

Change of attitude toward culture: pre- and post-expatriation experiences of managers

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Abstract Cultural adjustment and intercultural effectiveness strongly influence international managerial issues, such as organizational success in a local firm, assignment completion, cost of expatriation, and repatriation. Therefore, employees assigned to work in another country need to prepare by learning about that country's culture before expatriation. Much research has been conducted in the last few decades on the role of culture in expatriation. This study examines how the attitude of expatriate managers toward the importance of culture changes between the pre- and post-expatriation periods. This study is structured as a two-step investigation: (1) pre-expatriation cultural preparation and (2) thoughts on the importance of culture after expatriation. The research sample was South Korean expatriate managers working in Turkey or the US. All participants were reached by the trace method, and the interview data were analyzed in QSR NVivo software with content analysis. The results showed that expatriate managers' attitude toward the importance of culture changed as a result of expatriation. Pre-expatriation, some participants did not prepare for the new culture. However, after the expatriation experience, all agreed that an understanding of the host culture was important during the assignment. An overseas experience allowed participants to understand the significant role played by culture in their adjustment to the new environment.

Keywords Expatriate managers · Culture · Expatriate assignment and experience

Introduction

Globalization has led to companies increasing the number of international assignments of human resources (Bonache and Brewster 2001). Expatriation is the result of a global economy that causes people to live and work away from home (Glanz et al. 2001).

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Management of expatriation has become a significant research area that has been studied extensively in recent literature (Richardson and McKenna 2002). Living in a different culture for work is a result of globalization (Andreason 2003), because expatriate assignments are cross-cultural transfers of companies' human resources (Harris and Holden 2001). Culture greatly influences the institutional and managerial practices in different regions and countries (Flytzani and Nijkamp 2008). During the assignment, adaptation to a new culture is a success factor for expatriates (Andreason 2003). Schroath and Korth (1989) emphasize that sociocultural environments of the host country strongly influence expatriation. Expatriates should not only learn how to adjust to new working conditions, but also about interacting with the culture of a new country (Andreason 2003).

Over the last few decades, the influence of culture on expatriates has been underlined in multiple studies, with many researchers agreeing on the importance of an understanding of the local culture for people who work overseas (Black 1988; Black and Mendenhall 1990; Ralston et al. 1995; Webb and Wright 1996; Peltonen 1998; Tung 1998; Au and Fukuda 2002; Brown and Ataalla 2002; Russell and Dickie 2007; Kim and Slocum 2008; Flytzani and Nijkamp 2008). These studies have looked at the importance of culture for expatriation, expatriate managers, expatriate management, and expatriate assignments. This study differs in that it asks how expatriate managers comprehend the importance of culture and how their attitude toward culture changes in the context of the expatriation experience. In particular, it underlines that there is a relationship between an expatriate manager's attitude toward culture and the expatriate experience. The concept of attitude (a mental position) is used deliberately to refer to the mind and the world of thought, which allows humankind to make sense (to think and to feel) (Oxford Dictionary 2014) of things in their environment. Therefore, the attitude of managers represents their mental interaction with the world that they are in. In this study, assigned managers' attitude is accepted as a dependent variable and the expatriate experience as an independent variable. The main goal was to explore how managers' attitude toward cultural understanding changed after the expatriate assignment. This paper does not aim to generalize the results for all expatriates. It is structured as a qualitative study to obtain richer data regarding the relationship between the expatriate experience and a change of a person's attitude toward culture.

Conceptual framework: expatriation and culture

An expatriate is defined as a human resource sent abroad by the parent firm for a temporary period to complete an official overseas assignment (Caligiuri 2000; Richardson and McKenna 2002; Lund and Barker 2004; Benson and Pattie 2009). The main characteristics of expatriates are being assigned to a job or project, being sent abroad by a parent firm, and working and living locally. Control and coordination of operations are the main roles attributed to these assignments (Bonache and Brewster 2001). As a specific group of expatriates, expatriate managers are those who are assigned to a significant role as interpreters and implementers of human resources and business strategies. They work for a set length of time and play a role in coordinating and controlling worldwide operations (Harris and Holden 2001).

If there are great cultural differences between the center and the subsidiary, companies might prefer to send an expatriate who will help the central organization understand local conditions and control subsidiary operations (Bonache et al. 2001). Expatriates are generally assigned to countries where they do not have citizenship (Tahir and Ismail 2007), which causes expatriates to meet and encounter new cultural environments. Consequently,

it is highly possible for expatriate managers to resist or embrace a culture that is different from their own (Flytzani and Nijkamp 2008).

Culture is a complicated term in the social sciences and there have been many debates over its meaning. Hofstede (1980) called it the collective programming of the mind that defines the customs and attitudes of the members of a society. The word culture can be defined as a set of norms and rules. In addition, national culture is defined as values, beliefs, and assumptions learned in early childhood that differentiates one group of people from another (Hofstede 1991). Human resource management policies and practices in a cross-national context are influenced by national culture (Sparrow 1995). The general notion in the expatriate literature about working abroad underlines that culture has a large impact on the success or failure (Schroath and Korth 1989; Ralston et al. 1995; Newman and Nollen 1996), adjustment (Black and Mendenhall 1991; Aycan 1997; Jassawalla et al. 2004), effectiveness (Kim and Slocum 2008), performance (Black 1988), and conflict of expatriates (Banai and Reisel 1993; Hutchings 2005).

Theoretical background

Culture has a great effect on expected behavior. If the culture of the host country is very strong and different from the culture of the expatriate's homeland, unprepared individuals stumble and experience frequent shocks (Torbiörn 1982). According to Walton (1990), expatriation starts with excitement, transitions into disappointment, and eventually turns into culture shock. Banai and Reisel (1993) noted that even traveling between two countries is a source of conflict for expatriates. Therefore, being culturally skilled is essential for managers of global corporations (Harris and Morgan 1991). Of expatriates sent on foreign assignment, 10–80 % return home prematurely. Failure to adjust to the host country's culture is one of the reasons for failure in adapting to the new environment (Okpara and Kabongo 2011).

Expatriate assignments include four aspects that contribute to success: selection, preparation, management, and repatriation (Anderson 2001). Pre-departure preparation has a cultural side. Preparation for the culture of the host country can be achieved with continuous support from the employer to the employees throughout their assignment (Yavas and Bodur 1999). However, professional and institutional preparation for the culture of a new home country is not common. Accordingly, people assigned for expatriation need to prepare through their own interest and effort, but their opportunities are restricted to research on the host culture that they are able to perform themselves. As a rule, the employing company does not give the advice "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" (Doz and Prahalad 1986), but some expatriates underline the importance of this rule in helping them to quickly adapt to a new culture. In general, firms acknowledge the importance of cross-cultural differences, but do not know how to address the relationship between facets of culture and organizational practices (Hendry 1992). Chen et al. (2010) underline the importance of cross-cultural motivation, which positively influences the work adjustment. On the other hand, it is proposed that motivational states and stress cognition impact expatriates' work adjustment patterns (Firth et al. 2014).

Cultural preparation plays a significant role in an expatriate's adaptation to work and life in the host country. Hutchings (2005) focuses on the culture shock that causes expatriates to experience non-adjustment and expatriation failure. Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) emphasize that some cultures are more difficult to adjust to than others. As a key factor in achieving acculturation and the intercultural effectiveness of expatriates, cross-cultural training must be underlined. Cross-cultural training that decreases culture shock

(Caligiuri 2000) is becoming a recognizable component in the international business world, because cultural differences between countries create barriers such as time, language, geography, food, and climate. In addition, differences in values, beliefs, perceptions, and background are as important as other variances (Zakaria 2000). According to Ren et al. (2014), organizations in both home and host countries can provide language and cultural training to help minimize cross-cultural uncertainty during the international relocation. Organizations can train expatriates to be more proactive regardless of their personal disposition. In this context, organizations can design training programs to improve expatriates' cultural skills (ability to work with others from different cultures).

This study suggests that in addition to the factors noted above that are influenced by culture, the expatriate experience has a strong effect on expatriates' attitudes. Existing studies discuss the strong effect of culture on personal, institutional, and managerial issues, but there is a gap concerning how the expatriate's attitude toward culture changes after the experience of living in a new culture. As a reason for expatriate failure (Chiotis-Leskowich 2009), culture shock is a reaction to an environment that looks unfamiliar. To decrease this result, it is possible to use strategies such as culture learning (Furnham and Bochner 1986). Understanding the culture can eliminate expatriates' problems (Bonache et al. 2001).

This research aims to close the gap in understanding of the relationship between expatriate thought and expatriate experience in the context of culture. This study poses the question: *How does the attitude of expatriate managers change after an expatriate experience?* As noted in the introduction, the dependent variable is expatriate managers' attitude toward culture, and the independent variable is the expatriate experience. To answer the research question, the expatriate managers' thoughts on culture in the pre- and post-expatriation periods were compared. *Pre-expatriation* refers to the time from designation of the assignment until departure and includes selection and preparation (Anderson 2001) as two aspects of the expatriate assignment. The pre-departure period is focused on because it is the most appropriate time in which to prepare to live and work in a new culture. *Post-expatriation* refers to the period of expatriation, management, and repatriation.

Cultural preparation is accepted as a sign of giving importance to the cultural aspect of expatriation. For instance, it is suggested that global companies provide cross-cultural training as cultural preparation for their expatriates and expatriate candidates (Mendenhall and Oddou 1985; Kealey and Protheroe 1996; Webb and Wright 1996; Caligiuri 2000; Bonache and Brewster 2001; Shim and Paprock 2002; Russell and Dickie 2007). For that reason, considering the culture of the new home is related to making cultural preparation. Because this research investigates only the individual tendency of expatriates, not institutional or organizational practices and applications, the sample consisted solely of expatriates whom companies did not support with pre-expatriation cross-cultural training. It is understood that individual cultural preparation depends on expatriates' interest in learning and understanding more about the new cultural environment. Thus, their decision whether to do cultural preparation and how much to do is the result of their attitude toward the importance of culture.

Research methodology

The sample

This study concentrates on exploring expatriate managers' attitude toward the importance of culture. Any effort of the expatriates to learn about the host culture prior to expatriation

and their thoughts on the importance of culture post-expatriation are the compared dimensions of this research. Research participants were questioned regarding their cultural preparation or lack thereof, and their justifications for preparing or not preparing, in the context of the pre-expatriation period. After expatriation, participants were asked about their thoughts on the importance and influence of culture.

The participants were selected from expatriate managers. The reasons for choosing this group are as follows:

- Their critical role, such as being a major representative of the parent firm in the local operation.
- The success of the manager contributed directly to the success of the firm.
- The strategic value of their adjustment to the new home, such as the settlement of the parent firm with a local operation in the host country.
- Sending an expatriate manager to a host country was a great expense, but in the long term the financial outlay paid off.

For these reasons, it is important to explore concerns about culture from the perspective of expatriate managers. The sample consisted of expatriate managers from South Korea who at the time of the survey worked and lived in Turkey and the US. All participants worked under the same general conditions (expatriation applications, length of assignment, role in local firm).

South Korea is one of the countries increasing its human resources all over the world. Since 1995, It has become one of the most developed economies in the world. South Korea's international companies employ expatriates and expatriate managers all over the world. The Korean government is taking a very active role in business development and South Korean firms' efforts to seek out opportunities in new markets overseas (Lee et al. 2003). Therefore, a study of South Korean expatriate managers is timely, due to their increasing managerial and organizational roles in many regions of the world, South Korea's continuously growing commercial presence globally, and the willingness of South Korean managers to contribute to a scientific study. Because of expatriate managers' very busy schedules, one of the most difficult tasks of expatriate researchers is finding willing and cooperative research participants.

Another feature of the current research is the contribution to the expatriate literature of a comparison between managers who work in different cultural environments. The sample group for this study included 20 South Korean expatriate managers. Half of them worked and lived in the US and the rest in Turkey. Interview-based studies involving a small number of respondents (often fewer than 20) are becoming more common in the social sciences (Crouch and McKenzie 2006). As the sociologist's digging tool (Denzin 1989), the interviews were used to mine data about expatriates. According to Patton (2002), in-depth information from a small number of people can be very valuable. The sample size is small because the intent was to obtain rich data with an interview-based study. It should be noted that certain restrictions on the research caused us to limit the host countries to Turkey and the US. The number of participants is limited at only 20, but for future studies, it is planned to increase the sample by adding more host countries in order to make a multinational comparison.

Turkey and the US were chosen in order to make a significant investigation on different cultures. At the outset we wondered whether different cultural contexts could affect the cultural attitude of expatriate managers in different ways, or whether a new cultural context, simply by dint of being not previously experienced, would affect all expatriates in the same way. For instance, Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) underline the difficulty of

adapting to certain cultures. Expatriates from western cultures can have trouble adapting to the cultures of India, Pakistan, Liberia, the Far East, the Middle East, and North and East Africa. Schroath and Korth (1989) found that similarities between the sociocultural environments of the host country and the home country have a great effect on expatriation.

Data collection and analysis

Participants in this research share certain demographic features, such as being *male*, *married*, and *college graduates*. This gives some idea about the assignment policy of South Korean companies for expatriate managers. All participants had been living in their host country for fewer than 9 years but more than 6 months. Their ages were between 36 and 49. The host countries were Turkey and the US.

Managers from Turkey and the US were identified with T# and A#, respectively, during data analysis to easily identify and separate them. Participants were reached through purposeful sampling (Seidman 1998) and the trace method (Hornby and Simon 1994), because as a researcher I aim to study in depth the most appropriate participants in order to obtain information-rich cases (Patton 2002). As a data collection method, qualitative research interviews (Stewart and Cash 1985; Seidman 1998) were conducted. This research includes in-depth questions (Patton 1987). The responses were transcribed word for word, in order to support the study's quality check.

Electronic interviews, which use electronic communication facilities to access and communicate with participants, were conducted to obtain data from the expatriate managers (Morgan and Simon 2006). Methodologically, the first e-mail opens the communication with an open-ended question. The participants can reply and answer it easily. The researcher then follows up, asking further questions of the participants who replied to the first e-mail. But some participants did not reply to the initial e-mail, so reminder e-mails were sent. Ambiguous questions were cleared up, and the researcher gave the participants detailed explanations. Before the electronic interview, the researcher met with some participants to provide more information about the aim of the research. The reason for using electronic interviews was the managers' busy schedules and the difficulty in reaching them. This method allowed managers to take the time they needed to respond in depth, and it allowed the researcher to reach them quickly and easily.

Content analysis method (Holsti 1969; Luborsky 1994; Phillips and Hardy 2002) was applied to categorize, compare, and interpret qualitative data. This method analyzed interview texts for the frequency of the most-used words and meaningful reading of content. For data analysis, the QSR Nvivo software program was used to analyze qualitative data systematically by creating relevant tables and matrixes. Interview transcripts, recorded as internals (named in software) with participants coded as A# and T#, were transferred to NVivo software for analysis. Then, data in transcripts were coded according to the research question. After structuring free nodes with coding data, mentioned codes were correlated with the main and sub-questions as tree nodes. In addition to this coding, labeling, and correlating, attitudes and charts were used to present demographic information about participants.

The main hypothesis of this study is that managers who are assigned abroad accept the importance of culture after their expatriate experience. The dependent variable is the assigned manager's attitude, and the independent variable is expatriate experience. The main aim of this research was to explore how managers' attitude toward cultural understanding changed after beginning the expatriate assignment.

Discussion

This research aimed to close the gap in understanding the relationship between expatriates' attitude and the expatriate experience in the context of culture. The research question is *How does the attitude of expatriate managers change after an expatriate experience?* Therefore, this study investigated how expatriate managers' concerns about culture changed between the pre- and post-expatriation periods. The sample group comprised South Korean expatriate managers who worked and lived in Turkey or the US for a temporary period by assignment of their parent firms. In addition, this research was conducted on only expatriates whose employers did not support with a cross-cultural training program before expatriation. As a criterion of this research, only the expatriates' individual attitude toward culture was investigated. The study was structured as two procedures to compare and explore any change in the expatriate managers' concerns about the host culture, before and after expatriation. The first step was to examine any individual effort by the managers to prepare for or to research the host country's culture. The second step was an exploration of the managers' post-expatriation thoughts on the importance of culture.

Pre-expatriation attitude of expatriate managers

Expatriate managers who participated in the research explained why they did or did not research the host culture before expatriation. Twelve participants individually researched the host culture when preparing for expatriation; this number was split equally between those who lived and worked in Turkey and those who lived and worked in the US (Table 1).

The means they used to research the host culture are given below. Written documents—guide books, tour books, and brochures—were often used by participants who were sent to Turkey. Some consulted agencies. Participants expatriated to the US used more technological and online tools to get information about the host culture. Distinctively, participants sent to the US thought that watching American movies was helpful to give them an idea of American culture (Table 2).

Expatriate managers in Turkey initially looked for information about the historical background and characteristics of Turkey, as well as the ideology, language, population, religion, and food. Participants in the US preferred to look for information on the general culture, customs, greetings, and national holidays (Table 3).

Participants' reasons for doing or not doing any research on the host culture were grouped into three categories: individual, social, and organizational. Individual reasons are related to the adjustment of expatriate managers and their family members. Managers who initially focused on the adjustment of themselves and their family to the new home cared about culture and did preparatory research, culturally preparing both themselves and their family for the new country. Participant T7, expatriated to Turkey, prepared for the new culture because he aimed to adapt well in order to live there with his family. He looked into the main cultural characteristics such as religion, food, etc.

I did research about host culture before coming because I really want to adapt well to live here with my family (T7, Turkey).

I researched about the Turkish culture on Internet since I wanted to know people's ideology and some basic words so that I could use so that there wouldn't be any serious problem in communication (T2, Turkey).

Table 1 Participants who prepared for the host culture

Turkey	USA
T1	A1
T2	A2
T3	A3
T7	A4
T9	A7
T10	A10

Table 2 Means used for researching the host culture

Turkey	USA
Guide books	Internet
Video tapes	Multiple media
Internet sites	Movies
Brochures	
Agencies	

Table 3 Researched aspects of culture

Turkey	USA
History of Turkey	General information on US
Characteristics of Turkey	General cultural structure of US
People's ideology	Customs
Turkish language	Greetings
Turkish population	National holidays
Religion	
Food culture	

The participants who had individual reasons for cultural preparation had some information about the host country's culture and needed to be ready cognitively. The reason mentioned often was to learn about people's characteristics in the host country, and the second was to learn about the primary cultural features.

The participants whose reasons were categorized as social underlined the importance of avoiding communication problems with local people and having good relationships with them. A participant pushed himself to do research about Turkish culture on the Internet since he wanted to know about people's ideologies and to learn some basic Turkish words to avoid serious problems in communication.

The reasons for not researching the host culture can be categorized as individual or organizational. Some participants underlined the impossibilities of researching culture, and the rest expressed that they did not care about culture during the pre-expatriation period. The difficulties of researching Turkish culture before expatriation are related to a busy work schedule, limited time, and lack of written documents and sources. One participant underlined the difficulty of finding written material about Turkish culture in South Korea almost 10 years ago. Disregarding culture was another reason for not doing any cultural preparation.

I did not do any research about host culture because there was not enough time to research about that. Before coming to Turkey, There were so many things to prepare (T4, Turkey).

I did not research about host culture. Why, I never considered culture (T6, Turkey).

South Korean participants working in the US explained their cultural preparation situations and reasons in the same categories as those in Turkey. As given in the table below, reasons are categorized as individual, organizational, or social. The individual reason of facilitating individual and family adjustment is the same as the reason expressed by managers in Turkey. In contrast to managers in Turkey, there are also organizational reasons such as ensuring good relationships with co-workers, recognizing each other in the workplace, collaboration, and working effectively with colleagues. In addition, social reasons were mentioned by some participants, such as learning appropriate behavior and attitudes in the new culture and integrating with the host country's people.

I did research about host culture, because it is worth of research about your host country's culture. That makes me have right attitude for living in USA. And also that give my family good settlement to live with (A4, U.S.).

I have done research about host culture. I think I should understand the custom to work with American colleague before coming. Korea is my home, first home which I spent most time of my life. USA, second home to give me a good opportunity to understand another custom in the world (A1, U.S.).

The reasons for not doing cultural preparation are categorized as individual and organizational. As with some of the managers sent to Turkey, some expatriates to the US simply disregarded cultural preparation. On the other hand, some participants were confident they already had an idea of American culture as a result of multiple media and American movies. One participant underlined his preference for learning about the host culture on site. The sole stated organizational reason was limited time before expatriation to prepare themselves culturally.

I did not do research about host culture. I thought it was familiar with me before coming to this country. I could get learned American culture by multiple media in Korea (A6, U.S.).

I did not do research about host country's culture because I did not need to know other country's culture. But I think culture is important, because someone who is a manager does not know the culture he will be failed (A5, U.S.).

The participants indicated that one of the main features of the assignment process is that, in general, it is confidential. When the expatriate candidates are told of the assignment, they find themselves with a very limited amount of time to prepare. When companies plan overseas assignments they do not share the decision for a period of time for confidentiality purposes, so as not to negatively affect employee motivation in the workplace or to cause employee confusion. For that reason, when employees are informed about an expatriate assignment, they focus on their current tasks in the parent firm and the next project or job in the local firm.

Post-expatriation attitude of expatriate managers

After examining the cultural concern of expatriates before expatriation, in the second step of this study all participants were asked about their attitude toward the importance of

Table 4 Reasons for cultural preparation for turkey

Reasons for doing cultural preparation		Reasons for not doing cultural preparation	
Individual reasons	Cultural adaptation for himself and his family Learning about people in host country and host culture	Individual reasons	Disregard for learning about host culture
Social reasons	Avoiding communication problems Having good relationships	Organizational reasons	Busy schedule (many duties) Time problem (limited time) Written material, document, and source problems

Table 5 Reasons for cultural preparation before expatriation to the US

Reasons for doing cultural preparation		Reasons for not doing cultural preparation	
Individual reasons	Cultural adaptation for himself and family	Individual reasons	Disregard for learning about culture Being sure of already having an idea of the host culture Preferring to learn host culture on site
Organizational reasons	Relationships with co-workers Recognizing each other in the workplace Collaboration and effectiveness with co-workers	Organizational reason	Time problem (limited time)
Social reasons	Appropriate behavior and attitudes Integration with host country's people		

culture to ascertain how much they cared about culture in the context of a new culture. All participants comprehended the importance of culture. In particular, the participants who did not do cultural preparation underlined the importance of knowing about the new culture; this accords with the many studies that agree on the importance of culture for people who work in a foreign country (Black 1988; Black and Mendenhall 1990; Ralston et al. 1995; Webb and Wright 1996; Peltonen 1998; Tung 1998; Au and Fukuda 2002; Brown and Ataalla 2002; Russell and Dickie 2007; Kim and Slocum 2008; Flytzani and Nijkamp 2008).

All participants stressed that by the beginning of the overseas experience, their sense of culture had changed and developed compared to the pre-expatriation period. In addition, the managers were asked concerning the influence of culture on their expatriation experience. All participants admitted that the new culture had a high potential to affect them on different levels. According to the participants in Turkey, having some understanding of the host culture is important because it has personal, interactional, and occupational effects.

Participants in Turkey explained their thoughts on the categories used in Tables 4 and 5 while evaluating the importance of culture. Some emphasized the importance of understanding the culture on personal level. If expatriate managers as individuals have learned about the new culture, they can easily understand the intentions, attitudes, thoughts, purposes, ideas, and lifestyles of the host country's people, thus reducing the likelihood of serious problems in understanding others. In the context of individual issues, participants

Table 6 Participants who agree on the importance of culture after the expatriation experience

Turkey	USA
T1	A1
T2	A2
T3	A3
T4	A4
T5	A5
T6	A6
T7	A7
T8	A8
T9	A9
T10	A10

underlined the necessity of cultural understanding in order to adapt to the new environment, accommodate life easily, and live harmoniously in the host country. An understanding of the culture reduces or eliminates difficulties in adapting to the new life and workplace. According to Black (1988), general adjustment involves overall adaptation to living in the foreign culture and comprises factors that affect daily life. Culture shock causes expatriates to experience non-adjustment and failure (Hutchings 2005). Adjustment to the new place is one of the most important dimensions of expatriation.

Culture is an important factor. As a manager working with Turkish people, I have to understand his life style & expect his reaction. Turkey is my working place with friendly people. I've spent my life enjoy fully with my family. Especially Turkish people are showing me warm heart everywhere, which I will not forget (T5, Turkey). I never considered culture before. But of course yes, cultural things are so important. Why, without understanding host country's culture, it is very difficult to manage the work (T6, Turkey).

I should stay for several years in Turkey. I have to know Turkish culture for good relationship with Turkish people. Now, I have good relationship with Turkish people. I want to stay more. But according to my company rule, I follow it. I don t want to turn back earlier (T10, Turkey).

Expatriation is a social process, and learning about the host culture reduces the likelihood of difficulties such as interactional conflict. Even traveling between two countries is a source of conflict for expatriates (Banai and Reisel 1993); for that reason, being culturally skilled is essential for expatriate managers (Harris and Morgan 1991). Good communication and relationship skills are a consequence of understanding others' cultural structure. Communication seems to be related to expatriates' desire to understand and relate with host-nationals and confidence in interacting with people (Mendenhall and Oddou 1985) (Table 6).

On the work level, the main aims of expatriate managers are to manage and work well, and learning about the host culture has a high potential to support these goals. As a result of expatriates' cultural adjustment, their performance increases and repatriation decreases (Black 1988). Even adjustment to a new culture is a success factor for expatriates (Anderson 2003). According to Mendenhall and Oddou (1985), cultural training influences success during expatriation. Numerous studies in the international business literature have identified culture as one of the critical dimensions in explaining the success or failure of a firm's international operations (Schroath and Korth 1989) (Table 7).

Table 7 Subjects influenced by culture

Levels	Related subject	Studies in literature	Expatriate expressions on circumstances influenced by cultural awareness	
			Turkey	USA
Personal subjects	Adjustment Culture shock	Black (1988)	To understand intentions/ mind/thoughts	To feel adapted
		Black and Mendenhall (1991)	To catch purpose/ideas	To understand customs
		Aycan (1997)	To anticipate reactions of the host country's people	To understand differences
		Wong (2001)	To overcome difficulties in understanding others	To have the right attitude for living there
		Jassawalla et al. (2004)	To adapt to new environment	To decrease homesickness
		Walton (1990)	Not to face difficulties in adapting	Not to feel as foreign
		Mamman (1995)	To accommodate easily to life	To accept diversity
		Caligiuri (2000)	To understand the lifestyle	
			To harmonize	
Interactional subjects	Conflict Communication	Banai and Reisel (1993)	To have good communication	To communicate easily
		Hutchings (2005)	Not to have serious problem in communication	To collaborate with each other
		Constantinides et al. (2001)	To have good relations	To harmonize
		Babcock and Babcock (2001)	Not to make mistake with relationships	To have good interpersonal relations
		Dowling and Welch (2004)		
Occupational subjects	Performance Organizational success and failure Effectiveness	Black (1988)	To work better	To be successful at work
		Schroath and Korth (1989)	To manage the work	To work well with colleagues
		Ralston et al. (1995)	To manage work easily	To work comfortably
		Newman and Nollen (1996)		To work with each other without misunderstanding
		Kim and Slocum (2008)		To decrease trouble with work

The issues expressed by participants in the US are similar to those noted by expatriates in Turkey. Based on their experience, they underlined their opinions, which could be categorized as personal, interactional, and occupational, as with the pre-expatriation reasons. According to the participants in the US, to understand differences and customs and to have the right attitude can be possible if one understands the new culture on an individual level. Understanding the host culture helps them to feel less foreign in the new home and to accept diversity and differences between home and host cultures.

Culture is important because the understanding of cultural differences between them can make easy to communicate and work each other without misunderstanding. To avoid that situation, understanding of them is very important. I keep the global and open mind, I think it'll never happen and nobody will be expatriated. I think all over the world becoming one country sharing their cultures. Even there're still some cultural characteristics in some country, it'll not be the issue after understanding each other (A2, U.S.).

I think culture is important. Because someone who is a manager does not know the culture he will be failed. If the manager is under an illusion the culture it will make the manager to mistake (A5, U.S.).

To work in America with Americans, I need to know what American culture is because work is the team play process. As a team work, team member need to understand each other to cooperate and increase the efficiency. Language itself is not enough to understand and make a strong team work but the culture could. Try to understand my best to make strong team work with Americans. Such as sharing my time to communicate local people and try to participate American culture (A10, U.S.).

As interactional issues, communication, collaboration, harmonizing, and relations are influenced by expatriates' knowledge and understanding of the culture. To avoid social problems such as misunderstanding, knowing the culture can be helpful for expatriates to improve relations with the host country's people. As a final category, participants in the US underlined the importance of cultural awareness on the work level. Being aware of the culture helps expatriates to work with a good behavior, decreases work-related misunderstandings and trouble, and increases workplace comfort and success.

Conclusion

In this study, expatriates' opinions concerning culture were explored. The aim was to observe how the attitude of expatriate managers changes as a result of the expatriate experience. It is understood that not all expatriates will predict the strong impact of culture and comprehend the importance of culture before the expatriate assignment. Many expatriates encounter this fact after expatriation. In this study, their concern, effort, and thoughts regarding culture were investigated in two steps concerning, respectively, the pre- and post-expatriation periods.

Before expatriation, this study focused on participants' attitude toward researching the culture of their new home as preparation for expatriation, what kind of tools were used to get information, and which factors of the culture were researched. More than half of the participants made an effort to research the culture independently. There were differences in the means used by participants to obtain cultural information. Some participants assigned to work in the US seemed confident of already having an understanding of American culture. In contrast, some of the managers who were sent to Turkey did not consider themselves to be at all familiar with Turkish culture. Participants sent to Turkey researched more specific aspects of the host country's culture than those expatriated to the US.

The participants who did preparatory research had individual, social, and organizational reasons for obtaining information about the new culture. Those who did no cultural research prior to expatriation explained individual, social, and organizational reasons for their lack of preparation. The participants' explanations as to why they did or did not do

preparatory research revealed their attitude in the pre-expatriation period to the importance of culture; some were certain they would need to know about the host country's culture, but others did not consider it important. A few wished to find out about the culture but could not because of certain difficulties. When participants in Turkey and the US are compared, it is observed that their attitudes toward cultural preparation were approximately the same. The reasons for preparing or not preparing were grounded in the same conceptions.

The participants who did prepare agreed that it was important to learn about the new culture, but did not perform systematic research to get information about vital cultural issues; rather, they looked into only one or a few aspects of culture. The participants who did no research were not aware that an understanding of the host country's culture was extremely important for a successful expatriation. They underlined the limited time and the many things to be taken care of prior to expatriation. In contrast to those other tasks cultural preparation was not considered crucial. Disregarding culture and thinking it unimportant was not common; of 20 total participants, eight (four in Turkey and four in the US) considered cultural preparation unnecessary.

Post-expatriation, the managers' thoughts on the importance of culture and which issues can be influenced by cultural awareness were examined. The change in expatriates' attitude regarding the importance of culture is evident. All stressed that at the beginning of the expatriate experience their sense of culture changed and developed compared to the pre-expatriation period. After coming to live and work in a new country, all agreed on the significant role and effect of culture. The biggest revolution happened in the attitude of managers who did not consider cultural preparation important before the expatriation assignment. The others' thoughts on the importance of culture were strengthened. The expatriates who did cultural preparation felt more comfortable and less stressed in the host culture. Not only expatriates but also their family needed to prepare for this experience. To prevent early repatriation and the loss of time and money, cultural preparation should be provided and supported institutionally. International organizations that support their human resources before their international working experience by offering cultural training can ensure the individual and social adaptation of expatriates and protect them from cultural shock and conflict. If cultural training cannot be organized by the employing firms, adequate time and opportunity should be provided for the expatriate candidates to do their own cultural preparation for living and working abroad.

The results of this study underline that it is crucial to comprehend the importance of culture for successful expatriation. Many prior studies emphasize the importance of culture in expatriation. This study differs in that it observes how the attitude of expatriates toward the importance of culture is altered by the expatriation experience. It cannot be expected that all expatriates will comprehend the significance of culture before beginning an overseas assignment. However, this investigation shows that the expatriation experience has a large impact on the change of attitude regarding the importance of culture for a foreign assignment.

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