Résultats, IER (2018a). <https://www.ier.com/en/>.

IER (2018b). *Newsletters: Air Transportation Solutions*. http://www.ier.com/files/IER_Frequencies__24_EN.pdf. Access: March 2013.

Institute for Comparative Survey Research (2018). Vienna, Austria. <http://www.world-valuessurvey.org/>. Access: March 2013.

International Air Transport Association (2013). <http://www.iata.org>. Access: March 2013.

Khaleej Times (2015). *Nepotism versus wasta in business globalisation*. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/business/nepotism-versus-wasta-in-business-globalisation>
Access: December 2017.

Kotter, J. P. (2007). Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail. *Harvard Business Review*, 85(1), 96–103. Access: March 2013.

Moonesar, I.A., & Thibaud, L. (2015). Research & Development: Impression et Enregistrement des Resultats (IER). *Emerging Markets Case Studies Collection*, 5(3), Emerald Group Publishing, UK. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/EEMCS-03-2015-0039>. Access: March 2016.

Societe Nationale de Chemins de Fer (2015). www.sncf.fr. Access: March 2015.

Trompenaars Hampden-Turner Consulting (2018). Amstelveen, The Netherlands. <http://www2.thtconsulting.com>. Access: March 2018.

