

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree in Management from the Nova School of Business and Economics

This individual thesis is part of a group thesis addressing the following overarching research question:

How are the Characteristics of Corporate Culture Manifested in Organizations that Exhibit Scalability?

Christopher Jonathan Garrn (59301)

How are the characteristics of Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation manifested in organizations that exhibit scalability?

Work project carried out under the supervision of:

Aman Asija

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Abstract

The study uses Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory to investigate how its dimensions affect an organization's capacity for successful development. Qualitative data was collected through interviews with 35 firms in scaling stages to assess various cultural dimensions within those firms. The results indicate that top-level employees believe mostly in mixed approaches and not a strictly black-or-white way of thinking. The selection of the Hofstede framework disregards other prominent cultural frameworks, which may ultimately provide valuable findings in future studies. This study is the first qualitative assessment that investigates specific cultural characteristics while exhibiting scalability, adding important information to organizational culture approaches.

Keywords

Hofstede, Organizational Culture, Scalability, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism – Collectivism, Masculinity – Femininity, Long Term – Short Term Orientation, Indulgence - Restraint

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1. Introduction (Group Paper)

When a company begins to scale, many aspects of its operations, structure, and strategy change significantly. Corporate culture stands out as a critical yet overlooked element (Groysberg et al. 2018). When entering the process of scaling, organizations are forced to adapt their cultural framework to maintain cohesion while navigating the many challenges of growth (Schein 2010; Cameron and Quinn 2011). As this adaptation unfolds, companies often find it difficult and challenging to balance this cohesion with the evolving demands of growth, since scaling tends to disrupt established norms and respective values (Schein 2010; Cameron and Quinn 2011). The reality highlights the need to understand the defining characteristics of corporate culture that enable organizations to scale while providing stability and guidance during those uncertain times (Schein 2010; Groysberg et al. 2018).

In today's highly competitive and dynamic landscape, corporate culture has emerged as a fundamental driver of long-term business success (Schein 2010). With more than just the shared beliefs and values within an organization, a strong and adaptive corporate culture influences organizational strategy, encourages employee engagement, and fosters innovation. There have been many studies in which companies have shown their failure to align their organizational culture with their strategic goals resulting in low performance, in which the neglect of a strong culture was frequently cited as the number one cause of failure (Cameron and Quinn 2011).

In this rapidly changing world, in which many new technologies, markets, and dynamics drive companies to innovate and explore innovative strategies, some manage to achieve scalable growth. Scalability itself is nothing new in business, however, there are many factors involved for a company to achieve this level of capability. Companies achieving scalable growth tend to foster a culture of resilience and agility, in which they maintain a clear strategic focus and operational consistency while navigating challenging growth complexities. As research has shown, a well-developed corporate culture can support the seamless integration of new

employees, systems, innovation and quick problem-solving in dynamic environments. All this is essential for companies' scalability-related mechanisms such as growth, since it enables companies to respond fast to external pressures without having to compromise internal alignment or values (Gibson and Birkinshaw 2001).

While it is very prominent today, the concept of corporate culture has not always been a strong focus in organizational studies or even settings. Looking back to the 1950s and 1960s, early management studies started to explore the human aspect of companies, discussing motivation and management styles as the precursors to today's understanding of culture within an organization dynamic (McGregor 1960). Now, corporate culture is seen both as a stable foundation and flexible framework that evolves through external changes such as globalization, technological advancement, and shifting societal expectations (Martin 2002). These shifts indicate that a corporation's culture needs to be strong enough to provide identity and direction, yet adaptable enough to embrace change.

Companies with stable and adaptable cultures have shown success during scaling, while others with rigid and ineffective cultures have faced challenges. The business "WeWork" exemplifies how a poorly managed and misaligned culture can lead to significant instability during scaling. Here, the company's initial ethos "work hard, play hard" fostered a loose and informal environment which often blurred professional boundaries. The lack of an organizational structure, combined with the absence of transparency and professionalism, took a toll on the investors' trust and eventually created a substantial financial challenge. Ultimately, the company's CEO resigned, causing a critical decrease in the company's valuation (Pendergraft 2021). Evidently, the lack of a cohesive and accountability-driven culture guided the business to instability, poor decision-making, and investor dissatisfaction, leading to the failure of scaling sustainably.

For one, the Agency Problem was evident as leadership often prioritized personal gain over organizational stability. This misalignment between the management's interest and the companies' goals could have initiated unstructured decisions and been the root cause of lost accountability. Further, the concept of Transaction Cost Economics reveals that WeWork's internal culture generated high transaction costs. With no foundation of trust or a structured culture in place, the company may have excessively used resources on monitoring and damage control, which led to further operational instability and inefficiency.

In contrast, companies such as Spotify, Netflix, and Airbnb are examples of organizations successfully implementing a strong and adaptable culture during the process of scaling by aligning it with their strategic objectives. All of them share a focus on transparency, regular feedback, meaningful rewards, personal freedom, and engagement (Kniberg and Ivarsson 2012; Choudary 2015; Hastings and Meyer 2020).

The success of these companies can be better understood if one examines related theoretical concepts. For instance, the Resource-Based View (RBV) positions the cultures of Spotify, Netflix, and AirBnB as valuable and inimitable, giving them a competitive edge. The strength of their cultural identities enhances resilience and makes it harder for other companies to replicate. Further, these companies provide a balance between cultural fit and cultural add, maintaining their foundational values while evolving to meet changing market dynamics and the company's continued growth. These companies stay true to their core principles while allowing them to be flexible and grow, achieving adaptability during periods of expansion. (Kniberg and Ivarsson 2012; Choudary 2015; Hastings and Meyer 2020).

This further highlights how corporate culture is seen both as a stable foundation and flexible framework that evolves through external changes such as globalization, technological advancement, and shifting societal expectations (Martin 2002). In recent years, there have been

many significant changes in work structure and workforce demographics across the market. Such trends include remote work, emphasis on diversity and inclusion, general market shifts and technological advancement. These shifts in culture can have a large effect on how companies need to approach cultural change during scaling, as societal expectations could influence employee priorities, consumer behavior, and organizational value.

The shift towards remote work, which has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, transformed traditional corporate culture by decentralizing the work environment. Conventional hierarchies are challenged by remote work, which introduced more flexibility and a more autonomous approach to employee management. Remote work being integrated into organizations fosters a culture of trust and independence, empowering employees to take ownership of respective tasks while keeping in mind company goals. However, if companies fail to integrate remote work correctly, this can result in straining communication, reducing engagement, and finally a lack of collaboration (Wang et al. 2021; Bick et al. 2020).

The shift towards more diversity and inclusion in the workspace is more common in multinational companies. It promotes cultural adaptability, which allows a company to benefit from diverse perspectives and increased innovation. Organizations with high adaptability therefore foster environments where collaboration and equality thrive, as well as promote the capability of responding to diverse market needs. In case of low adaptability, companies would most likely fail to respond rapidly to market needs and quick innovation cycles (Hunt, Layton and Prince 2015; Roberson 2019).

Millennials and Gen Z can become a big challenge for companies in adapting their culture as this generation brings new values and expectations into the workforce, with cultural shifts around work-life balance, purpose-driven work, and an increase in flexibility. Flexibility is defined mostly by where and how employees work, pushing a company's boundaries to attract

and retain talent. Many highly adaptable organizations changed policies to make their cultures more flexible and meaningful, aligning them with younger generations. Accordingly, organizations with low adaptability and failure to change find it increasingly hard to attract and retain talent. The resulting lack of identification with a company's culture can have a negative long-lasting impact on the growth trajectory (Twenge 2010; Schroth 2019).

At last, the role of technology has shifted many cultures as digital transformation has become a cornerstone in influencing communication, decision-making, and innovation. More companies have shifted towards digital tools, which allow for more flattened traditional hierarchies, open communication, and agile corporate culture. High-adaptable companies with technology as part of their culture framework will see more effective scaling, leveraging data and digital tools to drive continuous improvement. Organizations with low adaptability will commonly find innovation and being competitive in a rapidly evolving market more and more challenging (Yin et al. 2020).

In previous literature, the impact of organizational growth on corporate culture has been recognized by research on components, dynamics, and business success. There have been various frameworks offering distinct perspectives on how culture operates within organizations. Among these, Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory stands out as one of the most prominent and influential approaches.

This theory was initially developed by Geert Hofstede through extensive research on employees at IBM in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The framework explains variations in both organizational and national cultures, as well as their influence on decision-making and strategic alignment. Six dimensions have been identified from this framework: Power Distance, which measures the extent to which less powerful members of an organization accept the unequal power distribution; Individualism vs. Collectivism explores whether individuals prioritize more

personal goals over group cohesion and vice versa; Masculinity vs. Femininity, considers the preference for achievement and competition versus cooperation and work-life balance; Uncertainty Avoidance, indicates how comfortable organizations are with ambiguity and risk; Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation examines whether a culture emphasizes sustainability and growth over immediate results; and Indulgence vs. Restraint measures the degree to which cultures allow the free pursuit of gratification versus imposing strict norms and controls (Hofstede and Minkov 2010).

Hofstede's framework provides a structured tool to understand the interplay between corporate culture and scalability, emphasizing its contribution to identifying cultural factors critical for scaling. While existing literature already explores how scalability impacts corporate culture such as shifts in values, norms, and organizational cohesion – this study contributes by understanding the specific cultural characteristics within Hofstede's dimensions that are critical to gain the capability for scaling. The question remains unanswered whether certain traits, for example, those related to leadership dynamics, risk tolerance, or time orientation, are essential during the scaling stage. This leads to the central research question of this study: ***“How are the characteristics of corporate culture manifested in organizations that exhibit scalability?”***

To address this research question, the thesis is structured in a way that provides both a comprehensive foundation and a focused exploration of each dimension of Hofstede's framework concerning scalability. It begins with an overall literature review of the variables corporate culture and scalability, followed by the methodology outlining both research design and data collection. Subsequently, the thesis delves into individual deep dives of the Hofstede dimensions, providing insights from existing literature and conducted interviews. The study synthesizes these findings across all dimensions in the discussion, contributing to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting their implications for scalability. The thesis concludes with proposed managerial implications, identified limitations, and a conclusion.

2. Literature Review (Group Paper)

2.1. Scaling, Scale-Ups and Scalability

Scaling, scale-ups, and scalability are central topics in modern entrepreneurship and business management. However, these three terms are often used interchangeably without clear distinction nor understanding of their actual meanings. Here, specifically scaling and scalability are frequently perceived as synonymous by many readers. The following section hence provides a distinct understanding of the different terms and their definition for this thesis.

While starting a company requires vision and a viable product, scaling presents diverse challenges that involve efficiently growing the business without a proportional increase in resources. This is one of the most difficult tasks when building a business (Zajko 2017). Many authors accordingly view the biggest challenge for entrepreneurs not at the start but at the scaling phase of a company (Carucci 2016; Isenberg 2012). While scalability can be described an essential capability to support growth without sacrificing efficiency or service quality (Stampfl et al. 2013), entrepreneurs and leaders frequently highlight that scaling involves more than only growth. Here, the optimization of processes, efficient allocation of resources, and maintenance of a cohesive organizational culture are highly relevant aspects as well.

A scale-up is thus a type of firm in a phase of organizational development characterized by high growth (Kohler 2018). Suitably, Coviello et al. (2024) provide a clear overview of existing literature regarding the topics of scaling, scale-ups and scalability in the organizational context. These are further discussed in the following section.

2.1.1. Scaling

Carucci (2016) describes scaling as “adding revenue at a much greater rate than cost”, which underscores the financial ramifications that scaling entails. In contrast to ‘classic scaling’, Kuratko et al. (2020) and Büge and Ozcan (2021) further differentiate the term ‘blitzscaling’,

which is described as a strategy emphasizing rapid organizational expansion and values speed over efficiency. This is particularly present in technology-intensive markets (Sullivan 2016).

The work of Huang et al. (2017) posits that digital innovation is a pivotal factor in scaling, enabling ventures to significantly increase their user base while minimizing the need for proportional increases in infrastructure investment. Additionally, the paper also terms scaling as a process that emphasizes growth. Compatibly, Coviello et al. (2024) identify a clear pattern by addressing eight main attributes to define scaling: *1) Returns to scale; 2) Growth; 3) Internal elements (e.g. organizational culture); 4) Investing to grow; 5) Global markets; 6) Business model; 7) Replication Strategy; and 8) Persistence over time.*

With their research, Coviello et al. (2024) prove that most of the analyzed definitions do not distinguish between scaling and growth, which leads to a misperception that scaling is simply growth. Many of the definitions refer to growth as being quick or exponential. Yet, concerning organizational culture, the authors note that most definitions characterize scaling as a comprehensive organizational endeavor which requires significant transformation across an entire firm. Henceforth, research implies that the organizational cultural dimensions presented by Hofstede (2011) may have a significant impact on the scaling process. All six dimensions: *1) Power Distance, 2) Uncertainty Avoidance, 3) Individualism vs. Collectivism, 4) Masculinity vs. Femininity, 5) Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation, and 6) Indulgence vs. Restraint* may shape how organizations approach the transformation required during scaling.

To conclude, after examining relevant research, this paper applies the definition of Coviello et al. (2024), who define scaling as “an organizational process whereby managers transform the internal organization and leverage digital resources to rapidly expand a firm’s outputs without a corresponding ex-ante increase in inputs.” (p.14).

2.1.2. Scale-Up

Compared to literature concerning the process of scaling, research regarding scale-ups is rather recent. Kohler (2018) identifies a scale-up as a corporation in a phase characterized by high growth and a validated business model. This aligns with most definitions that view scale-ups as a type of firm (Coviello et al. 2024). Bruneel et al. (2022) also stress the necessity to add a validated business model to the growth aspect. Therefore, this thesis applies Kohler's (2018) definition for scale-ups.

Some definitions examined draw back on OECD (2007) metrics for high growth firms, such as the criteria of an "average annualized growth in revenue or employees exceeding 20% over a three-year period". However, the former views this approach as critical since OECD's definition is intended for measuring high growth in general, not specifically scale-ups. Moreover, such benchmarks fail to account for unique characteristics on a firm-by-firm or sector-specific basis. In general, most studies define a scale-up as a type of firm in a specific stage of organizational development with the assumption that the firm's development is a linear process.

Next to scale-ups, other firm types include start-ups and established firms. Start-ups are newly created organizations in the very early stages of development, focusing on testing and validating their business model (Kolvereid and Isaksen 2006). Established firms, on the other hand, are mature companies with a strong presence in the market, clear organizational structures, and reliable revenue streams. In this thesis, terms such as firm, company, corporation, or organization are used interchangeably to refer to these different types of businesses.

2.1.3. Scalability

While scaling focuses on the processes that enable growth beyond proportional input increases, scalability is typically defined as a firm's inherent ability to handle growth. This ability might

be strengthened by various characteristics of corporate culture. The first definition by Hallowell in 2001 finds the origin regarding scalability in e-commerce firms and focuses on a “business’s ability to serve numerous additional customers at extremely low incremental cost“ (p.35). Zhao et al. (2013) view it similarly and state that “Scalability enables the venture to deliver the service offering at a lower cost and to exploit the potential to serve a larger number of customers than its competitors.“ (p. 792). To this date, it is also the only one that offers a scale-based measure for scalability (Coviello et al. 2024). However, Zhao et al. (2013) mention that the increase in numbers and decrease in costs can be achieved through “the use of technologies, equipment, and centralized facilities.” (p. 792), which stands out from previous definitions. Here, its distinction is based on the fact that scalability is supported by both a firm's technological infrastructure, its internal organizational elements and culture, encompassing traits from all six dimensions of Hofstede.

Coviello et al. (2024) further expound by mentioning that many definitions associate scalability with a firm's ability to increase outputs while reducing costs. Some incorporate economies of scale in respective definitions, such as Monaghan et al. (2020) who mention digital firms are “quickly able to build and leverage economies of scale in core business processes” (p.18). On the other hand, others define scalability as “a business model’s ability to increase revenues faster than the corresponding cost base” (Stampfl et al. 2013, p. 229).

While it seems that scalability could be a performance metric, many definitions consider scalability to be a capability that a firm may develop. This comprehensible skill therefore directly ties to an organizational culture’s different characteristics (Hallowell 2001, Juntunen et al. 2018, Nielsen and Lund 2018). For instance, cultures prioritizing adaptability and innovation may foster scalability by emphasizing flexibility and creativity, whereas cultures emphasizing discipline and structure may achieve scalability through efficiency and reliability. Therefore, Nielsen and Lund (2018) define it as “ (...) a system’s ability to expand output on demand when

resources are added” (p. 66) while Juntunen et al. (2018) examine it as “the ability to deal with business-volume related changes, business-space related changes regarding markets and customers, and business model related changes in the business over time” (p.20). It is also stated that scalability implies a firm can expand on demand without constraints.

In their analyses, Coviello et al. (2024) find 14 definitions in the technology context where specifically Giustiziero et al. (2023) illustrate that digital technology is more scalable than human capital. Hence, Coviello et al. (2024) derive that digital technology is more “rapid and low-cost sharing” and an “easy and non-linear expansion of a firm’s interaction with multiple stakeholders” (p.15). This also highlights the critical role of a firm’s technological architecture in achieving scalability. Yet merely three definitions contemplate the internal implications of scalability, which appears low, given that the scaling process often involves substantial internal changes, potentially transforming an organization’s architecture and culture.

Lastly, Coviello et al. (2024) state their definition as “an ordinary organizational capability developed by managing and achieving coherence among a firm’s technological architecture, organizational architecture, and business model.” (p. 16). This thesis views scalability as such. As presented, the scaling process requires a lot of change. With growth, many different factors inside organizations are changing, including processes, hierarchy levels, planning, leadership and many more. All of these are part of the term “organizational culture” which the authors will analyze in the following chapter.

2.2. Organizational Culture

The culture of a company, often referred to as corporate culture, also commonly known as organizational culture, plays a fundamental role in any firm. For businesses looking to scale, it’s important to adjust their culture to meet new challenges (Coulson-Thomas 1995). Researchers have studied corporate culture extensively, offering a wide range of definitions.

While there is significant overlap in many definitions, certain differences stand out and deserve attention. This section focuses on clarifying what corporate culture means. However, before exploring it in detail, it is necessary to first consider the broader concept of “culture”. After all, the diversity of definitions for organizational culture reflects the many ways culture itself is understood. In 1998 a study identified 54 distinct definitions of culture in academic literature published between 1960 and 1993 alone (Kumar 2016). Generally, the concept of culture often is described as a “fuzzy” concept as it is difficult to grasp and generalize. Nevertheless, there are still essential elements to be defined and categorized (Causadias 2020; Spencer-Oatey 2021).

2.2.1. Culture

Culture is influenced and shaped by several factors. Therefore, national culture, for example, is affected by geographical location, climate, traditions, values, as well as historical circumstances, all of which are transmitted through societal mechanisms like education or socialization. Resulting, expressions of culture are found in different domains, including architecture, art, language, media, economic systems, social behaviors, work ethics, and even leisure activities, among others. It is important to mention that while some cultures remain insular, others are more open to external influences and thus change (Coulson-Thomas 1995).

According to Coulson-Thomas (1995), culture encompasses values, customs, beliefs, and assumptions, shaping behaviors, attitudes, and expectations both intentionally and unintentionally within groups. These aspects of culture furthermore dictate what is considered acceptable or appropriate within a group. Speaking of acceptance and appropriation, groups face two key challenges over time: integrating individuals into a cohesive whole, while adapting effectively to external environments to survive. The collective learning about the solutions to these challenges, forms the shared assumptions and beliefs that we call “culture” (Ojo 2010).

At its core, culture represents the customary practices of a specific group, thus fundamentally influencing how people perceive and prioritize their world (Coulson-Thomas 1995).

A renowned scholar in this field is Geert Hofstede. Together with his son and Minkov (2010), he likens culture to a computer's programming and defines culture as the "collective mental programming that sets one group of humans apart from another". He further elaborates that these behavioral patterns, thoughts, and emotions are often established during childhood, as it is this time, when individuals are receptive to absorbing new information and experiences, in particular (Hofstede et al. 2010).

2.2.2. Culture as a Social Phenomenon

Some scholars simplify culture into two broad categories – national and organizational – while others propose additional levels, meaning that culture is not confined to the national level alone, where older generations pass traditions to younger ones. Kavar (2012) identifies four distinct levels at which culture operates: First, the national level – here, as already discussed, unconscious values are formed during childhood, which remain stable despite changes in practices over time. Secondly, the organizational level: This level reflects practices that are rather superficial, thus manageable. These practices differ across companies even within the same country. Third, the occupational level: A blend of national and organizational culture that further gets influenced by norms of specific professions i.e., teaching. Lastly, the gender level, recognizes cultural differences between men and women which are shaped by national cultural contexts.

According to Gallivan and Srite (2005), organizational culture is a subset of national culture, as most organizations operate within a specific national context, thus employing individuals from the same cultural background. However, due to rising multinational corporations, these distinctions have blurred, positioning firms as macro-cultures and countries as micro-cultures.

The perspective of Spencer-Oatey (2021) too, shifts culture from a strictly national construct to a personal and psychological one, influenced by society. Here, society does not need to be equated to a single nation or nationality. Instead, culture simultaneously becomes part of every individual's identity while serving as a universal social creation, thus varying in how beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are practiced and embraced.

Culture plays a pivotal role in a business context too. Particularly when businesses interface with stakeholders including customers, employees, suppliers, or investors (Jones 2007). Triandis and Suh (2002) succinctly stated Culture to be to society what memory is to individuals. Culture is a way of preserving and passing on effective practices through generations. According to Hofstede (1994), corporate culture can be seen as patterns of thought and behavior transferred from parents to children, teachers to students, leaders to followers, and vice versa.

The P-Model proposed by Causadias (2020) is in line with the views of Triandis and Suh (2002), Hofstede (1994), and Kavar (2012). The P-Model emphasizes three core elements of culture, being people, places, and practices. These three elements are influencing each other and are interdependent. This interdependentness leads to the fact that culture cannot exist without one of these core elements. (Causadias 2020). The first core element, which is seen as the foundation of cultural systems is found by people. It includes their social interactions, demographics, and cultural expressions (Cooper and Denner 1998). Places, being the second core element are meant to shape cultural settings such as neighborhoods, schools, or homes, including institutional and ecological factors. Lastly, practices involve participation, community engagement, as well as cultural expression through daily customs and rituals (Causadias 2020).

2.2.3. Corporate Culture

Having introduced the broader concept of culture, it is evident that culture itself transcends national boundaries and exists within organizations. Corporate culture is frequently held accountable for numerous organizational challenges while occasionally being credited with fostering positive qualities at the same time (Ojo 2010).

According to Hofstede (2001), corporate culture can be seen to be fundamentally distinct from national culture. However, these two complement each other. Hereby corporate culture is seen to uniquely define companies by focusing on internal behaviors and values, while not considering broader national influences. Conversely, national culture disregards the nuances of corporate culture, thereby focusing on the broader norms that differentiate one country from another.

The study of corporate culture dates back to the early 1980's. Already in 1979, Pettigrew is considered pioneering the field by analyzing how organizational culture emerges through collective beliefs, ideologies, rituals and myths in a boarding school (Plakhotnik 2008).

A comprehensive yet general definition of corporate culture is offered by Edgar Schein from MIT's Sloan School of Management. Schein argues that organizational culture can be understood as the "way of life" within an organization, which is shaped over time and persisting in the long run. This "way of life" encompasses the different aspects of an organization's functioning. It includes punctuality in attending work, completing assigned tasks, adherence to dress codes, the display of company logos on attire, interactions between supervisors and subordinates, employee behavior towards customers, clarity and enforcement of rules and procedures, the management's attitude towards worker welfare, openness in communication, as well as further practices, defining the organization's daily operations (Schein 2004).

Kumar (2016) defines corporate culture as a combination of philosophy, ethics, values, trust and shared behaviors which are underpinning an organization. While Fondas and Denison (1991), one of the most famous and respected theorists dealing with organizational culture emphasize that corporate culture represents the foundational values and principles shaping management systems and behaviors and that both exemplify and reinforce those basic principles.

In order to understand corporate culture more easily and effectively, its key elements have to be analyzed.

2.2.4. Elements and Characteristics of Corporate Culture

Several scholars describe culture as being multi-layered. Among the most recognized models are Schein's model (1985) and Rousseau's model (1990) (Bunch 2007). Schein (2004) argues that culture can be analyzed at three different levels. Here the term "level" refers to the degree to which a cultural phenomenon is visible to the observer. The proposed levels include artifacts, values, and underlying assumptions and progress from visible to tacit or invisible. To understand culture, its complex patterns combined with its interrelated layers must be decoded (Štok et al. 2010). Schein's model, being one of the most cited frameworks in organizational culture studies, serves as a tool for abstraction and complexity reduction. The model suggests a hierarchy in which visible behaviors influence and are influenced by rules, standards, and prohibitions which are seen as unobservable assumptions (Dauber et al. 2012).

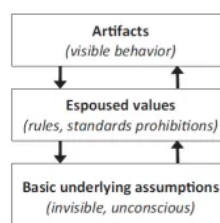


Figure 1: Organizational culture model by Schein (1985)

By introducing a fourth domain – symbols – and defining the processes linking each element of the organizational culture construct, Hatch (1993) extends Schein’s model. The extension allows for a better understanding of interdependencies within the model. Through the model, Hatch identifies two possible pathways for how observable behaviors emerge from underlying assumptions. Firstly, through “manifestation” into values and subsequent “realization” into artifacts. Secondly, through “interpretation” into symbols and subsequent “symbolization” into artifacts. Nevertheless, it remains unclear under which conditions these transformations occur. Similarly, the factors determining whether assumptions become “manifested” and “realized” or “interpreted” and “symbolized” remain unclear (Dauber et al. 2012).

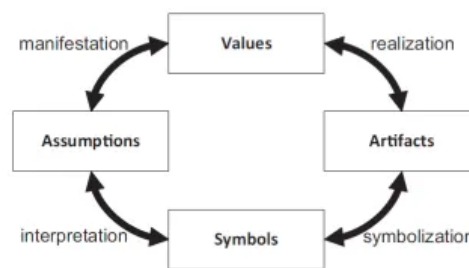


Figure 2: Organizational culture model by Hatch (1993) (retr. from: Dauber et al. 2012).

Rousseau (1990) takes the organizational culture model one step further by offering a five-layered model instead of a three- or four-layered model. Rousseau’s (1990) model is structured as concentric rings in which he emphasizes the distinction between visible outer layers, such as artifacts, and hidden inner layers, such as fundamental assumptions (Ghinea and Bratianu 2012). The first layer is artifacts, containing observable manifestations of culture. The following layer addresses patterns of behavior. Here, cultural norms are formed by established behaviors. Thirdly, behavioral norms incorporate implicit rules which lead to guiding actions. Furthermore, the fourth ring is values. Values display core principles shared within the organization and lastly fundamental assumptions which are seen as deeply ingrained beliefs forming the basis of cultural identity (Bunch 2007).

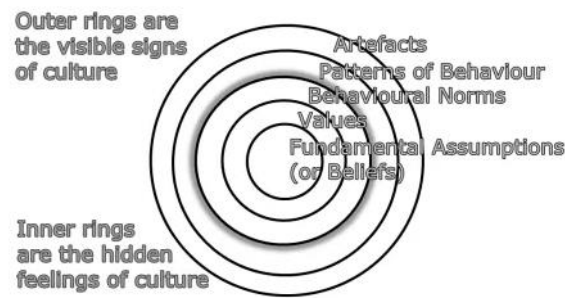


Figure 3: Rousseau's model of organizational culture (retr. from: Ghinea, Bratianu 2012).

Another perspective is provided by Herman's Iceberg Model (1970). It distinguishes between visible, formal aspects of an organization (e.g., systems, structures, policies) and hidden, informal aspects, such as attitudes, beliefs and values (Ghinea and Bratianu 2012).



Figure 4: Herman's Iceberg Model. (retr. from: Ghinea, Bratianu 2012).

According to Hodgetts and Luthans (2003), several important characteristics are associated with organizational culture. First, observed behavioral regularities, such as common language, rituals and terminology. Second, norms. These contain expectations regarding work quantity and intergroup cooperation. Third, dominant values, like shared commitments to quality, efficiency, or other goals. Philosophy yields the fourth characteristic. It covers beliefs about employee and customer treatment and is followed by Fifth, rules - concerning guidelines for productivity, customer relations, and internal cooperation. Lastly, Hodgetts and Luthans

mention organizational climate. Hereby, the overall atmosphere that is shaped by interactions among participants and their treatment by management plays a significant role.

By examining these cultural elements across a variety of organizations and scholars containing numerous definitions, different types of cultures can be identified.

2.2.5. Typologies of Organizational Culture

Deal and Kennedy (1982) identified four distinct types of organizational cultures. The first one is Tough-Guy: This culture is characterized by Individualism, risk-taking and quick feedback. Employees thriving in this environment often enjoy high-pressure situations. However, Individualism may also lead to high turnover, thus making it challenging to build a cohesive culture. The second type is called Work Hard – Play Hard: In this culture, teamwork and high energy are valued. Employees receive feedback immediately and only face minimal risks. This culture incentivizes a drive to collectively excel. Bet-Your-Company-Culture is the third kind: Decisions in this culture involve high stakes, meaning that outcomes often take years to materialize. The focus is on long-term planning, preparation, and risk mitigation, therefore emphasizing collective responsibility. The last one is called Process Culture and is characterized by low risk, paired with slow feedback. Precision and attention to detail are paramount in this culture. Employees prioritize technical excellence over immediate outcomes.

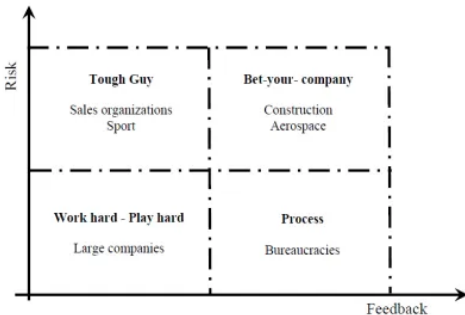


Figure 5: Organizational Culture Model by Deal and Kennedy (Deal and Kennedy 1982).

Cameron and Quinn (2011) further distinguish four dominant culture types. With Collaborative (Clan) Culture: A friendly, team-oriented environment is meant and held together by loyalty and tradition. Hereby the focus lies on employee development and creating a humane workplace. The second type Create (Adhocracy) *Culture*: Puts emphasis on adaptability, innovation and risk-taking. This culture thrives on producing cutting-edge products and embracing change. Thirdly, Control (Hierarchy) Culture: Yields a formal, structured environment with a strong focus on rules, processes and efficiency, as the name already suggests. Lastly, compete (Market) Culture: A rather result-driven culture in which competition, external positioning and productivity is prioritized.

The numerous elements of corporate culture mentioned before are playing an important role in representing different corporate typologies. However, while the two just mentioned typologies are worth mentioning, they are less frequently used, thus valued by scholars if compared to Hofstede's cultural dimension model.

2.2.6. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede's culture dimension framework was initially developed to analyze cultural differences at the national level, which offered a more systematic approach on understanding how societal values can influence workplace behaviors and organizational practices. The framework had been derived from a large-scale study conducted at IBM in over 50 countries, in which six culture dimensions were identified: Power Distance, showing the acceptance of hieratical inequality; Individualism vs. Collectivism, which is all about exploring personal autonomy compared to group cohesion; Masculinity vs. Femininity, contrasting competition and status as well as material success against collaboration and quality of life; Uncertainty Avoidance, measuring tolerance against ambiguity and risk-taking; Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation, which is future planning against tradition and immediate results and at last Indulgence vs.

Restraint, addressing gratification against self-control (Hofstede 2001; Hofstede et al. 2010; Hofstede and Bond 1988).



Figure 6: Hofstede's Culture Dimension (Vizmonte and Ligot 2024)

In comparison to the typologies of organizational culture mentioned before, which are more generic and theoretical, Hofstede's framework provides a more systematic and practical approach, making it more valuable in understanding and applying corporate culture in an organizational context.

Since the publication of the framework back in the 1980s, it has become one of the most widely used tools for analyzing corporate culture (Kirkman et al. 2006). Previous frameworks mentioned in the literature focus on defining corporate culture more on a conceptual level, while Hofstede's framework provides a more practical application with a direct link to real-world scenarios. If one looks at an example, the dimension Power Distance has been used in the past to identify leadership styles, indicating that high Power Distance often exhibits hierarchical decision making while low Power Distance fosters more of a participatory leadership (Harzing and Hofstede 1996). This shows that these dimensions allow organizations to design their culturally aligned strategies, which ensures compatibility with employees' expectations and overall company goals.

Despite the culture dimensions wide adoption, it has also faced some criticism in past years. Some scholars such as McSweeney (2002) have argued that it oversimplifies culture though equating it with uniform culture traits, neglecting the intra-culture diversity factor which can be very different in many countries. There has also been criticism when it comes to the representativeness of the data since it was only derived from IBM employees and its static nature, as the framework does not fully capture the evolution of cultural influences by technology and globalization (McSweeney 2009; Tung and Verbeke 2010). Nevertheless, there have also been many validations of the framework with all its dimensions, such as in the World Values Survey, underscoring the enduring relevance (Beugelsdijk et al. 2015).

Connecting the theoretical construct and practical application seen through this review, Hofstede's framework stands out as a valuable and pioneering tool in understanding corporate culture. It has a very systematic methodology and with its emphasis on culture dimension it allows researchers and practitioners to analyze culture, making it crucial for cross-cultural studies and corporate strategies.

2.2.7. Corporate Culture and Scalability

The preceding, detailed analysis of existing literature reveals culture to be an inherently complex phenomenon with a pervasive impact on organizations (Amah and Daminabo-Weje 2013). While its importance has become clear, how does corporate culture stand in relation to firm scalability?

During the 1980s and 1990s, the surge of interest in organizational culture coincided with efforts to understand why American firms were struggling to compete with their Japanese counterparts (Ojo 2010). According to Amah and Daminabo-Weje (2013), the success of an organization is significantly influenced by its culture. They argue that a strong corporate culture serves as an alternative control system, ensuring productivity, profitability, and adaptability in

dynamic environments i.e., business contexts. In this manner, key benefits of a strong organizational culture include employee motivation –to encourage innovation and creativity; Customer orientation – to enhance responsiveness and service quality; Global Competitiveness – which equips firms to navigate technological and environmental changes; Behavioral Guidance – teaching employee’s appropriate interactions with stakeholders and lastly; Organizational Cohesion – which fosters loyalty as well as high moral among employees (Kumar 2016).

A quantitative analysis by Kotter and Heskett (1990) demonstrates that firms with strong cultures outperform those with weak cultures. McShane and Glinow (2005) highlight three critical functions of corporate culture: 1. It acts as a form of social control, therefore influencing decisions and behavior. 2. It serves as social glue, thus attracting and retaining top talent and lastly, 3. It aids the sense-making process, meaning it enhances communication and cooperation. Shahzad et al. (2012) illustrate that performance-enhancing cultures significantly increased organizational income by 765% between 1977 and 1988, compared to just 1 % growth in organizations without such cultures.

To conclude, organizational culture plays a vital role in achieving higher levels of performance by fostering goal alignment and motivating individuals. Due to shared values, pride as well as a sense of belonging is created, which encourages employees to wholeheartedly commit their skills and potential to the organization (Kumar 2016). It can be said that a strong culture serves as an intrinsic motivator leading to superior performance, thus scalability. Therefore, key elements of a robust organizational culture include aspects like empowerment, decisiveness, a learning mindset, and teamwork. Once arrived at this level, culture becomes a true catalyst for gaining the capabilities to scale, thus a source of sustainable competitive advantage (McShane and Glinow 2005). While general management systems can be replicated, a company’s cultural

strengths that are deeply ingrained and tied to a company's core philosophy remain uniquely and therefore difficult to imitate.

The comprehensive analysis of culture across its various dimensions illustrates its pervasive influence on shaping behavior as well as expectations within organizations. Whereas national culture provides a broad context, corporate culture stands out as a distinct and essential construct which is tailored to the internal dynamics of a company. Shared principles, values and behaviors that guide decision-making and interactions within an organization are reflected, which makes it a critical factor in achieving strategic goals. Building on insights, corporate culture is defined in this paper as follows:

Organizational culture is a set of values, symbols, and rituals, shared by the members of a specific firm, which describes the way things are done in an organization in order to solve both internal management problems and those related to customers, suppliers and the environment (Claver et al. 2001).

Furthermore, due to the examination of existing literature, it becomes clear that corporate culture goes beyond simply influencing internal dynamics. Thereby playing a critical role in shaping a firm's ability to scale.

3. Methodology (Group Paper)

This section outlines the motivation for a semi-structured, cross-sectional interview and discusses the choice to employ a qualitative re-examining of existing literature to reveal characteristics of corporate culture for a business to obtain the ability to scale. Considering the investigative approach of this study, the qualitative approach provides flexibility in exploring, capturing, and elaborating the information provided by the respondent (Saunders et al. 2019). Furthermore, the data obtained is more comprehensive and in-depth, allowing a more precise answer to the questions than, for instance, with a quantitative approach. This is, as the chosen

method allows for the exploration of new perspectives that emerge during interviews. Due to this flexibility, qualitative approaches are particularly good at investigating underexplored topics and which is essential when conducting research in new fields of study (Hatch 2011). A quantitative approach may not be as well suited as it cannot answer the research question as detailed since it solely focuses on the relationship of multiple variables rather than the interviewee's beliefs, emotions, and experiences (Lakshman et al. 2005).

This study involves semi-structured interviews, a form of qualitative research especially suitable for investigating complex social phenomena such as corporate culture (Bryman and Bell 2018). Thanks to this approach, this allowed the authors to obtain contextual information and insights into the points of view and experiences of the interviewed managers. The sample consists of 37 individuals, mostly managers, founders, and executives from a variety of scaling businesses, as well as two individuals from academia.

Purposive sampling methods allowed the writers to receive sufficient relevant data from a smaller sample of interviewees. This approach is especially helpful in qualitative research to guarantee that participants have the experience and knowledge required to answer the research questions, selecting them not randomly but based on the prerequisites needed (Patton 2002). In order to participate in the interviews, individuals were required to have been directly involved in the scaling process and spent enough time within the firm to offer informed information on its growth and development.

The team of authors used a variety of networks to collect responders for the interviews. This included educational relationships like student associations (i.e., SCOPE Maastricht), personal networks, and business connections like LinkedIn. The sample's diversity and relevance were increased by using the previously mentioned variety of outreach methods and following criteria, which improved the validity and richness of our data (Saunders et al. 2019). The chosen

selection criterion made sure that all participants had the necessary organizational expertise to offer insightful criticism on the process of development. Respondents needed to have worked for their business long enough to be able to take part in key scaling efforts. To interview respondents on the cultural elements during scaling, we also only included businesses that had previously scaled their operations.

Given its reliability and integrated transcription functions, Microsoft Teams was used to conduct interviews and gather the needed data. Following ethical research norms, all interviews were recorded on audio with the participants' permission (Saunders et al. 2019). By combining both verbal consent and Microsoft Teams' automatic requests for transcribing authorization, dual consent was achieved. This strategy was essential since it can result in more candid and open responses since participants are assured that their opinions are respected and fairly portrayed (King & Brooks 2017). Furthermore, recording interviews with permission enables researchers to concentrate on the discussions rather than taking notes, which leads to the acquisition of richer data (Bryman and Bell 2018). All participants received assurances of confidentiality and anonymity in which the data was handled anonymized throughout the research process (Kang & Hwang 2023).

The interview protocol was designed to explore all the various aspects of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, with a particular focus on how these dimensions manifest in scaling organizations. Questions were crafted to probe decision-making processes, communication styles, and hierarchical structures, providing valuable insights into how Hofstede's cultural dimensions are characterized in the respective company.

The first part includes questions on “The role of the interviewee and the industry of the company” as well as “To what extent has your company grown/scaled in the past? Change of location, higher turnover, etc. When did the scaling take place?”. These questions are intended

to receive insights into the validity of the person being interviewed, as well as guaranteeing a fit for the paper's research question.

In the second phase, the interviewee's opinion and experience regarding the different dimensions are investigated. The questions (Appendix 1) indirectly address every dimension individually in order to be as precise as possible to minimize error or bias with the responses. This is important data, as the thesis will draw a comparison of the data gathered, as well as the given literature.

The qualitative findings from the interview are organized in a table (Appendix 2) by distinguishing the statements according to their respective dimensions. This table is used to identify similarities and differences as well as proposed connections and conclusions based on the data patterns found.

Consequently, the thematic approach offers the chance to methodically and effectively examine qualitative data. It is defined as a "method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke 2008). For the thematic approach, first, the transcripts and data were examined. Further, the cultural tendencies of each organization were categorized according to Hofstede's dimensions, forming the basis for the subsequent analysis. In this analysis, each individual paper delves deeper into the interviews, examining the transcripts in detail to gain a more precise understanding of the cultural inclinations.

Because of the semi-structured format's flexibility, the authors were able to examine distinct organizational contexts while keeping interview formats consistent (Galletta 2013). 2018).

To better understand the multifaceted cultural phenomena that exist within businesses, the qualitative approach was selected. Qualitative approaches are well-suited for investigating the "how" and "why" questions in organizational research, according to Hammersley (2010).

4. Characteristics of Corporate Culture Manifested in Organizations that Exhibit Scalability (Individual Papers)

The following chapters will examine the fifth dimension and how its characteristics are manifested in organizations during scaling. The author will analyze the existing literature as well as the findings from the conducted interviews. Finally, the author will provide several propositions based on findings derived from the conducted interviews.

4.1. Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation (Christopher Garrn)

4.1.1. Introduction

Scalability can be defined as "an ordinary organizational capability developed by managing and achieving coherence among a firm's technological architecture, organizational architecture, and business model." (Coviello 2024, p. With any organization continuing to scale up, scalability becomes an important factor in considering how organizations can continue to maintain efficiency and innovation while adapting to market requirements without sacrificing their long-term goals. While scaling often depends on operational competencies and market conditions, the underlying corporate culture within an organization is at the very foundation of how organizations pursue growth and address their challenges. In a study from Claver et al (2001), corporate culture is defined as "a set of values, symbols and rituals, shared by the members of a specific firm, which describes the way things are done in an organization in order to solve both internal management problems and those related to customers, suppliers and environment".

Within corporate culture, there is one dimension that has been fairly researched: Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation. This was introduced in Hofstede's later work after collaboration with Michael Bond through the Chinese Value Survey (Hofstede and Bond 1988). This orientation essentially deals with how societies weigh future rewards against immediate gains. Long-term Orientation is common in East Asia; for example, China and Japan stress perseverance over

quick returns, thrift over material success, and long-term planning over short-term gains. Conversely, a Short-term Orientation, common in Western countries like the United States emphasizes tradition, quick gratification, and achieving fast results (Hofstede et al. 2010).

Although Hofstede's original work focused essentially on national cultures, his cultural dimensions have been adopted in an organizational context to explain better how internal aspects of culture influence a corporations' strategic alignment (Kirkman et al. 2006). In business terms, companies with Long-term Orientations typically make investments for sustainable growth, Rand D and long-term capital investments, while often trying to innovate and adapt to sustain their competitiveness over time. Such companies acknowledge that sustained success necessitates ongoing adaptation and strategic vision (Meyer and Peng 2015).

Conversely, companies that prioritize short-term objectives are inclined to emphasize immediate financial benefits, which may facilitate strong growth in the near term; however, this approach can result in challenges related to scalability in the future, attributed to a lack of comprehensive long-term planning. The focus on fast returns could make them very vulnerable to fluctuations in the market, thereby complicating their ability to respond effectively to enduring challenges (Lavery 1996).

While existing literature primarily connects Hofstede's dimensions to national and corporate-level issues, it notably overlooks how the characteristics of the Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation dimension manifest in companies with scaling capabilities. The present research tries to fill this gap by exploring how a business time orientation-a Long-term or Short-term one- should be characterized in order to have the capabilities to scale. Thus, the key research question would be: *How are the characteristics of **Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation** manifested in organizations that exhibit scalability?*

We will explore how time orientation within companies affects their growth trajectory, aiming to provide insights into how it shapes a company's ability to thrive in an increasingly complex global market.

4.1.2. Literature Review

Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation on National Level

Geert Hofstede's framework of Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation was based on his landmark study concerning cultural dimensions that aimed at explaining how different cultures emphasize certain time-related behaviors. The work initially conducted among IBM employees across more than 50 countries eventually yielded six cultural dimensions; one of these includes Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation (Hofstede 2001). This dimension differentiates cultures that emphasize future rewards and long-term approaches from those that stress tradition, social obligations, and short-term results (Hofstede and Bond 1988).

Hofstede's analysis on Long-term Orientation at the national level offers deep insights into how cultural values impact large national policy settings and governance structures. Countries with a Long-term Orientation, such as those in East Asia, are more concerned with future planning, savings, and strategic investments that essentially drive their economic growth and development; Venaik et al. 2013 confirm this assertion. As such, these countries would set policies that help them achieve innovative edge, infrastructural development, and long-term national prosperity. For instance, the goal of China towards sustained industrial development has been one of the main reasons for its unprecedented economic growth over the last few decades (Peterson et al. 2002; Ronald and Baker 2000).

In contrast, there are Short-term-Oriented countries, like the United States and the United Kingdom, which rely on short-term financial returns and short-term policies that help in enhancing short-run economic growth. Studies have indicated that these countries have often

relied on quarterly profits, consumer spending, and social hierarchies as the major precedents of time (Hofstede 2001; Lukács et al. 2020). The outcome has been a lesser investment in infrastructure, education, and Rand D of which all are strong building blocks of long-term economic stability (Ronald and Baker 2000).

A number of studies in national-level Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation indicate considerable variations in savings rates, investment behavior, and economic policies. Long-term-oriented societies tend to save more and invest in long-term growth strategies whereas Short-term-Oriented societies would be more likely to spend and consume for the sake of immediacy and short-term economic gains (Venaik et al. 2013).

Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation in Corporate Context

Long-term and Short-term Orientation significantly impact organizational behavior in how they pursue strategic planning, innovation, and decision-making activities. Since such investments provide sustainable competitive advantages, firms that pursue Long-term Orientation will invest in research and development, employee training, and sustainable business practices (Meyer and Peng 2015). One example of a long-term strategy is the approach of Kaizen implemented at Toyota which lays a great emphasis on continuous improvement in the long-term thus helping retain its position among the world leaders (Liker 2004). The focus on Long-term Orientation, therefore, is not only beneficial for large companies like Toyota but also contributes a great deal to the success of SMEs. Wiklund and Shepherd (2003) explain in their study that SMEs with Long-term Orientation are most likely to engage in proactive strategic planning and, thus, raise their chance of scalability with long-term success, proof of the applicability of Long-term Orientation across organization size.

In contrast, Short-term-Oriented organizations put the main emphasis on immediate gains and may concentrate their efforts on quarterly income and short-term benefits, often at the expense

of long-term growth. Lavery, in 1996, observed that short-term-driven firms underinvest in areas crucial for long-term success, such as innovation and people development, thus constraining scalability and long-term competitiveness.

Lavery's opinions are in agreement with the results of modern studies that prove companies focused on short-run outcomes can, indeed, grow fast but mostly fail to sustain it due to inadequate investment in crucial business spheres. A lack of such long-term capital investment prevents these firms from their further effective expansion in competitive markets. Taras et al. (2012) further stress that business entities with a Short-term Orientation also tend to face difficulties in sustaining innovation processes, since the focus on quick returns impedes investment in long-term research and technological advancement.

However, the difference between Long-term and Short-term Orientations manifests the most in the way in which firms approach innovation. Those firms that have a Long-term Orientation tend to foster innovative environments, mostly due to continuous investments in research and development and gradual improvements (Venaik et.al. 2013). Flammer and Bansal (2015) further support this by showing that firms with long-term managerial behavior consistently perform better financially over the medium term. Their research highlights that sustained investments in innovation and R&D, typical of Long-term Orientation, lead to more stable financial outcomes. This provides strong evidence that Long-term Orientation helps companies not only to innovate but also to maintain financial stability.

Research Gap

Although there has been extensive research conducted on Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation at both national and corporate levels, there is still a significant gap in the literature on how characteristics of Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation are rooted in an organization's ability to scale. The existing studies so far have researched cultural and strategic implications of Long-

term vs. Short-term Orientation broadly, giving only little attention to scalability in the business context.

The gaps are interesting, as scalability entails sustained success within competitive markets, forcing companies to adapt and grow themselves without compromising the foundational elements. Groysberg et al. (2018) highlighted, that scaling an organizational comes along with undergoing substantial changes in operations, structure, and strategy, with corporate culture being a critical and unexplored factor. However, these processes often disrupt established norms and values, in which it becomes challenging to balance cultural stability and the pressure of scaling (Schein 2010; Cameron and Quinn 2011).

These challenges underscore that it is necessary to investigate the defining characteristics of corporate culture – more specifically how the dimension Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation manifests in companies with scalability capabilities.

4.1.3. Analysis

Introduction to the Analysis

This analysis will examine the role of Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation in shaping organizational culture during the process of scaling. The aim will be to uncover how specific characteristics of this dimension contribute to the ability to navigate the challenges faced with scalability. In order to perform this, the analysis is divided into three focused sections.

First, the overall summary of the interview results gives a general understanding of the sample and basic trends across the data. Afterwards, these findings are analyzed against the research question for relevance to our understanding of how time orientation is characterized within the capability of scalability. It then discusses the findings in the light of the existing literature, showing the consistencies or divergences that reinforce the study's significance.

Overall Statement of the Analysis and Results

The sample size for the interviews was 37 with founders, CEOs, senior managers, and experts in industries such as technology, finance, and manufacturing. These interviewees shared their experience in scaling processes from steady, organic growth to rapid expansion. The sample comprises both genders and is focused on German-based companies with the language of the interviews being German. Most interviewees were approached through professional networks or platforms like LinkedIn, creating an informal and personal atmosphere for discussions.

Among these, the responses revealed an almost equal distribution between Long-term and Short-term Orientation, having a comparable number of companies favoring each approach. This balanced distribution provides a unique opportunity to examine how each approach links to scalability in different contexts. Rather than favoring one clear orientation, the findings suggest that both orientations may play specific roles in scaling, depending on company circumstances and strategic needs.

In-depth Analysis of Time Orientation and Scalability

The companies interviewed show distinct orientations in their approach to growth. Some focus on long-term strategies that prioritize sustainability and stability, while others adopt short-term objectives aimed at quick adaptation and immediate returns. This difference in orientation often reflects each organization's strategic priorities, independent of industry or size.

Long-term Oriented Companies

Throughout the interviews, long-term-oriented businesses frequently mentioned laying a solid basis for long-term success. This strategy entails forming strategic alliances, making educated decisions, and emphasizing steady and informed expansion. For example, a software technology business exhibited a strong commitment to long-term growth by focusing on partnerships that were consistent with its strategy. "Our focus has been on partnerships that

support our long-term goals, ensuring that growth is sustainable rather than immediate," a company executive said. This method demonstrates how the corporation prioritizes connections that promote stability over quick rewards.

Similarly, a renewable energy business emphasized the significance of linking new initiatives with long-term sustainability objectives. "We've been focusing on building a foundation first (...) quick wins don't align with our long-term vision," the chief executive officer commented. This approach represents the company's commitment to create long-term value and impact, with a focus on durability and expansion over fast market entrance. It shows how long-term-oriented businesses incorporate stability into their strategies by emphasizing basic connections and aligning with key ideals. They tend to avoid rushing into new ventures, instead focusing on creating structures that will endure.

Another company in the aerospace sector mentioned this perspective by emphasizing the significance of investing in a robust staff and technological infrastructure to allow incremental development. One of the senior business development managers stated, "We prioritized stability in our team and tech stack over aggressive growth to ensure future readiness." This enables them to expand at a sustainable rate, with an eye on long-term profitability.

Similarly, an educational nonprofit prioritized steady expansion by utilizing grant funds to build basic infrastructure. According to a co-founder, grant money enabled the company to establish a solid foundation first and avoid rapid growth without a clear structure and vision. This resource-conscious strategy demonstrates a commitment to a steady, mission-driven growth model that prioritizes long-term goals over quick and unstructured expansion.

At last, in the consulting sector, one company emphasized the necessity of developing client relationships that reflects their basic principles. The CEO said, "We want clients who understand our vision and value our approach; it's about long-term collaboration rather than just

filling orders." This emphasis on identifying clients that share their beliefs demonstrates their commitment to consistent, sustainable growth through partnerships that reinforce the company's vision.

In summary, long-term companies seem to be driven by stability and a focus on lasting relationships, often taking gradual steps to build resilient foundations. Their emphasis on alignment with core values and strategic partnerships sets them up for success, where growth is achieved steadily and sustainably.

Short-Term Oriented Companies

On the other hand, Short-term-Oriented companies prioritize flexibility, rapid responses, and immediate returns, often making decisions based on current market demands and resource availability. One example of this orientation is seen in a real estate management firm that scales incrementally based on monthly cash flow. "We add properties as resources allow (...) growth depends on monthly revenue," the founder explained, indicating a reliance on immediate income to drive expansion rather than a structured, long-term plan.

Similarly, a hospitality company reacted fast to meet an increase in demand. According to the founder, "When demand grew, we had to scale fast to keep up.". This agility helps the corporation to respond to short-term market needs successfully, but it lacks the long-term stability and planning that some other organizations have.

These examples reveal how Short-term-Oriented companies focus on capturing immediate opportunities and adapting quickly to market changes. Their approach is pragmatic and responsive, allowing them to capitalize on current conditions, even if this may limit their long-term strategic planning.

Another short-term example comes from a recruitment company that emphasized the need for rapid decision-making to stay competitive. "Decisions are made quickly to meet client

demand,” shared a team lead. This agile approach demonstrates how responsiveness and speed are essential to their success, with a focus on short-term client needs rather than structured, long-term growth.

Similarly, a sportswear company adjusts production based on immediate demand, choosing not to engage in extensive planning. The founder remarked, “We produce as demand dictates (...) there’s no need to over-plan.” This flexibility enables the company to adapt quickly to shifting market demands, allowing them to capitalize on immediate sales opportunities without a heavy focus on future planning.

Lastly, a mobility company that initially expanded rapidly into new markets shifted to prioritize profitability in its core market due to recent economic conditions. A manager stated, “We grew fast, but now we’re focusing on profit here at home.”. This pivot reflects their short-term focus on immediate profitability, a flexible response to external economic pressures that underscores a readiness to adjust strategies based on present conditions.

This analysis highlights two distinct growth orientations: long-term-focused companies prioritize stability and strategic partnerships, while short-term-focused companies emphasize flexibility and rapid response to capture immediate opportunities. The choice between these orientations often depends on a company’s business model and industry dynamics. Companies in fast-moving markets may benefit from a short-term approach, while those with complex, high-investment products may lean toward long-term strategies. However, it can be noticed that companies’ time orientation naturally evolves as shifting market dynamics and strategic goals require them to adjust their approach over time.

4.1.4. Proposition Development

The results show that there is no uniform direction of the organizations to being solely Long-term or Short-term in their strategic orientation; rather, it changes with the elements of business

models, industry fluctuations, and existing market conditions. Even if an organization has a lean towards one particular orientation, it is not absolute but changes with the contextual factors and is not a pre-set decision.

However, regardless of the orientation, the findings indicate that each company establishes some form of time-based strategy (either Short-term or Long-term) suited to its unique operational needs and external pressures. This suggests that orientation is not an inherent characteristic but rather a flexible approach that evolves with changing business and market dynamics. Based on these insights, the following propositions is presented:

***Proposition 1:** Scalable organizations balance Long-term and Short-term Orientations, adapting to external pressures and growth phases, highlighting that scalability relies on cultural adaptability rather than a fixed time focus.*

***Proposition 2:** Scalability in organizations requires an alignment of time orientation with industry-specific demands, where Long-term Orientation supports stability in high-investment sectors, and Short-term Orientation facilitates agility in fast-paced industries.*

5. Discussion (Group Paper)

5.1. Introduction

In the way organizations navigate growth and adapt to challenges, corporate culture plays a very important role. As heard throughout the thesis, when companies enter the scaling stage – which is marked by strong growth and increased complexity – the dynamics of corporate culture are heavily influenced. The scaling process mentioned before often requires companies to adapt their leadership style, decision-making process, and internal structures in order to manage the expansion effectively. To understand these traits, Hofstede’s framework of cultural dimension provides a foundational tool. However, the traditional application as has been seen in the analysis does not fully account for the external pressures and transformations arising during the scaling process.

The introduction to the thesis highlighted that modern workplace dynamics such as globalization, the rise of remote work during COVID-19 and greater emphasis on work-life balance have added multiple layers to corporate culture. As a result it therefore might add more complexity in the adaptation of culture during the scaling process. Thus, it is necessary to contextualize the dimensions of corporate culture and its characteristics within the conditions of scalability, showing a better understanding between the interplay of scaling and culture adaptation.

This thesis seeks to address this by exploring the research question: **"How are the characteristics of corporate culture manifested in organizations that exhibit scalability?"**

The discussion tries to identify how Hofstede’s dimensions manifest themselves in companies that exhibit the capability of scaling.

The discussion section is structured into four distinct parts. The first part is about showcasing, what findings support the existing literature and align with established theories. The second part

is about mentioning findings that challenged the existing literature, identifying potential future research gaps. Following, the third part provides findings that extend beyond the existing literature, proposing new perspectives on the characteristics of corporate culture during the scaling stage. At last, in part four managerial implications are provided, offering actionable insights for leveraging these findings in practice.

5.2. Supporting the Existing Literature

The findings from the previous analysis validate many principles of Hofstede's cultural dimension in such a way that they demonstrate a strong relevance in understanding the interplay between corporate culture and scalability. Across many industries and organizations, the dimensions Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Long-Term vs Short-Term Orientation, and Indulgence vs. Restraint showed that they can shape organizational strategies and ultimately growth, aligning with theoretical frameworks and prior studies.

Through many interviews, the dimension of Power Distance has shown its critical factor in adaptability and decision-making. In low Power Distance organizations, the interviewees expressed how innovation and problem-solving can be encouraged through open communication and flat hierarchies. This observation aligns with Chen et al. (2021) and Botero et al. 2009 arguing that a reduced hierarchy can foster creativity and employee engagement. On the other hand, if the organization has an increased PD structure, the interviews emphasized that this top-down approach increases efficiency, particularly in very time-sensitive growth situations. In these settings, leaders tend to act as role models, influencing employee's alignment and fostering innovation, as can be seen in research by Wu et al. (2021).

The dimension Uncertainty Avoidance revealed some contrasting approaches as well. Companies with a rather low Uncertainty Avoidance emphasized a "fail fast" mentality in which

they highlighted flexibility and experimentation during scaling. These behaviors are reflected in the research from Chen et al. (2017) and Escandon-Barbosa et al. (2021), who have linked Uncertainty Avoidance with innovation. In contrast, it was found that high Uncertainty Avoidance can be found in industries such as aerospace or energy with a more conservative approach prioritizing risk mitigation and stability, avoiding risky strategies. This approach might bring forward a more stable environment, however, could potentially hinder innovation as have mentioned in existing literature.

The analysis provides evidence that organizations frequently blend individualistic and collectivistic practices that mostly align with prior literature highlighting the importance of a more balanced approach to achieve better performance outcomes (Triandis 1995; Sivadas et al. 2007). Most of the time, firms both recognize individual and team achievements, offering team-based bonuses as well as individual performance awards such as “Employee of the Month”. This aligns with the prior findings that combining individual and collective traits enhances organizational cohesion and productivity. Further, some organizations have implemented 360 – degree feedback while others rely more on informal, team-oriented evaluations. This aligns well with the literature emphasis on tailoring different practices based on specific roles, industries, or organizational context (Schwarz 1990).

The leadership styles which have been observed during the interviews reflect both characteristics of Femininity and Masculinity. Those leaders, blending masculine traits such as assertiveness and goal orientation with feminine traits such as empathy and collaboration were seen most effective during scaling. These orientations align with Gartzia and van Engen’s (2012) findings, showcasing the importance of balancing both leadership approaches. It became particularly evident in the interviews, that leaders drive towards a more feminization of management approach, increasingly prioritizing inclusivity and employee well-being alongside performance as supported by Eagly et al. (2012) and the Boston Consulting Group (2021).

Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation showed many alignments with the existing literature. Long-term oriented firms such as aerospace and energy companies emphasized sustained investment in R & D, strategic partnerships, as well foundational infrastructure. These organizational strategies align well with Meyer and Peng's (2015) findings in which long-term planning supports resilience and scalability. Short-term-Oriented firms, such as those in real estate or the hospitality sector, demonstrated strong agility by responding rapidly to changing market demands. This flexibility characteristic reflects Laverty's (1996) view that short-termism can drive quick adaptability and capitalize on immediate opportunities.

At last, in the interview the questions around Indulgence vs. Restraint highlighted how indulgent cultures enhance employee satisfaction as well as innovation, supported by the findings of Gu et al. (2022), who notes that indulgent environments foster job satisfaction through personal fulfillment and engagement. The companies in the interviews reported that they include team-building events and flexible working hours, boosting morale and engagement during the scaling stage. Indulgent cultures were linked to increased risk-taking and innovation as Alipour and Yaprak (2022) argue that fewer restrictive rules in indulgent environments encourage experimentations, adaptability, flexibility as well as spontaneity.

5.3. Challenge the Existing Literature

The analysis showcased several cases in which the findings diverged from the existing literature, challenging the universality of Hofstede's framework of corporate culture dimensions.

High Power Distance environments are often associated with limited communication and strong hierarchal decision-making (Chen et al. 2021) however, the interviews revealed a more nuanced reality. Many of the high Power Distance companies interviewed, adopted a structured communication system that ensures information would flow effectively, which counters the

argument that high Power Distance limits dialogue. Yet, voluntary communication has been less frequent in these settings, emphasizing the need for systems to encourage collaboration. At last, most interviewees were in favor of a mixed approach between hierarchical leadership and elements of egalitarianism. Ultimately this challenges the view that either High or Low Power Distance is more effective.

On the dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance, the interviews highlight hybrid forms as well which were not addressed well in the existing literature. Several companies have developed risk-minimizing strategies such as small-scale testing of initiatives, thereby mixing the flexibility of low Uncertainty Avoidance with the caution of high uncertainty avoidance. Further, the interviews showed that external market dynamics can shift a company's culture orientation, in which organizations become either more risk-averse or risk-tolerant depending on their new strategic goals. These findings challenge the static nature of Hofstede's framework, as we have seen that Uncertainty Avoidance can be dynamic and context dependent, as the industry market can change as well as consumer behavior and expectations.

The findings from the interview challenge the static nature of Hofstede's framework of Individualism vs. Collectivism highlighting that organizations frequently adopt more of a hybrid approach. The framework of Hofstede's culture dimension assumes a clear orientation towards one or the other, however the interviews reveal that companies blend those orientations on context. Feedback processes in many firms include structured 360-degree reviews, aligning with Collectivism, however peer feedback often resists since it portrays discomfort with employees—an individualistic tendency that contradicts the collectivist ideal of open collaboration. Additionally, the reliance on industry-specific factors, such as job roles or company size, to determine the balance between individual and team recognition challenges the notion that this dimension operates uniformly across organizations. These findings underscore the inadequacy of viewing Individualism and Collectivism as fixed traits, suggesting that

scalability demands more dynamic and situationally adaptive cultural practices than Hofstede's framework accounts for.

The dimension Masculinity vs. Femininity challenges established assumptions from existing literature. For example, Jie et al. (2020) makes the assertion that masculine cultures enhance employee performance, yet this can be countered by evidence of dissatisfaction and burnout from over masculine environments. Furthermore, Gherardi and Barbara's (2001) claim, that women often feel the need to distance themselves from their feminine identity in the workplace is described as outdated by interviewees. Instead, organizations increasingly encourage the integration of feminine traits into leadership, reflecting broader societal changes toward inclusivity.

The binary distinction between the Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation and was often challenged by the interviewees. The findings challenge the static nature of Hofstede's framework, revealing that cultural orientations are more dynamic than previously acknowledged. Interviews demonstrated that firms often adjust their strategies between short-term and long-term priorities depending on external pressures and their stage of growth. For instance, one mobility firm transitioned from an aggressive short-term expansion strategy to a focus on long-term profitability within its core market. This adaptability highlights the evolving nature of corporate culture during scalability, which Hofstede's binary framework does not fully address. These results suggest that time orientation is not fixed but contextually fluid, requiring a more flexible interpretation in modern organizational settings.

At last, the dimension Indulgence vs. Restraint challenges an established assumption to a certain degree. While Indulgence was often associated with positive outcomes such as employee satisfaction and innovation (Gu et al. 2022), the interviewees revealed that some organizations experience conflicts in maintaining professional boundaries from overly flexible structures.

These findings suggest that excessive Indulgence environments might hinder effectiveness, especially during strong periods of growth where boundaries are critical.

5.4. Extends the Existing Literature

The insights from the interviews not only support or challenge the literature but also areas where the literature can be extended in order to address the evolving dynamics between corporate culture and scalability.

Looking at the dimension of Power Distance, the existing literature predominately focuses on the binary distinction between Low and High-Power Distance, however the analysis reveals a more nuanced perspective. The interviewees consistently expressed the value in combining both, hierarchical efficiency and a more equal and inclusive communication structure. Companies emphasized that a hybrid approach can leverage the strength of both ends of the spectrum to address the complexities of scaling. For example, within an organization, the employees might be involved in the idea creation and selection, but the final decision still needs to be made from up top.

The findings from the dimension Uncertainty Avoidance extend the literature through demonstrating unconventional practices such as "Creative Fridays" and agile decision-making, which encourage low Uncertainty Avoidance cultures and foster innovation. The approaches can provide practical examples of how a company can deal with uncertainty and foster adaptability—a subject that has thus far not been widely explored. Correlation between leadership and an organization's willingness to embrace uncertainty was expressed in the interviews. This often makes the leaders a key driver in shaping risk-taking behaviors and in fostering an environment open to experimentation, offering new perspectives in dealing with uncertainty.

The information in the analysis for Individualism vs. Collectivism more expand rather extend the existing literature as it gives practical insights into how hybrid approaches of Individualism and Collectivism are implemented during scaling. Studies from Schwarz (1990) and Triandis (1995) express moving beyond the static framework while the interviews reveal specific applications for this balance. For example, some companies blend individual recognition in the form of promotional systems and employee of the month awards with team practices such as DNA awards, group bonuses, which aligns culture orientation with their respective operational strategies.

The results from the analysis extend existing literature by showcasing the flexible nature of time orientation in which companies adapt their priorities between Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation, a result of changing market demands. For example, with the mobility company, even though it was expanding with a long-term plan into new markets, it quickly needed to pivot back and shift priorities to focus on the core market due to changing market dynamics. Leadership emerges as another extension and critical factor in influencing time orientation as Leaders in long-term-oriented firms emphasize vision and stability, ensuring alignment with strategic goals, while leaders in Short-term-Oriented firms focus on immediate opportunities to drive growth. This connection between leadership and time orientation extends existing research by linking scalability to leaders' ability to balance competing priorities.

The last dimension which extends on existing literature is Indulgence vs. Restraint as the interviews provide evidence that both poles interact more fluidly than suggested by Hofstede's model. For example, the practices in indulgent organizations such as flexible work arrangements and team-building activities can boost employee morale and innovation. However, if an indulgent environment becomes too excessive, it could occasionally create challenges in maintaining professional boundaries during rapid growth. The findings suggest that Indulgence cannot be universally beneficial and that its impact can depend on the

organizational context in which future studies should be inclined to examine how both poles can coexist.

5.5. Managerial Implications

The observations from the analysis underline the importance of a strong and adaptive corporate culture during the scaling stage, where managers must understand and navigate the balance between the characteristics of the cultural dimensions. This requires some clear strategies that align well with the company's industry, market dynamic and growth phase.

In order for companies to achieve the capability of scaling, companies need clear communication, especially in the dimension of Power Distance. Managers should not only inform employees of decisions, but also ensure they understand the rationality behind it. This blends the decisiveness of High-Power Distance with the inclusiveness of Low Power Distance. Further, leaders should be actively advised on their model behavior, as interviewees revealed that in High Power Distance environments employees often emulate their leader's action, in which it makes leadership integrity crucial for fostering innovation and reaching leadership goals.

If looking at less regulated companies from the conducted interviews, low Uncertainty Avoidance practices such as agile decision-making as well as fostering a "fail fast" mentality can foster adaptability and innovation. For example, there are flexible initiatives such as "Creative Fridays" that can institutionalize risk-tolerant behaviors. However, this does not adhere to strictly regulated industries such as finance, energy or aviation. Here, High Uncertainty Avoidance emphasizing risk avoidance and compliance might deem more effective. Managers should be aware and recognize, that Uncertainty Avoidance strategies need to evolve with the maturity of the company, as companies must shift from experimental approaches during growth towards more structured practices for sustained operations.

It is important for leadership to understand the pivotal role in managing time orientation. Here, managers must balance the short-term vs. long-term priorities and goals, in which they recognize that time orientation is not static but rather shifts based on external pressures and market dynamics.

Balancing individualistic vs. collectivistic practices emerged also as a key insight from this paper. Managers need to tailor their approach based on industry, company size, and employee preference. If one looks at an example, team-based rewards such as DNA awards can foster collaboration, while individual recognition programs, such as performance-based programs, can boost motivation. Ideally, managers should incorporate elements of both characteristics into the business.

Additionally, the findings from this paper underline the necessity of leaders to integrate both traditional masculine and feminine traits. While it is clear that assertiveness and goal orientation might drive performance, empathy and people-focused strategies are becoming increasingly vital for sustaining top talent and satisfied employees. Leaders must understand the shift away from purely number-driven approaches and develop strategies that reflect shifting workplace dynamics such as growing trend work-life balance and inclusive practices.

At last, the dimension Indulgence and Restraint plays a critical role while exhibiting scalability. Managers need to foster a corporate culture more in the direction of Indulgence which can enhance job satisfaction and creativity, allowing employees to create ideas without strict boundaries. For example, encouraging team-building activities and flexible work arrangements can potentially boost employee's morale while maintaining productivity. However, a level of balance between Indulgence and Restraint is necessary in order to ensure accountability and alignment with the organization's objectives.

Incorporating these implications, managers could create an adaptable and resilient culture that can support sustained growth and the complexities of scalability. These nuanced strategies provide actionable insights that align internal practices with external demands, which could potentially lead to long-term success in some very dynamic markets.

6. Limitations and Future Research (Group Paper)

This study faces several limitations related to its methodological approach and the application of Hofstede's cultural framework. Yet, the findings and outlined limitations similarly highlight various themes for future research. These either extend or intensify the gained understanding of how cultural dimensions are manifested in scalability. The following section integrates these aspects by directly linking the study's confines with recommendations for forthcoming studies, focusing on constraints of a qualitative research approach, dimension-specific insights, and emerging workplace trends.

6.1. Qualitative Research

Methodological limitations are related to this study's selection of qualitative research, human subjectivity, the chosen research design and potential biases. First, qualitative research lacks the capacity for statistical validation, reducing the applicability of findings to larger populations (Atieno 2009) and making the results of this study not objectively verifiable. Relying only on primary data from the interviews conducted may neglect valuable comprehension from further assessments. Additionally, each participant may have perceived this study's semi-structured interview questions slightly differently, resulting in a variability of answers. To enhance the robustness of findings, future studies can thus integrate a multi-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques. This is because conducting surveys alongside interviews would provide a detailed analysis and could allow for profounder understanding of one's observed culture. As subjectivity is an equally common restriction of interview-based research, it suggests that important issues could have been overlooked in both this paper's data

collection and analysis. Here, as this study is heavily reliant on the interpretations of the researchers, it may be influenced by personal experiences and cognitive biases as also discussed by Choy (2014). The above-mentioned suggestion for further examination will also allow for amplified objective validation while retaining the contextual information gained from qualitative data, such as in this study.

6.2. Research Design

Addressing the selected research design and the importance of the human factor in qualitative studies, this paper's emphasis on a mostly non-geographically distributed sample with an emphasis on German firms introduces a cultural bias, potentially skewing the results towards German business norms and ethical practices. This limits the applicability of findings to non-German, European or global contexts, particularly in companies with very diverse cultural environments. Future research should expand sample diversity beyond mainly German companies to comprehend the impact of a wider range of cultural backgrounds in the study.

Further, the emphasis on interviewing management-level employees to understand the roots of each corporate culture might have led to an incomplete understanding of the broader corporate culture, as perspectives from other employees and staff, who interact with organizational culture very differently, are not necessarily included (Connell et al. 2001). Therefore, perspectives from employees at various organizational levels should be addressed in impending research to identify how potential sub-cultures are manifested within analyzed companies. Additionally, narrowing on one specific corporate setting is an important implication for future research, as the context-dependent corporate focus of this study restricts the strength of its general conclusions and limits the expandability of findings. Specifically, the varying sizes, characteristics and industries of interviewees are of high relevance. Consequently, as established by the authors in this study, there is a need in future studies to isolate these variables to get a better understanding of each individual characteristic.

Besides, this study is based on one-time snapshots of each corporate culture and consequently presents a lack of longitudinal qualitative data, possibly missing out on valuable lessons about cultural changes of firms holding scalability over time. Consequently, a time-series approach can represent a crucial development for future research. By tracking cultural changes and associated decisions over time, one can gain additional insights into the evolution of these organizations, as well as their distinctive reasoning. Here, corporate reactions to societal distresses such as the COVID-19 pandemic also present a relevant topic for further analysis.

Supplementary, interview questions focusing on indirect techniques could have been phrased differently to get improved responses from participants. This became noticeable after analysis regarding the Individualism-Collectivism dimension, which could have benefitted from such change. Here, interviewees often focused on the feedback processes rather than collective workflows. Interviews were also conducted in both personal and online settings. This could have influenced the participants' willingness to disclose information in different settings, while online interviews also experienced minor technical challenges, potentially affecting respondents' attitudes. By conducting all interviews in a consistent environment, researchers can better control factors such as comfort level issues that may influence responses. Lastly, this study may be subject to a social desirability bias in respondent's minds, as they might have presented their organization's culture more positively compared to the truth to align with the perceived expectations of the researchers, yet also to indirectly support their own decisions. This presents a significant challenge for future research too.

6.3. Hofstede Framework

This study also faces limitations with regards to the applied Hofstede framework of culture. The selection of the framework, while appropriate and justified throughout the paper, disregards other prominent cultural frameworks, such as the competing values framework by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1981), which may ultimately provide valuable findings in future studies. Scholars

can also apply scalability to adaptations of Hofstede's model itself, which would present valid extensions to this study. Specifically, the two-dimensionality of Hofstede's framework presented challenges for some dimensions, as it limits its ability to account for distinct cultural aspects and in-between approaches that combine elements of both poles of each unique dimension. Besides, this study and Hofstede's framework may also be subject to an ecological fallacy. For this paper, deriving group-level conclusions from each individual perspective of participants may lead to this study making deceptive propositions about the corporate culture of scaled organizations.

Forthcoming analysis can nevertheless delve deeper into some of Hofstede's specific cultural dimensions, for which longitudinal nature of studies is of interest again. For Masculinity-Femininity, examinations ought to explore how cultural shifts over time affect other aspects such as employee motivation. Also, since Uncertainty Avoidance values in organizations possessing scalability can evolve over time, one should investigate how it develops during organizational periods of mergers, acquisitions or significant transformations. Additionally, research concerning the Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation dimension and its interplay in scaling strategies is needed. This might uncover on how organizations balance immediate needs with long-term vision during rapid growth phases. Here, the difference between scalability as defined in this paper and the scaling process is highlighted.

6.4. New Trends in the Corporate Setting

Lastly, the dynamic nature of cultural dimensions presents an intriguing area with regards to emerging trends in the corporate setting. With the rising significance of remote and hybrid work models, scholars need to reassess how the analyzed cultural dimensions manifest themselves in digital environments. Additionally, as teams become more diverse and geographically distributed, scholars need to understand how successful organizations aim to balance individual autonomy, feedback processes, cultural identification and collective goals. Finally, other topics

such as corporate social responsibility can also be combined with this study's approach, aiming to apprehend how the dimensions are established in sustainable corporate environments.

7. Conclusion (Group Paper)

This paper emphasizes the importance of corporate culture and its unique dimensions in the corporate setting and supplements this relationship with regard to scalability. The author's verdicts stress both common cultural trends among all analyzed dimensions, yet also specific dimensional requirements that organizations must navigate to exhibit scalability. Shared conclusions among all cultural dimensions display how business scalability depends ongoing against the static nature of Hofstede's cultural dimension framework.

Organizations possessing scalability often use hybrid approaches to manage the multifaceted nature of scalability. Here, businesses might combine short-term approaches with a long-term strategic vision or balance teams with individual workflows. Therefore, no single pole of any dimension proves to be comprehensively superior; instead, scalability is achieved through a flexible and context-dependent combination of cultural traits, where environments specifically vary by industry or organizational magnitude. Organizational leaders play another crucial role in shaping corporate cultures of companies exhibiting scalability, as they head and control all cultural facets that ultimately shape culture. Accordingly, findings prove that organizations empower employees through practices that consistently drive innovation and adaptability – critical elements for scalability.

However, scalability is shaped differently by each cultural dimension, which respectively requires consideration by businesses. Specifically, high PD facilitates centralized decision-making yet may hinder scalability, employee voice and hence efficient problem-solving. Low PD on the other hand fosters collaboration and adaptability. Additionally, low UA encourages essential attributes of scalability such as innovation and risk tolerance, while high UA might

safeguard stability in regulated contexts such as the financial sector. Individualism might drive innovation and performance through employee autonomy, while Collectivism enhances team cohesion and identification, with scalability reigning supreme through a balance of both. Femininity's focus on empathy and retention is essential for long-term scalability and success, while effective leadership evaluates relevant interplay with Masculinity over time. The aforementioned duality is paramount concerning time-based strategies, where long-term strategies drive growth and short-term agility addresses market demands as well as operational adjustments. Indulgence has a positive impact on cultures possessing scalability. Yet, the balance between both poles, with a tendency towards Indulgence, is essential to exhibit scalability. Finally, this thesis challenges Hofstede's direct opposition to dimensional poles and underscores the complexity of fostering scalability through corporate culture.

To answer the previously outlined research question, "How are the characteristics of corporate culture manifested in organizations that exhibit scalability?", this paper derives that organizations which exhibit scalability adopt a dynamic interplay of cultural traits within their corporate culture, mostly balancing opposing poles to meet context-specific needs.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Questions (English Version)

-- Interview Questions Master Thesis 2024 --

How are the characteristics of corporate culture manifested in organizations that exhibit scalability?

1. (Agreement for the interview)

Thank you for helping me with my master's thesis at NOVA School of Business and Economics.

I would like to ask you questions about your organizational culture. There are no right or wrong answers. I want to record the interview, but I will keep your answers confidential: Only my professor, and four classmates I will conduct the master thesis with, and I will have access to your information. I will de-identify your answers such that you will be referred to in my assignment only by your position and company industry. Your answers will be used only for master thesis purposes and will not be shared publicly. Do you consent to participate in the research? (yes/no)

Should you have any questions regarding the purpose or intent of this research you may contact my professor, Aman Asija, at aman.asija@novasbe.pt.

2. (Introduction)

- Industry, Size of the company, Position of Interviewee

3. Scalability

- To what extent did your company expand / scale up in the past ? (Spatial change, higher revenue etc.) When did scaling occur?

4. Power Distance

- When senior leaders make decisions, how transparent are they about their reasoning with lower-level employees? Can you recall a time when their decision-making process was explained in detail?

5. Uncertainty Avoidance (Risk and Attitude)

- Can you recall a time when an innovative or unconventional idea was proposed? How are proposals typically handled here? How did people react, and was it embraced or met with resistance?

6. Individualism vs. Collectivism (Processes, Consistency and Teams)

- When performance reviews are conducted, how are team contributions weighed against individual achievements? What model or process is used for feedback (360, etc.)

7. Masculinity vs. Femininity (Work-life balance, etc.)

- When conflicts arise in the workplace, are they typically resolved by focusing on results and objectives, or is there an emphasis on understanding, collaboration, and maintaining relationships? What do you use to maintain personal growth, work-life experience?

8. Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation (Cultural add / cultural fit)

- When setting goals or making decisions, how far into the future does the organization typically plan? Are most initiatives focused on immediate outcomes, or is there a clear focus on long-term sustainability and growth? Could you potentially name a few goals?

9. Indulgence vs Restraint

- How does the company approach balancing work with personal enjoyment, like allowing flexible breaks or organizing fun activities? Are there clear boundaries, or is there room for spontaneity and enjoyment? Do you offer work benefits and how often are they used?

Appendix 2: General Overview of Interviews Conducted

Company	Industry of the Organization	Position of Interviewee	Scalability Scenario	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualism vs. Collectivism	Masculinity vs. Femininity	Long-Term vs. Short-Term	Indulgence vs. Restraint
Company 1	IT	Founder & CEO	Employees triples over 9 years, revenue doubled	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Masculine	Long-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 2	IT	Founder & CEO	Scaled from 2 to over 100 employees in 4 years	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Feminine	Long-Term Oriented	Restrained
Company 3	Real estate - Property/rental management	Founder & managing director	Organic growth; Bootstrapped; Managing 30 apartments after 2 yrs --> double the size in 2024 from 20 to 40	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Feminine	Short-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 4	Hospitality & Consulting - Hotel management	Founder & CEO	Demand grew 4 to 5 times within 1 yr; caused business expansion	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Feminine	Short-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 5	Staffing - Personnel services	Team Leader; Management	Organic Growth; 5 employees added in two yrs	Low Power Distance	High Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Masculine	Short-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 6	Retail - Sustainable sports products	Founder & Sole Shareholder	Increase of one to three manufacturing sites	High Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Feminine	Short-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 7	Heating & Plumbing	CEO & Owner	Acquisition of companies. From 1 to 15 companies	High Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Masculine	Short-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 8	Manufacturing - Prothesis	CEO & Owner	Sustainable growth but also buying start-ups to increase knowledge	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Feminine	Long-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 9	B2B-SaaS Productivity Space	Co-Founder	1) More Users, 2) more revenue, 5% week over week annual revenue growth for the last 2 years. 3) More processed data - as more users (from 10 hours meetings notes per week to 5.000)	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Feminine	Short-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 10	Consulting - Innovation & Product Development	Senior Venture Architect	The company experienced particularly strong growth through the establishment of a venture building unit, which led to a 75% increase in revenue.	High Power Distance	High Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Feminine	Short-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 11	Finance - Venture Building	Investment Manager	Recently scaled from 15 - 20 subsidiaries	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Feminine	Short-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 12	B2B SaaS E-Commerce	Co-Founder	Scaled after funding round in 2023 and breakeven in 2024	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Feminine	Long-Term Oriented	Indulgent

Company 13	Consulting - Tech & Legal & Taxes	CEO & Owner	Fusion with another firm and scaled monetary and personnel wise	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Feminine	Long-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 14	Pharma	CEO	Increased from 5 to 60 employees and one store to 3 stores	High Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Feminine	Long-Term Oriented	Restrained
Company 15	Oil & Gas	Owner	Scaled from one gas station to 23 branches	High Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Masculine	Long-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 16	Aviation eVTOL	Head of Business Development	Increased from 150 to 700 employees and multiple new offices across the world within 2-3 years	Low Power Distance	High Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Feminine	Long-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 17	Consulting	Co-Founder	Scaled business processes and customer base as well as orders within 1 year	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Feminine	Long-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 18	Heating & Plumbing	Founder & CEO	From 3 to 34 employees and multiple locations	High Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Feminine	Long-Term Oriented	Restrained
Company 19	Vehicle repairation	CEO	From 1 to 3 locations	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Feminine	Short-Term Oriented	Restrained
Company 20	Maritime	Managing Director	Within 2 years to 4 Location with strong growth in customers and employees as well as revenue doubling revenue every quarter	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Feminine	Long-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 21	Health	CSO - Chief Service Officer	Increased from 2500 to over 110 000 employees globally	High Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Feminine	Short-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 22	Energy	CEO	More than 10 new firms within holding	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Feminine	Long-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 23	Machinery	CEO	From 3 to 30 employees	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Masculine	Short-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 24	Education - Tutoring/Learning support	CFO & Founder	From 50 users to 1,000+ users; 500 active per month; from five students to 8 full time employees + 6 working students & board	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Feminine	Long-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 25	Banking	CEO	From 2.2 billion to 6.4 billion. Merged 5 times in the last 8 years	High Power Distance	High Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Feminine	Long-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 26	IT - Chemistry	CEO & Founder	From 3 to 35 employees and multiple locations	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Feminine	Long-Term Oriented	Restrained
Company 27	E-commerce - Automotive sector	Advisor of CEO; First Employee	Over 400 employees; \$150 mio. annual rev; Expansion into US market	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Masculine	Short-Term Oriented	Indulgent

Company 28	Energy	CEO	Doubled revenue in the past 20 years.	High Power Distance	High Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Masculine	Long-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 29	IT - Renewable energy	Sales Manager / First Employee	From 50 to 500 customers in 2023; Rev increase from 300k to 2.7m	High Power Distance	High Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Masculine	Short-Term Oriented	Restrained
Company 30	Consulting	Head of Munich Office	Scaled through a 3.5x increase in staff; 2.5x increase in rev	Low Power Distance	High Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Masculine	Long-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 31	Fintech - Automobile	Founders Associate	From 8 to 160 employees. From Garage to 3 floors of offices. From 0 to 22 million in Fundraising	High Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Feminine	Short-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 32	Infrastructure - Vehicle Charging	First employee	Increase from 0 - 17 employees	High Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualistic	Masculine	Short-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 33	Tele-communication	Head of Organizations Since 16.5 YRS	From 5 to nearly 300 employees in the past 15 years	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Feminine	Long-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 34	Beverage	CEO & 2nd Generation Owner	From one to 30 employees	Low Power Distance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Masculine	Short-Term Oriented	Indulgent
Company 35	Sports & Entertainment	Managing Director	Quadrupled revenue	Low Power Distance	High Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivist	Feminine	Short-Term Oriented	Indulgent

Transcripts of the Interviews on Request