

# CULTURAL DIMENSIONS AND CRM SYSTEMS IMPLEMENTATION: A PRELIMINARY FRAMEWORK

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## ABSTRACT

Cultural dimensions are often identified as a crucial influence on the success or failure of Information Systems in general and Customer Relationship Management Systems (CRM) in particular. Several researchers have suggested ways in which management can accommodate these dimensions or solve the problems they may pose. Ali & Alshawi (2005) have proposed a cultural dimensions framework for the management of CRM systems implementation in the multinational environment. In this paper the authors test that framework by conducting a qualitative comparative case study in a large multinational organization in two countries. The authors have investigated the implementation of CRM systems within the same organization in both Egypt and the UK. Using observation, document analysis and interviews, qualitative data has been elicited and used a Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) analysis to determine themes for each case study. The authors have used the Structural analysis by Walsham (2002) which based on the concepts of Structuration Theory by Giddens (1979, 1984), to propose their explanations of these themes and draw from this analysis the cultural dimensions which may have impact on CRM systems implementation. The authors have concluded by proposing an updated framework of cultural dimensions for management of CRM systems within multinational environment organizations.

## Keywords

CRM, Culture, Qualitative, Case Study, SSM, Structuration Theory, UK, Egypt.

## INTRODUCTION

In a competitive market, companies try to build a relationship with their existing customers as the cost of attracting new customers is higher than retaining these existing customers. To build a relationship with customer is a socio-technical process. The most important factor in that process is to understand how that customer values, norms, thoughts, perceptions, etc., are alike. Multinational organization deal with customers from many different cultures. CRM systems in multinational organizations are built to attract new customers, increase customers' value and retain customers, and in all cases these may be with different customers and from different cultures.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions are the most cited reference about culture within IS literature (McCoy 2003). Ali, and Alshawi (2005) have proposed a comprehensive cultural dimensions framework, including Hofstede's cultural dimensions, through a normative survey of the culture literature within and outside of IS literature. In this paper the authors test that framework by conducting a comparative qualitative case study in a large multinational organization in two different countries, Egypt and the UK. The authors use a Structural analysis (based on concepts of Structuration Theory (ST) by Giddens (1979, 1984)) to derive the cultural dimensions which may influence the CRM implementation and operation in a multinational environment.

The structure of this paper follows the logical sequence. The authors propose, in section two, the problem background. That includes the previous literature about culture within IS, then propose the background literature on Structuration theory within IS, then highlight Structuration theory as a different perspectives of looking to social and cultural phenomena in IS discipline. The research problem explicitly deals with social construction, so an interpretative research approach is proposed in section three. That includes a description of the qualitative comparative case study which the authors have conducted in a

commercial multinational company in Egypt and UK. Addressing the problem has two main strands: soft systems methodology (SSM) and Structuration theory (ST). SSM has already been extensively used in IS research and valued for its ability to deal with soft problem messes and its social alertness, SSM and proposal of the different themes from the primarily data analysis for each case study has been proposed in section five. ST is a well-developed theory of the social, which however, does not explicitly theorize information technology (IT) or lend itself to case study research in a very obvious way, in section six; the authors propose the Structural analysis of the different themes of each case study. In section seven, the authors have proposed a preliminary framework for the cultural concerns in the context of CRM systems implementation in multinational environment. At last but not least, in section eight the authors conclude by summary and future research.

## RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The literature on culture provides a set of general concepts and ideas as a way of looking at the world. However, the typologies of culture have inherent weaknesses e.g. they do not reflect the variety of values and attitude that may exist in a country, nor do they explain how cultures have developed over time. These limitations will need to be borne in mind, when considering the potential impact of culture on the use of information systems, particularly CRM systems (Skok and Legge 2001).

Stahl (2003) distinguished between two different dimensions of culture. The first proposes that different cultures are fundamentally and possibly irreconcilably different, whereas the second proposes that all cultures share some universal attributes. These two ideal-typical positions appear to be different shades of grey. Stahl has concluded that, despite obvious difference in cultures, there are similarities that are based on human nature. There are three identified levels of culture that are of relevance (Ali & Alshawi, 2004a). First, there is culture that a society shares (national culture), a set of core values that shape the behavior of individuals as well as the whole society which is the focus of this paper. Second, there is the culture on a smaller level, namely organizational culture, which the shared norms between the staff of the organization which is partly influenced by the national culture (Adler 1997; Bagchi and Cervený 2003). Third, there is the individual level of culture 'personality', as shown by Dorfman and Howell (1988) in their investigation into the effects of national culture on individual behaviour, e.g. technology acceptance, which may influence the customer behavior even in the opposite direction that the national culture is pushing. The focus of this study is on the potential impact of national culture on CRM systems but that obviously would have some influence by the organizational culture where that study has been conducted and also by the individual level of culture when it is coming to customer preferences and needs.

### Culture Dimensions

Hofstede's dimensions of culture are often adopted in cultural IS research (McCoy 2003), because they are the most widely cited and used. Given the critiques of Hofstede cultural dimensions (McCoy, 2003; Ali and Alshawi 2004a, 2005), the authors argue that studying the potential impact of culture on the CRM systems implementation and operation requires a wider scope of analysis to study culture, than Hofstede dimensions' have provided. The authors, in this paper, use concepts of Structural Theory by Giddens (1979, 1984) to explore the impact of cultural dimensions on CRM implementation and operation within a multinational environment. Walsham (2002) stated that Structural analysis could be used to analyze differences in cultural sub-groups and even individuals. The authors use a different perspective to drive cultural dimensions in a society; they use the Structural analysis as a tool to drive cultural dimensions, for more details refer to Ali and Alshawi (2004b). Ali & Alshawi (2005) proposed, by a normative literature review, a comprehensive culture dimensions framework for the management of CRM implementation in the multinational environment. A summary of these cultural dimensions and their definitions are shown in Table 1.

Culture Dimension	Definition
Uncertainty avoidance (UA) (Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 1994a; Trompenaars, 1993)	Degree to which people in a country prefer structured over unstructured situations: from relatively flexible to extremely rigid.
Power Distance (PD) (Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 1994a)	Degree of inequality among people, which the population of a country considers as normal: from relatively equal to extremely unequal.
Masculinity/femininity (MF) (Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 1994a)	Degree to which "masculine" values like assertiveness, performance, success and competition prevail over "feminine" values like the quality of life, maintaining warm personal relationships, service, caring, and solidarity: from tender to tough.

Culture Dimension	Definition
Individualism/collectivism (IC) (Hofstede, 1980, 1983,, 1994a)	Degree to which people in a country have learned to act as individuals rather than as members of cohesive groups: from collectivist to individualist.
Confucian Dynamism (Hofstede, 1994b)	Degree to which people in a country promote collective welfare and harmony, resulting in psychological collectivism.
Universalism-Particularism (Trompenaars, 1993)	Degree to which people in a country compare generalist rules about what is right with more situation-specific relationship obligations and unique circumstances
Neutral vs. Emotional Relationship Orientations (Trompenaars, 1993)	Degree to which people in a country compare 'objective' and 'detached' interactions with interactions where emotions is more readily expressed.
Specific vs. Diffuse Orientations (Trompenaars, 1993)	Degree to which people in a country have been involved in a business relationships with in which private and work encounters are demarcated and 'segregated-out'
Achievement vs. Ascription (Trompenaars, 1993)	Degree to which people in a country compare cultural groups which make their judgments of others on actual individual accomplishments (achievement oriented societies) with those where a person is ascribed status on grounds of birth, group membership or similar criteria.
Conservatism vs. Affective/intellectual autonomy (Schwartz, 1994)	Degree to which people in a country emphasis maintenance of status quo (Conservatism), or emphasis creativity or affective autonomy emphasis the desire for pleasure and an exiting life.
Hierarchy vs. Egalitarian (Schwartz, 1994)	Degree to which people in a country believe in freedom and equality and a concern for others (Egalitarian), vs. emphasis the legitimacy of fixed roles and resources (Hierarchy)
Harmony vs. Mastery (Schwartz, 1994)	Degree to which people in a country concerned with overcoming obstacles in the social environment (Mastery) vs. concern beliefs about unity with nature and fitting harmoniously into the environment.
Communal Sharing Relationships (Fiske, 1992)	Degree to which people in a country see the members of a particular group as equivalent and undifferentiated. Group members favour their own group, and can be highly hostile to those outside that group (this concept is so close to Hofstede's notion of Collectivism).
Authority Ranking Relationships (Fiske, 1992)	Degree to which people in a country involve a linear ordering of relations, with people high in rank having not only prestige, privileges and decision-making rights, but also possibly some responsibility for those lower down the hierarchy( this concept has an overlap with Hofstede's notion of power distance).
Equality Matching Relationships (Fiske, 1992)	Degree to which people in a country stress equality in social relations. People here are aware of where imbalances occur and, operating under the norm of reciprocity.
Market Pricing Relationships (Fiske, 1992)	Degree to which people in a country think in terms of prices and investment.

**Table 1: A Framework of Culture Dimensions (Ali, & Alshawi 2005)**

## RESEARCH APPROACH

### Research Problem

Following on from the cultural dimension framework proposed by Ali & Alshawi (2005), this study aims to validate the framework through a case study of CRM systems implementation within a large multinational private organization, the emphasis is on national culture but the authors highlight the potential conflict with the organizational culture and individual

level of culture when appropriate.

### Research Methodology

The case study is one of several ways of doing social science research. A case study has a distinct advantage this is when “a ‘how’ or ‘why’ question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control” (Yin, 1994). In this research the aim is to explore the potential cultural issues that may influence CRM implementation and operation in the multinational organization environment. Since the study concerns social and cultural phenomena within CRM implementation, therefore a qualitative case study is most appropriate for this kind of research. For more details of culture issues related to CRM systems see Ali & Alshawi (2004a). The authors use an interpretive approach to look at culture phenomena via the lens of the Structural perspective (Walsham, 2002). For more details about using a Structural analysis for studying the potential impact of culture on CRM please see Ali & Alshawi (2004b).

The aim for this research is to make sense of the whole, and of the dynamic relationships between the organization, the CRM users, customers and other actors. From an understanding of this, a Structural analysis can be used as a lens to show where problems reside, how potential solutions can be identified and how wider institutional issues relate to actors and vice-versa. For case study design and case study protocol refer to Ali et al. (2006).

### Data Collection

The authors have conducted two case studies in the same multinational organization but in two countries namely Egypt and the UK. The authors have chosen a large multinational private organization which has a branch in each country. The authors have interviewed staff in four departments in the organization. That includes Customers Operations Management, Marketing Management, Retail Management, and IT. Also, CRM team which was located within IT department in Egypt case but in marketing department in UK case. These areas has been identified as the touch points of customers and thought to be important for this research. The authors have summarized the work done in each case study in table 2.

	Egypt Case Study	UK Case Study
Organization Information	Egyptian branch of a large multinational private organization	British branch of the same multinational private organization
Departments	CRM, Marketing, Retail, and customer Services	CRM, Marketing, Retail, and Customer Services
CRM Technology Solution	Siebel CRM solutions	Clarify CRM Solutions
CRM Phase	Acquisition Phase	Retention Phase
CRM types	Operational CRM, Collaborative CRM, and analytical CRM	Operational CRM, Collaborative CRM, analytical CRM, and e-CRM
CRM staff	Within IT team	Within Marketing team
Source of Information: Observation Semi-Structured Interviews Documents and CRM Systems Analysis	CRM manager (1), CRM staff (9), IT manager (2), IT staff (4) Customer Operations manager (1), Customer Operations staff (2), Marketing staff (5), Retail manager (1), Retail staff (2), customers (16)	CRM manager (1), CRM staff (4), Customer Operations manager (6), Customer Operations staff (10), Marketing manager ( 5) Marketing staff (10), Retail manager (1), Retail staff (3), customers (16)
Customer Touch Points	Call Centre, Store, and Web, WAP	Call Centre, Store, and Web, WAP

Table2. Case study Structural Analysis in Egypt and the UK (Yin, 1994)

### SSM AND DATA ANALYSIS

‘The aim of soft systems methodology’ asserts Checkland ‘is to take seriously the subjectivity which is the crucial characteristic of human affairs and to treat this subjectivity.....in a way characterized by intellectual rigor.’ SSM is variously characterized by Checkland as a ‘system of enquiry,’ ‘enquiry process,’ ‘learning system,’ ‘reflection in action,’ ‘an organized version of doing purposeful thinking,’ or ‘structured way of thinking’ (Checkland and Scholes 1990).

The authors have used SSM to derive the primary themes in each case study (currently Egypt and the UK). The authors take these themes and compare them with the cultural framework (Ali and Alshawi, 2005) to identify the similarities and

differences between the two societies, for each cultural dimension. Some cultural dimensions have showed a significant people behavior variance while others have not. In addition the data has given rise to a number of new cultural dimensions being proposed. The findings are summarized in table 3.

Culture Dimension	Case Study in Egypt	Case Study in UK
Uncertainty avoidance (UA) (Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 1994a; Trompenaars, 1993)	Most Egyptians would try to avoid any kind of unstructured situations, and they tend to avoid any risk, but in the same society you would find people who are risk takers  Example: The Egyptian system still in the developing phase so there are many unexpected situations, so Egyptians would avoid uncertainty by speaking to someone who they would be certain and come back to him or her if there something goes wrong or unexpected	Most British would not be worried about unstructured situations, but they also tend to avoid risk, but in the same society you would find people who are risk takers  Example: The British system is very comprehensive and developed which almost don't leave any unexpected situations, so British would avoid uncertainty by written documents, so they would use that to avoid any unexpected situation or uncertainty
Power Distance (PD) (Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 1994a)  Authority Ranking Relationships (Fiske, 1992)  Hierarchy vs. Egalitarian (Schwartz, 1994)	Power may affect the way customers try to get their problems solved as they tend to ask for higher management levels as they perceive higher management are more powerful. Egyptian society is sees that there is more power with more senior management; even though the organizational culture would have a different perception of power distance.	Power may affect the way customers try to solve their problems as they tend to use different channels and processes according to the importance they give to their complaints. They don't tend to ask for higher management level to solve their problems but they use written complaints by fax or mail to escalate their problems. As the organisational culture has a stronger approach than people tendency, and as the organizational culture is very tightly structured, the result is that customers find it a bit hopeless to get more from higher management, and so use the channel of written complaints instead.
Masculinity/femininity (MF) (Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 1994a)	Egyptians tends to have very warm relationships which create very tight relationships with family and friends which sometimes make them dependent on each other in taking decisions, this might create a phenomena of being in contact all the time	British people are more performance oriented and more independent from family and friends which usually makes them more dependent on themselves for their decisions, and on the other hand that develops a phenomena of undependability
Individualism/collectivism (IC) (Hofstede, 1980, 1983,, 1994a) Communal Sharing Relationships (Fiske, 1992)	The cultural dimension affects the organisational staff more than people in the society. From the primary analysis there was no evidence that there are any differences between the Egyptian and the British branches of the organization, as in the Egyptian branch they cover the problem of not being able to work as a team by further training.	
Confucian Dynamism (Hofstede, 1994b)	Egyptians are building on their family welfare and that is the strongest relationship from their perspectives. Inside the work	The British build their own welfare systems and how they relate to their family but the strongest relationship from their perspective is about

Culture Dimension	Case Study in Egypt	Case Study in UK
	environment, Egyptians tend to have a high turn over, especially in the private sector, as there is a lack of qualified staff. This also increases the cost of training staff.	career. Inside the work environment, the British tend to have a lower turnover for the organization but often people are changing career on an individual basis. That would increase the overall quality of training for the organization staff.
Universalism-Particularism (Trompenaars, 1993)	Egyptians clearly tend towards universalism which causes a lot of misunderstanding in the relationship between the organisation and its customers. Also, Egyptians are more oriented to TV and media than magazines and websites as a source of information, mainly this stems from their educational system.	The British clearly tend towards particularism which causes a very structured and documented relationship between the organisation and its customers. Also, the British are more oriented to magazines and websites than TV and media as a source of information, mainly this results from the education in the society.
Neutral vs. Emotional Relationship Orientations (Trompenaars, 1993)  Harmony vs. Mastery (Schwartz, 1994)	This dimension mainly affects customer satisfaction, as Egyptians tend to be more emotional, and give some space for mastery so they are satisfied when they feel happy and cared for, which is more related to the treatment and when they feel that they are in some way special to the organisation.	This dimension mainly affects customer satisfaction, as the British tend to be more neutral, and try always to be in harmony so they feel satisfied when they get what they looking for, which is mainly 'value for money'.
Specific vs. Diffuse Orientations (Trompenaars, 1993)	Egypt is in the transition from public sector based economy to more private organisations, which affects Egyptian perception and expectation concerning quality or service.	The British live in a private based economy and so see it more crucial to look for the quality of service and seek 'value for money'.
Achievement vs. Ascription (Trompenaars, 1993); Conservatism vs. Affective/intellectual autonomy (Schwartz, 1994); Equality Matching Relationships (Fiske, 1992)	Egyptians tends to try to get to a higher social level as the traditions and norms give people more respect according to which social class they are from or have reached.	British also show social class differences but as the society is more focused on individuals, then people don't give as much attention to social classes.
Market Pricing Relationships (Fiske, 1992)	Both Egyptian and British showed their interest in keeping an eye on prices and it seems that it is the most important thing in a product or services. But, that would differ from each segment of each society.	
Professionalism	As a developing country, Egyptians as individuals are very professional but the entire work environment has been influenced by the defaults of the old public sector based economy. For example, time and level of quality, and quantity to quality relationship.	The work environment is very professional as the system depends on values and respect for time, quality not quantity, and higher qualified skilled employees.
Trust	The involvement of public sector based economy and then the	British do or sometimes do not trust the work environment, but what is

Culture Dimension	Case Study in Egypt	Case Study in UK
	<p>transition phase of Egyptian society has create a 'scariness' of people in the society about getting their rights, so people do as much as they can to have their own rights.</p> <p>Example: The problem of paying their bills in the company offices rather than using banks or credit cards, this arises because Egyptians try to avoid unexpected situations or errors in the systems, as they don't trust the system.</p>	<p>important and certain for them is that they would get their rights back sooner or later. Some even feel they would be lucky if there is a mistake in the system and as a result they get some reward (compensation).</p> <p>Example: British leave their credit cards or debit cards numbers to be debited, most British do trust the system; though, they also believe that if there was a mistake on the system they would be entitled to ask for a claim.</p>
Technology Awareness	At the individual level Egyptian employees are very technology literate especially young Egyptians; but in the whole society most of the people are still not aware of using the web, email, computers, and ATMs, especially older people.	In general most British people are very technology literate especially young people, but in some cases there are still some barriers to the level of technology they are aware of and willing to use; most of the people use web, email, computers, and ATMs.
Structured or organized vs. unstructured or unorganized behaviour	Egyptians tend to have an unstructured approach in their life, they like to change all the time even when it is coming to rules and procedures in work environments.	British are very structured and tend to have difficulty with changes to the rules and procedures, even if it is outside the work environment.
Openness to Others' cultures	Egyptian show a very open attitude to accept other cultures and other values and norms.	The British show a closed perception about other cultures; this may come from the advanced work environment of the UK which gives advantages to the UK over other countries. Therefore the British tend to believe that others would adapt to them, rather than the other way around.

**Table 3: An Updated Framework of Culture Dimensions (Ali, & Alshawi 2005)**

### STRUCTURATIONAL ANALYSIS

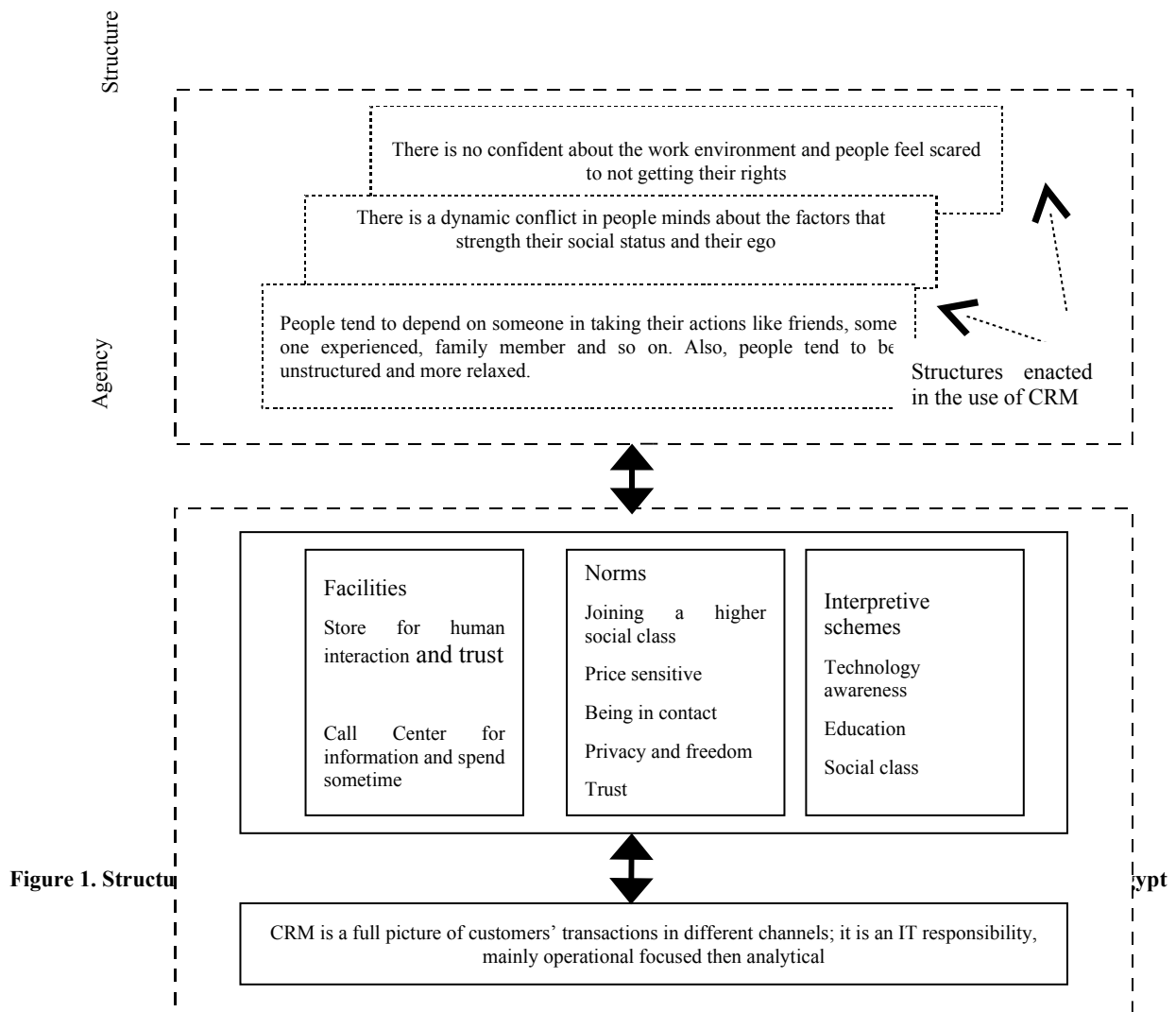
The theoretical basis for this paper draws on Structuration Theory by Giddens (1979, 1984). This theory has been highly influential in sociology and the social sciences generally (Walsham, 2002). In addition, it has received considerable attention in the IS field (for a comprehensive review see Jones 1998). The focus for this paper however, will be on how Structuration Theory can offer a new way of looking at cross-cultural research and information systems. A summary of key points as Walsham (2002) proposed it, is provided in Table 4.

Structure	<p>Structure as memory traces in the human mind</p> <p>Action draws on rules of behaviour and ability to deploy resources and, in so doing, produces and reproduces structure</p> <p>Three dimensions of action/structure: systems of meaning, forms of power relations, sets of norms</p> <p>IS embody systems of meaning, provide resources, and encapsulate norms, and are thus deeply involved in the modalities linking action and structure</p>
Culture	Conceptualized as shared symbols, norms, and values in a social collectivity such as a country

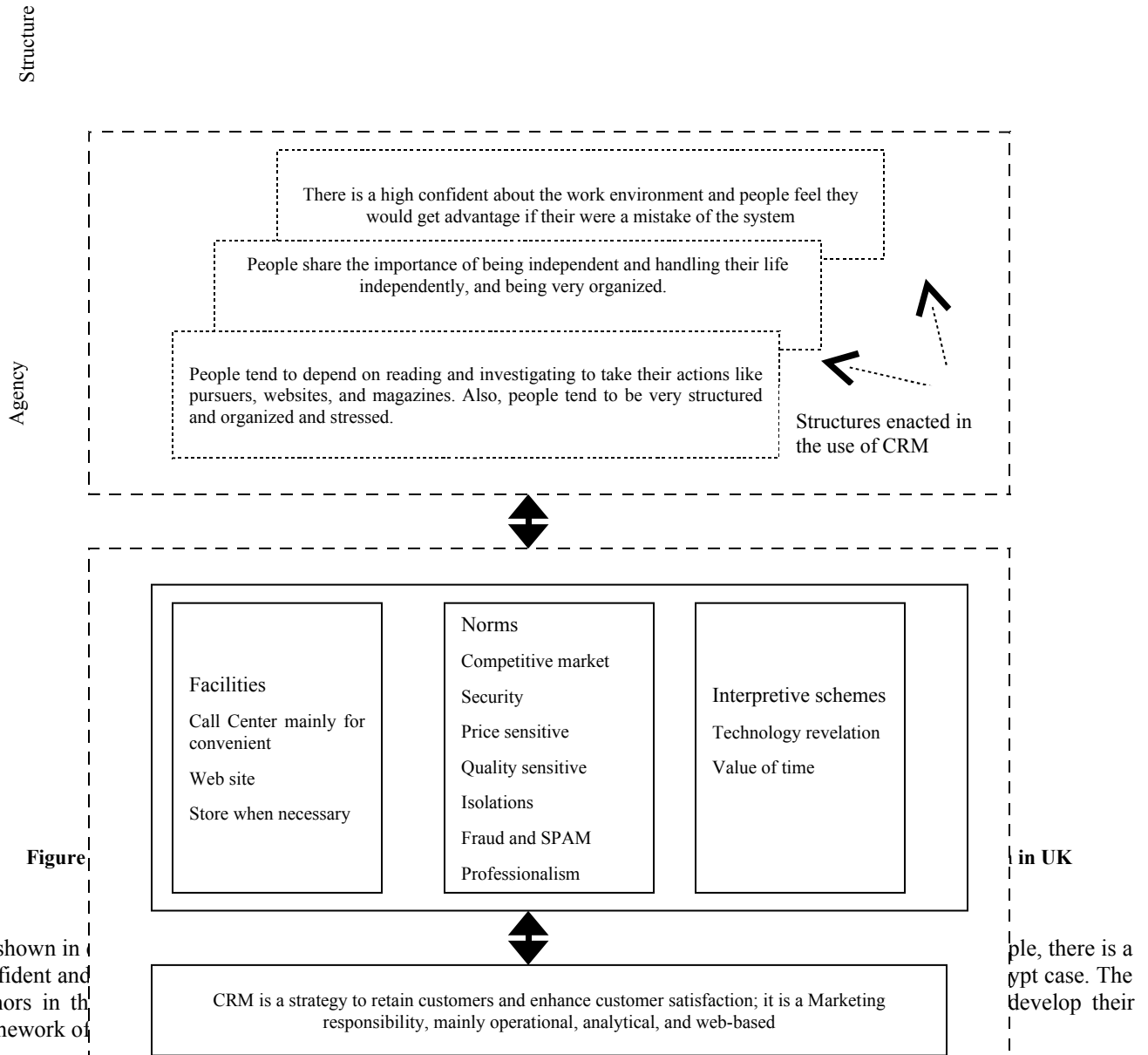
	Meaning systems, power relations, behavioural norms not merely in the mind of one person, but often display enough to speak of them being shared But need to recognize intra-cultural variety
Cross-cultural contradiction and conflict	Conflict is actual struggle between actors and groups Contradiction is potential basis for conflict arising from divisions of interest, e.g. divergent forms of life Conflicts may occur in cross-cultural working if differences affect actors negatively and they are able to act
Reflexivity and change	Reproduction through processes of reutilization But human beings reflexively monitor actions and consequences, creating a basis for social change

**Table 4. Structuration Theory, Culture, and ICTs: Some Key Concepts (Giddens, 1979, 1984; Walsham, 2002)**

The authors in the figure 1, and figure 2 display their preliminary Structural analysis of the shared structure between people living in each case study in Egypt and UK, for more details about using Structural analysis to investigate cultural potential impact on CRM systems implementation refer to Ali and Alshawi (2004b). The authors provide a Structural analysis of the CRM implementation and operation in the multinational organization in Egypt in figure 1, and then they provide their Structural analysis of the same organization but in UK in figure 2







**A PRELIMINARY FRAMEWORK FOR CRM IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATION WITHIN MULTINATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

In this section the authors merge their findings of each case study by SSM and their Structural analysis to develop their primary Framework of Reference for culture dimensions for CRM implementation and operation within multinational environment, that is summarized in table 5.

Culture Dimension	Structurational Analysis primarily indications
Uncertainty avoidance (UA) (Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 1994a;	The two case studies show that this cultural dimension may have influence on the behavior of people from a country to another. But, the individual of culture level would have influence from one person to

Trompenaars, 1993)	another.
Power Distance (PD) (Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 1994a); Authority Ranking Relationships (Fiske, 1992); Hierarchy vs. Egalitarian (Schwartz, 1994)	The two case studies show that this cultural dimension may have influence on the behavior of people from a country to another. But, the organizational culture would affect that as CRM staff is more influenced by their organizational culture than the national culture.
Masculinity/femininity (MF) (Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 1994a)	The two case studies show that this cultural dimension may have influence on the behavior of people from a country to another. But, the individual level of culture level would have influence from one person to another, also, organizational culture would influence the CRM staff positively or negatively concerning their behavior.
Individualism/collectivism (IC) (Hofstede, 1980, 1983,, 1994a) Communal Sharing Relationships (Fiske, 1992)	The two case studies show that this cultural dimension may have influence on the behavior of people from a country to another. That would have influence on the concept of customer centric organization for one side, and how customers take their decisions from the other side.
Confucian Dynamism (Hofstede, 1994b)	That mainly would influence the staff of the organization, which is a real problem in some cases when the organization spend loads of money on training the staff then they move to another company.
Universalism-Particularism (Trompenaars, 1993)	The two case studies show that this cultural dimension may have influence on the behavior of people from a country to another. But, the individual of culture level would have influence from one person to another.
Neutral vs. Emotional Relationship Orientations (Trompenaars, 1993); Harmony vs. Mastery (Schwartz, 1994)	The two case studies show that this cultural dimension may have influence on the behavior of people from a country to another. But, the individual of culture level would have influence from one person to another.
Specific vs. Diffuse Orientations (Trompenaars, 1993)	The two case studies show that this cultural dimension may have influence on the behavior of people from a country to another. But, the individual of culture level would have influence from one person to another.
Achievement vs. Ascription (Trompenaars, 1993); Conservatism vs. Affective/intellectual autonomy (Schwartz, 1994); Equality Matching Relationships (Fiske, 1992)	The two case studies show that this cultural dimension may have influence on the behavior of people from a country to another.
Market Pricing Relationships (Fiske, 1992)	The two case studies show that this cultural dimension would not have influence on the behavior of people from a country to another, but, the individual of culture level would have influence from one person to another. As, all societies would think of price and it would differ according to the standard of living only cross world.
Professionalism	The two case studies show that this cultural dimension may have influence on the behavior of people from a country to another.
Trust	The two case studies show that this cultural dimension may have influence on the behavior of people from a country to another.
Technology Awareness	The two case studies show that this cultural dimension may have influence on the behavior of people from a country to another.

Structured or organized vs. unstructured or unorganized behavior	The two case studies show that this cultural dimension may have influence on the behavior of people from a country to another.
Openness to Others' cultures	The two case studies show that this cultural dimension may have influence on the behavior of people from a country to another.

**Table 5: A Framework of Reference for Culture Dimensions within CRM Implementation and Operation within Multinational Environment (Ali, & Alshawi 2005)**

## SUMMARY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Cultural factors are often identified as a crucial influence on the success or failure of Information Systems in general and Electronic Customer Relationship Management Systems (CRM) in particular. The authors identified different cultural levels and different cultural dimensions. The authors argue that Hofstede's cultural dimensions which is the most cited study used in IS discipline is not appropriate for studying the potential cultural impact on CRM implementation. The authors propose Structuration Theory as another perspective to study culture issues in IS discipline. The preliminary structural analysis of the comparative case study shows that, there are cultural dimensions which play a role in each society and CRM implementation and operation in multinational environment. The authors have used the qualitative research data analysis mainly soft systems methodology to coding their data, and develop the different themes of each case study, which lead to their preliminary framework of cultural dimensions that may have influence on the CRM implementation and operation in multinational environment. In future research, the authors will validate that framework by conducting a third case study in another country for the same multinational organization, according to the results the framework would be updated.

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