ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS: EVIDENCE FROM JAPAN

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the organizational culture of Japan by studying the activities of three large companies in order to have a better understanding of the nation's culture and its effects on the society. From the perspective of cultural relevance, a literature review has been conducted in order to see the basis of the Japanese behavior and the differences between Japan and other countries. The paper discusses the cultural dimensions of Japan according to Hofstede vision and makes a foray into the present by analyzing them in a number of world-renowned companies. After presenting the methodology, the paper explains the reason for the company selection and provides a detailed analysis for each of them through organizational culture components, as found in Schein and Denison. All Japanese cultural features have a long history, undergoing little change over time, although globalization has played an important role in the partial diminution of some of them. There are deeply rooted cultural elements such as beliefs, symbols, rituals, to which employees adhere and which contribute to the development of companies and society as a whole. At the end, the paper presents possible limits of the research, but also provides the basis for further studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Culture is a relatively recent element of organizational theory and managerial practice, located at the center of the organizational life's existence (Popa & Ștefan, 2016). According to Bergiel et al. (2012) „success in the global market depends on understanding the cultures you are doing business with". Different countries have different national cultural characteristics and thus influence the organizational culture (OC) distinctly (Dheer, 2017), leading to a need for all those involved in the smooth running of the organization to adapt to the characteristics of culture (for example, the Japanese consider that work, makes you happier, healthier, richer) (Popa et al., 2016). OC is a determinant factor in supporting the environment for innovation in some organizations (Mohelska & Sokolova, 2018) along with technology transfer (Kimura et al., 2016), while being influenced by some other factors in turn, such as corporate social responsibility (Matei, Boboc, & Ghiță, 2021). For others it represents a component of the intellectual capital (Saeidi et al., 2021) and even if it is seen as being holistic, employees can contribute to its strength through commitment (Singh, 2007; Pham et al., 2019). Sometimes is found in the vast literature as "corporate culture" (Filipović, 2012) and seen as having the ability of efficient transformations, when it comes to firm performance (Polyanska et al. 2019; Almeida & Low-Choy, 2021) or effective project management (Morrison et al., 2008). OC can also differ not only because culture differs at the national level, but also because there are differences in the entrepreneurial environment, such as in the public versus in the private environment or differences in terms of gender for entrepreneurs (Hechavarría & Brieger, 2020) or

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differences as related to the type of organization (Bicer & Pekkan, 2020). The purpose of this research is to see if there are such differences in the public and private areas and briefly describe them, on a territory known to all as the "Land of the Rising Sun" and with a culture with ancient roots.

A priori to the analysis itself, the research begins with the study of the literature to highlight the characteristics of CO in Japan, as they appear presented in scientific papers. Also, the approach includes a thorough documentation of the types of Japanese companies, with the presentation of the main features, but also a ranking according to the current market value, to find top companies in various fields of economic activity. In this way it was possible to identify and select the three companies to carry out the case study from the applied part of the research. The study concludes with the drafting of conclusions and highlighting the elements of similarity and difference between the CO specific to the private environment, but also to the public environment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Japanese culture

Globally, different organizational cultures have emerged over time, their impact on the leadership styles of those countries being significant. As defined by Luthans and Doh (2009), "culture represents the totality of acquired knowledge that people use to interpret the experiences they face and generate social behavior". Going further, culture is acquired by transmitting symbols, rituals, language, stories, etc. from one individual to another. Japan is an industrialized country, being recognized as one of the most efficient economies in Asia in terms of economy and trade. Due to the lack of natural resources, Japan has relied on international trade to ensure a steady supply. As for the Japanese citizens, they are well educated, being known worldwide for the good manners they show. Japan is also known worldwide for its very high health standards, with life expectancy exceeding the value recorded in the United States or even in the European Union. (The World Bank, 2021a).

Japanese culture with ancient roots has greatly impressed many civilizations over the centuries, with Japan being one of the most homogeneous countries in the world. Indirect, traditional, collectivist style, with an emphasis on respecting the hierarchical structure, these are just a few terms associated with the Japanese following contacts made over the centuries. With a still deeply rooted national culture, Japan is one of the few countries in the world that "operates" in a totally different, unique way, based on traditional customs and feudal values, to which it still clings firmly. Given that we are in a full process of globalization and internationalization, Japanese culture has intrigued many people, especially in recent decades, based on a number of determining factors:

a) *The existence of feudal values* – founded in 600 BC. and rooted in Buddhism and Confucianism, the Japanese believe in high hierarchical structures with a strong emphasis on seniority, family, loyalty and respect. One of the feudal values is the unequal treatment of women, who have an inferior status in the strongly masculine society of Japan. However, research over the last 3 decades shows that there have been some changes in this regard, with women having the chance to create their own careers and achieve the success they deserve (Bucknall, 2005). Another notable aspect observed in the literature is that in Japanese culture there is a strong central core that sees things as either good or totally wrong, so there is no middle ground. For the Japanese, the loss is unacceptable and comes with a huge sense of shame because the loss is totally unacceptable. Therefore, since ancient Japan, the Japanese have considered themselves superior, who can not lose to anyone, the goal always being to conquer (Bucknall, 2005).

b) *Religion* – according to Lee and Trim (2008), the Japanese adopted Buddhism, which they later merged with Shinto. In this way, the Japanese relied on the teachings learned from Buddhism, but were able to develop ceremonies according to Shinto rituals (Osumi, 1992). In fact, the

teachings of Buddhism emphasize the right actions and the right decisions, involving three elements: morality, mental culture and wisdom (Lee & Trim, 1999). In addition to the above, the Japanese were deeply influenced by Confucian thinking (Mei, 1967). Confucianism focuses on 5 elements (goodwill, wisdom, justice, trust and decorum), influencing the specific relationships in society: between sovereign and various issues, father and son, husband and wife, brother to brother and friend to friend. It can also be added that Confucianism laid the foundations of a formal system of government and a complementary social system, such as the examination system of the Chinese public service (Lee & Trim, 1999).

c) *Social structure* – according to Levy (1992), there are six social classes that can be distinguished in Japan:

- The imperial family – is composed of the emperor and his relatives;
- Nobility – is composed of descendants of Kuge, samurai, dukes and counts (nobles of ancient Japan);
- Upper middle class – people who do not necessarily have descendants of any category of nobles, but have a high status in modern Japan;
- Lower middle class – ordinary people who are part of the working class of modern Japan. Most people fall into this category;
- Industrial proletariat – workers with an industrial profile, representatives of the "blue collars" in the specialized literature;
- Peasants – the rest of the population characterized by a lower income than average.

d) *Political philosophy* – In Japan there are 7 political parties (Japanese Democratic Party, Social Democratic Party, New People's Party, Liberal Democratic Party, Komeito, Japanese Communist Party and Your Party. Japan is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary government (UKEssays, 2018).

e) *Economy* – Japan identifies itself with a highly developed market economy. Globally, Japan is the second largest economy relative to Gross Domestic Product (current prices) and the second largest economy relative to purchasing power parity (International Monetary Fund, 2021). Japan is recognized worldwide for its efficient economy and limited nature of its natural resources. According to WorldData.info (2019), wages in Japan are among the highest in the world, but extremely high living conditions / standards must also be taken into account when making comparisons.

f) *Language* – almost all Japanese speak and use Japanese in the business language. Even if they know English, they would still be too shy to use it. Silence would be the answer in the situation of interaction with strangers. This may seem strange to many people, but this is the typical behavior of many Japanese. Extreme shyness causes them not to use a foreign language in their relations with people from other cultures, the dialogue in a language of international circulation being limited only to "Good morning" and "Goodbye" (UK Essays, 2018).

g) *Education* – according to the literature, the Japanese are a group of people characterized by homogeneity. As such, the education system in "The Land of the Rising Sun" is extremely uniform. In this way, the general perception is that the Japanese share the same beliefs and ideas. In order to improve the quality of the education system, the aim is to increase the number of teachers, so as to create smaller teaching groups in order to focus more on each student (UK Essays, 2018).

Geert Hofstede developed four dimensions specific to national cultures. According to Hofstede (1980), "Culture is a kind of mental programming that lies between human nature on the one hand and personality on the other." Following the study completed in 1980, it was found that cultural

differences can be understood by the following four distinctive dimensions: distance from power; individualism versus collectivism, avoiding uncertainty and masculinity versus femininity.

2.2. Organizational culture in Japan

According to Hofstede Insights, the 4 dimensions described in the original study by Geert Hofstede, in order to characterize a country-specific national culture, two other dimensions should be considered: long-term orientation and indulgence. If we explore Japanese culture through the 6-D model proposed by Hofstede Insights, we can get a good overview of the basic basic factors specific to Japanese culture in relation to other cultures worldwide.
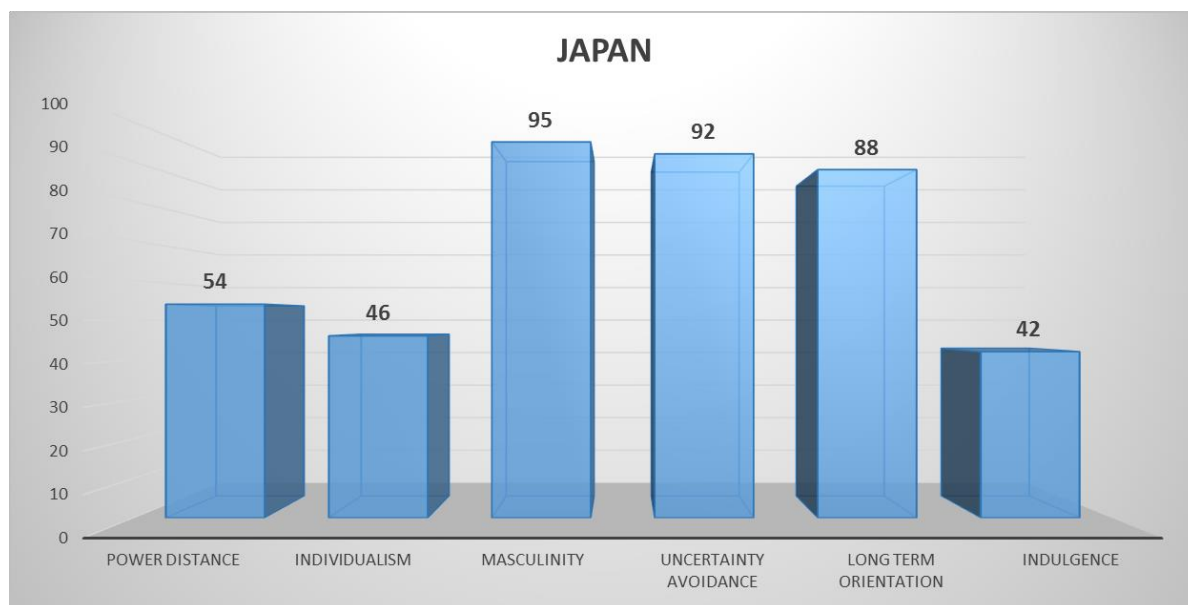

Figure 1. Cultural dimension of Japan
Source: authors, after Hofstede Insights (2021)

With an intermediate score of 54, Japan is a hierarchical society at the limit. However, there are other Asian countries considered more hierarchical than Japan. Some foreigners see Japan as highly hierarchical due to trade experiences, as they face a slow decision-making process: each hierarchical subdivision must confirm the decisions and the final check is ultimately made by management based in Tokyo. Paradoxically, this example shows that in Japan there is no individual who can take decisions on his own as is the case in more hierarchical societies.

According to Figure 1, Japan scores 46 points for the Individualism dimension, emphasizes the existence of many characteristics specific to a collectivist society: placing group harmony above the expression of individual opinions, a strong sense of shame for losing respect for others. However, its Asian neighbors are considered more collectivist than Japan, which is explained by the fact that in China or Korea, the basis of these collectivist societies is the existence of an extended family system, which does not apply to Japan. Japan has been a paternalistic society, the family name and assets being inherited from the father to the eldest son, the younger siblings being forced to leave the family home and earn a living with the families they create on their own. According to Western standards, Japanese are experienced as collectivistic, but according to Asian standard they are individualist, given the more reserved nature than most other Asians.

With a score of 95, Japan is one of the most masculine societies in the world. However, those competitive and assertive behaviors, specific to a male culture, cannot be seen due to mild collectivism. What can be seen as an expression of masculinity in Japan is the impulse of excellence and perfection in production, in services (hotels and restaurants), presentation (gifts or food), so in every aspect of life. Also, the extra work that is fully used is another expression of masculinity. It is

still difficult for Japanese women to climb up the steps of corporations characterized by hard and long working hours.

A very high score for Avoiding Uncertainty shows that the Japanese have learned to prepare for any uncertain situation. This applies to all aspects of life, not only for emergency plans or precautions for natural disasters. In this way, maximum predictability is manifested in Japan, with various events occurring similarly in any corner of the country. For example, the beginning and the end of the school year are organized exactly the same throughout the country. In addition, there are some etiquette books which prescribe in detail how people should behave or what people should wear taking into account the type of the social events (wedding, funeral, etc). Teachers and civil servants are reluctant to do things for which there is no precedent. In corporate Japan, the feasibility study is a commonly used tool in which significant resources are invested (time, effort), all the risks of a project being carefully analysed before any operation can start. Moreover, managers base their decisions on detailed facts and analysis. There is a great difficulty in realizing changes in Japan due to the high need for Uncertainty Avoidance.

With 88 points, Japan is one of the most long-term oriented societies in the world. In the long history of mankind, the Japanese assimilate their lives with a very short moment. That is why the Japanese strongly believe that they do their best in life time and this is the only thing they can do. Practical good examples and virtues guide people throughout their lives. In corporate Japan, the long-term orientation can be observed through: high investments in research & development, even in difficult times from an economic point of view; own capital rate as high as possible; the priority for the constant increase of market share rather than quarterly profit. All these things serve the durability of the Japanese companies. The idea behind it is that organizations are to serve stakeholders and society at large for many future generations, not to make money periodically for the shareholders.

Taking into account the score for Indulgence dimension (42), Japan shows to have a culture of restraint. For these societies (which have a low score for this category) there is a tendency towards cynicism and pessimism. Restrained societies (like Japan) do not put much emphasis on leisure time and control the gratification of their desires, in contrast to indulgent countries. The perception that actions are restricted by social norms is specific to people with this orientation, their feeling being that indulging themselves is somewhat wrong (Hofstede Insights, 2021).

2.3. Japanese companies – general characteristics, types, rankings

In 2019, Japan ranked 3rd in the world after the US and China, as an economy, with a GDP value of about 5.38 billion dollars, which means a per capita value of $ 42,930 (International Monetary Fund, 2019). For a long time, Japan's economy has been characterized by good collaboration between producers, suppliers and distributors, but also by the principle of lifelong employment (Dragomir, 2015). Things have changed in the meantime, as the "Land of the Rising Sun" is facing an aging process and a growing dependence on imports (Ministerul pentru Mediul de Afaceri, Comerț și Antreprenoriat, 2019).

According to corporate law, Japanese corporate entities are (Osaka Business and Investment Center, 2018):

- *Stock company* (Kabushiki Kaisha); in their turn, they can be:
  - ✓ Large companies;
  - ✓ Small and medium enterprises;
  - ✓ Public companies;
  - ✓ Private companies.
- *Limited liability company* (Godo Kaisha) (LLC);
- *General partnership company* (Gomei Kaisha);
- *Limited partnership company* (Goshi Kaisha).

We do not intend to go into details about the way to set up these types of organizations or about features related to the advantages or disadvantages of choosing one of them to operate in the Japanese market. Therefore, they remain above for information only

Regarding the number of organizations in Japan, at the level of 2016 there were about 3856460 companies, most of them (21.8%) operating in trade, 13.2% representing the accommodation and food services sector, 11.2% construction, and about 10% production.

Table 1. Ranking of Japanese listed companies

No crt.	Companies	Symbol	Market values (billion dollars)	Market values (billion dollars)	Symbol	Companies	No crt.
1	Toyota		240,92	56.82		Nintendo	16
2	Keyence		139,63	55.00		Denso	17
3	Sony		126,99	54.61		Hitachi	18
4	Recruit		95.09	53.14		Murata Seisakusho	19
5	Nippon Telegraph & Telephone		94.74	52.08		Takeda Pharmaceutical	20
6	SoftBank		94.68	51.55		Honda	21
7	Daikin		71.64	49.70		Oriental Land	22
8	KDDI		70.00	48.02		Z Holdings	23
9	Mitsubishi UFJ Financial		69.17	47.11		Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group	24
10	Shin-Etsu Chemical		68.01	43.97		Itochu Shoji	25
11	Tokyo Electron		67.78	41.32		Daiichi Sankyo	26
12	Fast Retailing		67.49	40.85		SMC	27
13	Nidec		66.92	40.44		Fanuc	28
14	Chugai Pharmaceutical		63.47	38.45		7-Eleven	29
15	Hoya		58.38	36.05		Fujitsu	30

Source: authors after CompaniesMarketCap.com (2021)

In sectors such as education and health, IT and communications there are less than 10% of all companies, and in agriculture or transport less than 2% (Statista, n.d.). These figures are not difficult to understand when it comes to agriculture, for example, as there is little arable land in Japan, with the country relying heavily on imports (about 60%) (Ministry of Business Environment, Trade and Entrepreneurship, 2019). The transport sector is very well developed, recognized for high quality and punctuality, to cover the needs of passengers, especially on the railway segment; however, existing companies in this sector account for less than 2% of the total, which proves their high efficiency.

Of all companies, it is estimated that there are over 33.000 older than at least 100 years, companies with tradition, that have passed the test of time (Lufkin, 2020). For example, in Japan exists the oldest hotel in the world, Nisiyama Onsen Keiunkan (Guinness World Records, 2021), Suntory and Nintendo have their beginnings around 1800, and Hosoo, a large kimono manufacturer around 1688 (Lufkin, 2020). Regarding the number of newly established Japanese companies, the World Bank reports for 2018 a value of 29243 (The World Bank, 2021b). In the top of the largest companies in Japan, depending on the market value listed on the stock exchange, are Toyota, Keyence and Sony (CompaniesMarketCap.com, 2021) or in other words, one of the largest manufacturers in the automotive market, followed by a world-renowned leader in the production of industrial automation equipment and a multinational with a wide range of products and technologies recognized as high quality. The following table shows the top 30 Japanese listed companies, both in the public and private sectors, according to the current market value.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research, regarding the organizational culture in the public and private fields in Japan, followed in the first phase, the critical analysis of the specialized literature to include in the paper relevant aspects about the organizational culture in Japan and about the Japanese companies and their main characteristics. The research is also part of the category of observational research as it is based on the study of official documents, reports, statistics on Japanese companies, to identify the elements needed to start the case study. From the multitude of companies identified in the rankings on revenues, number of employees, market value, etc., three companies were selected; for them access to information was not restricted in any way and for which they were identified among the most relevant aspects of CO. Another aspect in selecting organizations involved the business environment, whether public or private, to which is a third company is added that was born in the public domain, under the umbrella of the Japanese Government and which later went through privatization process.

The model for analyzing the specific elements of organizational culture was developed starting from Schein (1990) and Denison (1990), who stated the CO levels, respectively its dimensions and features. The figure below highlights the working methods explained and clarifies the steps of the scientific approach.

Figure 2. Methods
Source: authors

4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1. Selected companies profile

In order to highlight and discuss aspects specific to the Japanese organizational culture in the public sphere, but also in the private sphere, we will consider as an example, companies with tradition in the main fields of activity (Electronics, Telecommunications and Energy), with a long history time that places them today among the best known, not only locally, but also internationally, among those with high performance, but also among top competitors or even leaders in the markets in which they operate. Thus, the following companies will be in the centre of attention: *Sony Group Corporation (Sony), Nippon Telegraph & Telephone Corporation (NTT) şi Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings (Tepco)*. The following table summarizes some descriptive elements regarding the history, field of activity, but also basic economic aspects.

The Sony Group is a global organization with a wide range of businesses around the world - game consoles, devices, electronic equipment, music, movies, digital networks, and insurance and financial services. Given the high degree of business diversity, Sony is trying to maintain a well-defined system that ensures group unity and takes steps to address the issues facing society and the global environment. In addition, Sony delivers emotional experiences through its business, focusing on customers around the world (CNN Business, 2021).

NTT, also called Denden Kosha, is a Japanese telecommunications company that almost monopolizes Japan's domestic electronic communications industry. It is considered the largest company in Japan and one of the largest companies in the world. Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation offers a variety of telecommunications services, including telephony, telegraph, leased lines, data communications, terminal equipment sales and related services. Local and long distance telephone services are provided by this company in Japan (Bloomberg, 2021a).

Table 2. Companies' profiles

Companies / Parameters	*Sony Group Corporation (Sony)*	*Nippon Telegraph & Telephone Corporation (NTT)*	*Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings (Tepco)*
Field of activity	Electronics Game Hardware technology	Telecommunication	Energy Utilities and waste Electricity Oil and gas
Year of establishment	1946	1952	1951
Original name	Tokyo Telecommunications Engineering Corporation	Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Public Corporation	Tokyo Electric Power Company
Business environment	Private	Born public / in private field since 1985	Public
Company type	Corporation listed on the stock exchange	Corporation listed on the stock exchange; the Japanese government owns a third of the shares	Holding of four companies
Employees	111,700	320,000	42,060
Revenues (2020)	77.45 billion dollars	109,56 billion dollars	59.32 billion dollars

Source: authors after CompaniesMarketCap.com (2021), Dun & Bradstreet (2021), Sony (2021a), Tepco (2021)

TEPCO is a Japanese company whose field of activity is electricity generation, transmission and distribution (Reuters, 2021). The company bases its activity on hydroelectric and thermal energy, using nuclear energy as well. Tokyo Electric Power distributes electricity in the Kanto area, which includes the Tokyo metropolitan area, with Kanagawa, Chiba and Saitama prefectures. The company also provides information and communication services (Bloomberg, 2021b).

4.2. Aspects of organizational culture within the presented companies

All definitions for organizational culture have in common the inclusion of the often hidden philosophy, ideology, habits, values, norms, beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors that shape individuals within an organization and make it different from others (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Azeem et al., 2021), which controls how people and groups within the organization interact with each other, but also with entities outside it (George & Jones, 2002), which helps to create a system of common meanings (Robbins, 1984) or that give unity to the whole organization (Kilman, 1985). As mentioned in a previous chapter, OC is seen in the literature as part of an organization's capital, which ensures compatibility between the values of the organization and its employees, in order to achieve organizational performance (Barney, 1986; Tan, 2019).

Schein (1990) stated that OC has three levels: (1) The level of "artefacts" that includes ceremonies, rituals, stories, symbols; (2) The level of conscious, stated beliefs; (3) The level of fundamental, deep, unconscious beliefs. Similar to his perception, Denison (1990) presents four levels of OC: (1) The level of material culture that includes stories, rituals, symbols, etc.; (2) The level of perspectives, which includes rules and regulations; (3) The level of values; (4) The level of beliefs, presumptions. Denison also treats the four dimensions of CO, each characterized by three features. The following figure highlights them, as they were found in Hudrea (2014).
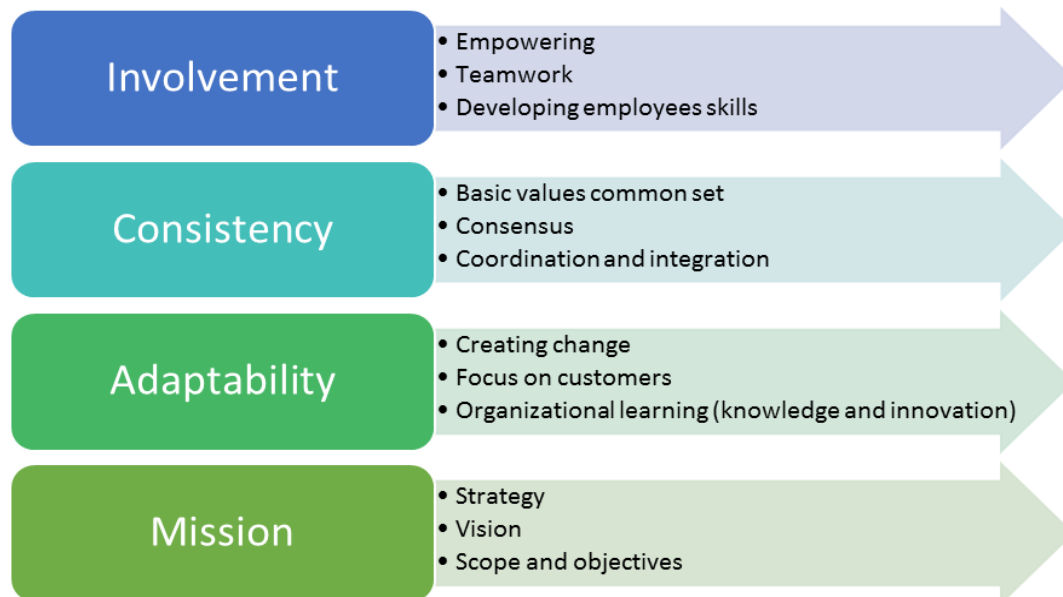

Figure 3. Dimension of OC after Denison's model
Source: authors after Hudrea (2014)

Given the aspects highlighted above, we will analyze some of them for the three companies, in order to see if and to what extent they were included and found in the case of each of them. We considered useful their grouping on OC components, for which we highlighted the specific elements of each component. Regarding the Adaptability dimension, we considered it appropriate to include among the features (those stated by Denison) Social Responsibility and Sustainability, as both contribute to meeting the current needs of customers, of the economy today, but also of environmental protection concerns.

Table 3. OC specific elements in Sony Group Corporation

OC components	Specific elements	Sony
Symbols	Logo	**SONY**
	Tagline	"BE MOVED"
Mission (vision, goal, objectives etc.)		***Mission:*** "A company that inspires and fulfills your curiosity"; ***Vision***: „Using our unlimited passion for technology, content and services to deliver new thrills and revolutionary ways to entertain, just as only Sony can"; ***Purpose***: „It fills the world with emotion through the power of creativity and technology" (Sony, 2021a).
Values	Basic values	"***Dreams & Curiosity***: Pioneer the future with dreams and curiosity"; ***Diversity***: „Pursue the creation of the very best by harnessing diversity and varying viewpoints"; ***Integrity & Sincerity***: "Earn the trust for the Sony brand through ethical and responsible conduct"; ***Sustenability***: „Fulfill our stakeholder responsabilities through disciplined business practices" (Sony, 2021a).
Norm	Corporate ethics	In 2001 Compliance Division of Sony Corporation was established (Compliance & Privacy Department). Since than, the document which define the guidelines for conduct has been adopted (Sony Group Code of Conduct), the Compliance Monitoring Team has been created, Compliance Leadership Team has been created and revisions to the Sony Group Code of Conduct have taken place. In recognition of ethical measures, Sony received the *2021 World's Most Ethical Companies* title from Ethisphere Institute (United States).
CO features regarding Adaptability	Creating change	Proactive in implementing change. Even if its core business its in electronics, it acquired a movie company (Columbia Pictures) and a recording company (CBS Records).
	Customer focus	„Sony actively uses customer feedback to improve products and services, feedback provided in after-sales failure reports or social media" (Sony, 2021b)
	Organizational learning (knowledge and innovation)	Sony is creating new technologies so that its engineers can develop products that offer functional value, while emphasizing people's sensibilities and what inspires them. (Sony, 2021b)
	Corporate responsibility	„CSR initiatives reflect Sony's commitment to ethical and responsible business practices. Sony has established the principles in The Sony Group Code of Conduct in accordance with its core values of fairness, integrity, honesty, respect and responsibility and strives to uphold these principles as it encourages the development of innovation in various industries." (Sony, 2021b)
	Sustainability	"The Sustainability Report includes a number of specific initiatives such as: • Achieving a zero environmental footprint by 2050; • Reduction of absolute greenhouse gas emissions by 5% compared to the level of the financial year 2020; • Use of 15% or more of electricity from renewable sources; Sony receives the *Sustainable Materials Management Electronics Challenge Awards* from the Environmental Protection Agency (United States) for responsible recycling of e-waste by certified suppliers" (Sony, 2021b)
CO features regarding Involvement	Employee empowerment	In 2015, Sony introduced *Career Plus*, a program that allows employees to stay in their current positions, being involved in other jobs and projects posted by the company, holding competing or secondary positions. The program allows employees to generally capitalize their expertise and knowledge, while building their networks within Sony (Sony, 2021b)
	Teamwork focus	Through the *Port project*, ambitious employees can interact across geographical or business boundaries. The concept is for Sony Group employees to come together, connect and create synergies to grow as individuals and boost human resources. (Sony, 2021b)

OC components	Specific elements	Sony
	Developing employees' skills and competencies	The company offers individual courses or group courses, Career Month, the opportunity to discuss with their bosses career development plans or promotion conditions. Sony has defined the global behaviors it wants to see among employees: *Inspire and Be Inspired; Stay on Point; Break Through Barriers*. (Sony, 2021b)

Source: authors

Table 4. OC specific elements in Nippon Telegraph & Telephone Corporation

OC components	Specific elements	Nippon Telegraph & Telephone Corporation (NTT)
Symbols	Logo	
	Tagline	Trusted Global Innovator
Mission (vision, goal, objectives etc.)		• *Mission*: „We want to be a partner that always anticipates the future and continues to transform dynamically while supporting industry and society". • *Vision:"* Our aspiration is to contribute to the realization of the <Smart World / Society 5.0>, a world in which all people receive the benefits of ITC, can work easier and can live pleasant and satisfying lives." (NTT, 2021a).
Values	Basic values	• *„We support the digital transformation of our customers";* • *„We capitalize our talents, technologies and assets";* • *„We are accelerating our own digital transformation";* • *„We promote ecological management and improve shareholder profitability to increase corporate value"* (NTT, 2021a)
Norm	Corporate ethics	NTT developed the NTT Group Corporate Ethics in 2002. The NTT Group has corporate ethics committees and corporate ethics officers at the group companies. Among the initiatives promoted to raise awareness regarding the NTT Group Corporate Ethics Charter, are: Corporate Ethics and Compliance Training; Anti-Bribery Handbook; Competition Law Handbook; Check System for Penetration of Corporate Ethics; Establishment of Corporate Ethics Help Line Contact Point; Disciplinary Actions against Confirmed Violations (NTT, 2021b)
CO features regarding Adaptability	Creating change	NTT DATA has been engaged in work style innovations since 2005 in order to become a company that offers change to its customers through IT. In 2018, the group worked to provide "change", a key word for the way it works. Changes have taken place in basic social infrastructure, or have referred to space-expanding technologies and new computers that exceed conventional limits (NTT, 2021c).
	Customer focus	**Measures adopted by the group for their customers** (NTT, 2021d): o It provides social infrastructure and business-specific solutions based on advanced technologies; o Builds and ensures stability management / operation of IT infrastructure; o Ensures the information security; o Protects data privacy. **Main approaches** (NTT, 2021d)**:** o Regular sales and proposals; o Customer satisfaction surveys (questionnaires, interviews)"
	Organizational learning (knowledge and innovation)	NTT innovates in the following directions: Networks; Artificial intelligence; Security; Data collection, management and analysis; Media devices / robotics; Environment and energy; Basic research (advanced technologies, materials technology, biotechnology, healthcare) (NTT, 2021c)

	Corporate responsibility	„CSR themes adopted by the group: • Enrich society; • Protect environment;	• Safety and Security; • United NTT" (NTT, 2021d)
	Sustainability	Objectives assumed by the organization to achieve sustainability: • Reducing the impact on the environment by promoting green information technologies; • Reducing greenhouse gas emissions;	• Reducing paper quantities; • Reducing waste quantities; • Carrying out activities with social and environmental contribution" (NTT, 2021d)
CO features regarding Involvement	Employee empowerment	At each workplace, the roles of staff responsible for employee development and guidance are clearly defined in a system in which employees establish their own annual learning plans. The goal is to increase the motivation to learn, to have professional human resources with advanced expertise and ability to react to change. Employees are free to select courses tailored to their position and job assignment, when required (NTT, 2021d).	
	Teamwork focus	-	
	Developing employees' skills and competencies	There is a TG system whose purpose is to support the growth of various specialized human resources and to maximize their performance, rewarding them accordingly. NTT provides an on-the-job training (OJT) basis, which is complemented and enhanced by out-of-group training (NTT, 2021d)	

Source: authors

Table 5. OC specific elements in Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings

OC components	Specific elements	Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings (Tepco)
Symbols	Logo	TEPCO
	Tagline	The Energy for Every Challenge
Mission (vision, goal, objectives etc.)		*Mission*: „Our mission and raison d'être is to deliver value that goes beyond the expectations of individual customers. To this end, we will first commit to fulfilling our responsibilities for Fukushima and pursue expanding possibilities in the world of energy and deliver a safe and comfortable life for all stakeholders—such as customers and business partners—, in addition to providing electricity and gas in a safe and stable manner." (Tepco, 2016) *Vision:* „Trust from stakeholders is the foundation of TEPCO Group's operations. By rolling out operations centered on global carbon neutrality and regional disaster preparedness for a safe and sustainable society, we will strive to create new value and be a corporate group that customers continue to trust and choose." (Tepco, 2016) *Objectives* (Tepco, 2016)*:* "1) Accomplishing the Fukushima Project as our highest priority 2) Creating a transparent organization to regain trust 3) Improving individual capabilities to drive business forward 4) Shaping the future of energy 5) Creating profitability through employee development"
Values	Basic values	"Top Priority on Safety"; "Fulfil our Responsibilities"; "Customer-focused"; "Dare to Innovate"
Norm	Corporate etic	"TEPCO Group Charter of Corporate Conduct" – document defining the guidelines for conduct to be followed within the TEPCO Group in order to ensure the application of CSR (corporate social responsibility) measures in all group companies; "Code of Conduct Related to the Corporate Ethics and Compliance Policies of the TEPCO Group" – document that includes concrete guidelines of conduct related to organizational ethics, which employees and managers must follow.

CO features regarding Adaptability	Creating change	"Business Streamline" – plan for streamlining the business by applying optimization measures, such as cost reduction and asset sales. "Nuclear reform" includes reforms on: safety culture, safety measures, disaster prevention measures, risk / crisis control protocol, information disclosure and risk communication methods. (Tepco, n.d)
	Customer focus	The organization anticipates customer needs. For example, it proposes fully electric houses under the slogan "Switch! to low-carbon lifestyles ", offering solutions and services for a comfortable and safe lifestyle in the use of energy. (Tepco, 2010)
	Organizational learning (knowledge and innovation)	There is an open innovation platform, where Tepco launches challenges for engineers and researchers around the world. There is also a "Tepco Research Institute" as part of the Tepco group.
	Corporate responsibility	There are CSR initiatives, according to the Sustainability report (Tepco, 2010), under the motto: "Our corporate activities are founded on earning trust from society".
	Sustainability	In Sustainability report, presents initiatives related to (Tepco, 2010): "Environmental Indicators (Performance and Targets), Initiatives for a Low-carbon Society, Producing Low-CO2 Electricity, Achieving Energy-efficient Utilization of Electricity, Biodiversity Conservation, Air Pollution & Hazardous Substance Countermeasures, Recycling of Resources, Environmental Management".
CO features regarding Involvement	Employee empowerment	-
	Teamwork focus	-
	Developing employees' skills and competencies	The company had a serious training system (Tepco, 2010): offered by General Training Center to help employees acquire the latest in specialized knowledge and skills rapidly in a friendly competition environment. However, following the adoption of the management efficiency plan, approved in 2014, it is desired to reduce costs, therefore some measures regarding employees provide reducing management education training and operation center costs.

Source: authors

Table 6. Summary of results

OC components	Specific elements	SONY	NTT	TEPCO
Symbols	Logo	✓	✓	✓
	Tagline	✓	✓	✓
Mission (vision, aim, objectives etc.)	Mission (vision, aim, objectives etc.)	✓	✓	✓
Values	Basic values	✓	✓	✓
Norm	Corporate etic	✓	✓	✓
CO features regarding Adaptability	Creating change	✓	✓	✓
	Customer focus	✓	✓	✓
	Organizational learning (knowledge and innovation)	✓	✓	✓
	Corporate responsibility	✓	✓	✓
	Sustainability	✓	✓	✓
CO features regarding Involvement	Employee empowerment	✓	✓	✗
	Teamwork focus	✓	✗	✗
	Developing employees' skills and competencies	✓	✓	✗

Source: authors

As demonstrated after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, Japanese businesses have a unique capability for long-term survival. Many companies around the world (including Romanian companies) are stuck in short-termism, focusing on a strategic plan for five years. But it is widely known that 40 % of companies that have remained in existence more than 300 years are from Japan. So, a lot of Japanese companies think about long term (100 or 200 years from now) and envision the kind of future they want to create. In this way, the whole society develops organically, the companies representing the economic engine that fuels the good state of the nation. Long-term guidance allows for detailed risk analysis and preparation of organizations for the worst, which helps overcome all uncertainties. Moreover, most Japanese companies try to act for the benefit of society, to generate sustainable development, rather than fast increase of profitability.

Another technique that can be applied by Romanian companies refers to the follow-up discussions after the implementation of the projects. It is acknowledged that the Japanese are very attentive to detail and analyze all indicators before making a decision. Similarly, after the completion of the project, it is important to review what were the critical points or what worked bad, so that, in the future, such things are prevented. This technique contributes to the understanding of the overall image of a project and to the increase of the expertise, which allows the easing of tasks in the future.

At the same time, innovation is the key to success, and Japanese learned this lesson on their skin. As we shown in the paper, Japanese companies are interesting in innovating and they belive in their vision. In this way, a very important lesson for Romanian companies would be to inspire from Japanese work ethics and innovative practices and believe in the vision, even if no one has ever achieved that until now.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In the present paper, the analysis of the cultural components specific to Japan highlighted a series of defining features for the mode of action of the Japanese. Analyzing the determinants of Japanese culture and the cultural dimensions specific to the Hofstede model revealed the characteristics of Japanese organizational culture, highlighting the cultural substrates and early influences that have been perpetuated from generation to generation. All these elements have led the "Land of the Rising Sun" to its current status, one of the most developed countries in the world. As shown in Figure 1, the Japanese people have some dominant cultural elements (masculinity, high degree of uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation), but there are exceptions given the growing globalization process felt especially in recent decades.

Through Table 1 (stock exchange listed companies) it was possible to clearly highlight the engine of the Japanese economy, large listed companies, thus capitalizing on important economic resources used mainly in investment or research activities. The degree of development currently registered by Japan is a consequence of the good collaboration between the components of the value chain (suppliers, producers, distributors), a collaboration that is based on the defining cultural elements specific to the Japanese people. Moreover, the partially collectivist character of the Japanese, namely the long-term orientation and the high degree of uncertainty avoidance is also reflected in the fact that a significant number of companies have managed to pass the test of time and carry out economic activities even 200 years away from the debut on the economic scene.

Through the analysis of the specialized literature, 3 well-known Japanese companies have been studied in order to highlight the cultural characteristics based on Denison's model. In order to delimit us from a uniform research, companies with a slightly different history were chosen, at least from an organizational point of view (private; public / private; public), the authors' attempt being to highlight the Japanese cultural features of the specific field of activity. Moving forward to Table 6 (Summary), it can be observed that certain cultural components are found to a greater extent in companies belonging to the private environment, rather than the public ones. However, the many

similarities between companies show that the gap between organizations, regardless of the form of organization, is not so great in the Japanese business environment, cultural elements playing an important role in carrying out business regardless of private or public capital. Moreover, we can take into account the fact that the absence of certain cultural elements for some companies may be a consequence of the field of activity, a possible factor that may hinder the assimilation of certain values. It can be seen that the differences appeared only in the case of the Adaptability dimension for the public domain company and the one that was part of the public domain, later being privatized.

Comparing with the four levels of organizational culture, as they are described by Schein (1990), it can be seen that in all three companies appear elements belonging to both the level of material culture (including stories, rituals, symbols, etc.) and the level of perspectives (which includes norms and rules), as well as the level of values and last but not least of beliefs, presumptions.

Although the authors explained in detail the working methodology specific to this paper, the study has some limitations. On one hand, the authors relied on the review of the literature, the analysis falling into the category of observational ones. On the other hand, the analysis of Japanese companies from a cultural point of view was partly based on internal documents published by the companies in question, which could lead to a note of subjectivism. In this way, in the future it may be considered to update this paper by introducing elements that highlight the organizational culture trought the view of independent entities.

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