

Exploring Cultural Differences among Supermarket Employees in Spain and Lithuania

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ABSTRACT,

This research delves into the differences, in culture among supermarket workers in Spain and Lithuania. With the use of structured interviews, with employees from both countries, the study examines variations in communication styles, management approaches, work motivation, social interactions, customer engagement, and cultural adaptation. The results show that Spanish employees, display to have a more open and direct communication style, a collaborative management method and value informal social interactions influenced by cultural norms such as sobremesa and convivencia. On the other hand, Lithuanian employees lean towards reserved communication styles, hierarchical management approaches and structured social activities that align with a more cautious and risk-averse cultural perspective.

While some findings are consistent with Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, such as Spain's collectivism and Lithuania's focus on reliability are notable inconsistencies. Practical implications include tailoring management strategies to bridge cultural gaps and improve workplace cohesion. Further research should expand the geographic coverage and incorporate quantitative methodologies to validate the findings. This study contributes to the knowledge of cross-cultural management in the retail industry and offers insights into enhancing teamwork, among multicultural teams and improving customer service practices.

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Keywords

Cross-cultural leadership, Cultural dimensions, Leadership styles, Employee efficiency, Comparative analysis, Supermarket industry, Spain, Lithuania

1. INTRODUCTION

Larsson and Schiehle (2016) highlight that multinational enterprises must effectively manage the diversity on their doorstep to survive and thrive in today's globally managed business environment. They emphasize that customer satisfaction and operational efficiency are the keys to success.

Ciuk et al. (2022) underlines the significance of cross-cultural management in multinational companies, stressing the need for fairness and equal treatment among employees from diverse cultural backgrounds. It is important that staff members feel fairly treated regarding their workload, recognition, and rewards. This fair and equal treatment plays a role, in upholding levels of employee satisfaction and ultimately resulting in improved customer satisfaction and operational effectiveness.

As noted by Greblikaite (2016) the modern European workforce, facilitated by open borders and work permits has allowed many of Eastern European country workers to migrate to countries such as Spain. This increase of migration highlights the complexity of cultural integration in the workplace, mainly due to the contrast in communication styles, work ethics, management hierarchies and expectations.

This paper sets out to understand the complexities of cross-cultural management in supermarkets operating in Spain and Lithuania.

According to Nair (2018) supermarkets are important centers of commerce; from grocery stores, they serve many people by providing the most basic needs to top-quality services. Although supermarkets may physically look the same in many countries, their staff may behave and collaborate differently. Like any other business, supermarkets function according to the culture of the country in which they are situated. Therefore, these supermarkets are an ideal small microcosmos for studying business culture in a particular country. Most of these supermarkets are multinational. Moreover, their workforce often has multiple nationalities. It becomes even more complicated to manage these supermarkets and ensure the same quality of services and operations.

Nair (2017) explains how supermarkets mirror the country's business culture. Therefore, appreciating how cultural expressions are represented in supermarket environments is a fundamental step to understanding broader societal and business practices. Additionally, the majority of comparative studies in Europe concentrate on the contrast between the northern nations, the Netherlands, Germany, and Scandinavia, and the Southern countries of Italy and Spain. What is lacking is an in-depth comparison of the business culture between Northeastern and Southern European states, like Lithuania and Spain.

This comparison is even more relevant as indicated by the study by Ramirez and Metelski (2013), which highlighted the attractiveness of higher wages in Spain and thus influence on migration of workers, particularly between Lithuania and Spain.

The primary goal of this research is to scientifically verify and elaborate on these differences, thereby making sense of how they contribute to the business practices of supermarkets. Furthermore, the study's results might not just relate to Lithuanian and Spanish workers; they may also apply to workers from culturally akin countries, e.g. The Baltics, Poland, and Ukraine, who are employed in Spain.

Li (2019) highlights that without an in-depth knowledge of foreign workers' cultural characteristics and their subsequent perspectives and behaviors, managers are bound to experience

obstacles to inter-employee and inter-departmental communication and, subsequently, to successfully integrate a cohesive organizational culture.

When it comes to comparative studies of European business cultures the primary focus mostly centers on North or South European business cultures, but not both. The study by Nikandrou et al. (2003) emphasizes the importance of understanding cultural diversities within European context. Therefore, the current study attempts to fill the lack of research done concerning the business cultures of Northeastern European and Southern European countries by comparing Lithuanian and Spanish business cultures.

A study of retail cultures done by Harris and Ogbonna (1998) found that high-level managers view culture as being related to strategic "consensus and consistency," while store managers view culture as being inconsistent and characterized by multiple subcultures and on the spot decision improvisation.

This inconsistency highlights the complexity of cultural differences within retail section and therefore more research is needed on the cultural differences between employees working in supermarkets in Spain and Lithuania.

Even though the main lines of research concentrate on the influence of large cultural dimensions on the behavior of employees in organizations, there is a notable knowledge deficit in research, especially in maximizing the benefits of cross-cultural management in the retail sector, particularly at the frontline. Melton and Hartline (2010) highlight this critical role that frontline employees have on the influence of the service performance. Acknowledging this, the primary objective of this research is to study the cultural differences between Spanish and Lithuanian supermarket employees and their influence on organizational performance. By conducting a comparative analysis, this study aims to enhance the existing body of knowledge on cross-cultural management in the retail industry, potentially leading to improved management practices and better business outcomes.

1.1 Research question

This research will focus on answering the following research question (RQ): What cultural differences can be seen in the behavior of Spanish and Lithuanian supermarket workers?

Sub questions:

- a) What are the differences in treating customers?
- b) What are the differences in the communication style?
- c) What are the differences in the collaboration between employees?
- d) What cultural differences impact employee efficiency?
- e) What are the differences in management style?

1.2 Academic relevance

The primary goal of this study is to conduct a deeper analysis and compare cultures in Lithuania and Spain, which represent Northeastern and Southern Europe. This study intends to add to the knowledge about cultural differences in Europe. By

examining the behaviors of supermarket employees, the contribution of this study lies in understanding the practical implications of these cultural differences in a real-world context. Supermarkets offer a unique setting as they are ideal small microcosmos reflecting societal norms. The findings of this study will not only deepen the understanding of cultural behaviors but will also highlight the significance of supermarkets as a unique and special setting for such studies. Such practical environment provides insights into how cultural differences manifest in workplace interactions and customer service practices, thus making a distinct contribution, to cross-cultural management studies.

1.3 Practical relevance

The study results are expected to offer valuable practical advice for supermarket managers in Spain, particularly those managers overseeing multicultural teams consisting of employees from the Northeastern part of Europe. Providing insights into the cultural nuances that play a crucial role in the workplace, the results are intended for use in making practical recommendations and strategies for managers to be successful and for having harmony during their interactions with employees from the Northeastern part of Europe. It is an applicable tool for managers in Spain to make more informed decisions and create a more inclusive organizational culture.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter, Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory will be used to analyze the cultural differences between Lithuania and Spain. Following that, literature from both Lithuania and Spain will be used to gain more in depth understanding about these two cultures.

Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory (Hofstede,2010) is widely used especially by organizations to help improve communication and cooperation between people from different cultures. Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory can provide a useful framework for understanding how cultural differences can affect business dealings. (*Intercultural Management*) The model identifies six key dimensions: *power distance, individualism, motivation towards achievement and success, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence.*

See in figure 1 the differences between Lithuania and Spain.



Figure 1 Six dimensions of Hofstede on Lithuania and Spain (Hofstede Insights, 2023)

Power Distance

The very first dimension described by Hofstede is power distance. Lithuania has a slightly lower score of 42 compared to Spain which scores a 57. Due to Spain’s higher score of 57 on

this dimension, Spain is considered a more hierarchical society. This indicates that people accept a hierarchical structure where everyone has a position, and no explanation is necessary. According to Hofstede Insights (2023) an organization’s hierarchy is said to reflect ingrained inequality, centralization is common, subordinates anticipate orders, and the ideal leader is a kind tyrant. Lithuanians, on the other hand, tend more toward equality and the decentralization of authority and decision-making. The younger generation often prefers teamwork and an open management style and is generally against control and formal supervision.

Individualism

The second dimensions is individualism. Spain is classified as a slightly more individualist society with a score of 67 than Lithuania (55). This indicates a loosely knit social structure where people are expected to look out for themselves, and their close families solely is highly preferred. According to T. Garcia Arias (2020) Spanish individuals frequently prioritize their interests, over the communal well-being which leads to various social issues and economic inequalities. On the other hand, with a score of 55, Lithuania scores slightly lower than Spain however according to Hofstede Insights (2023) Lithuania is an individualist nation. Lithuania maintained its individualist values even under the Soviet rule. Strong and close family members who honor each other’s personal space while staying in regular communication have traditionally been the guarantee of the nuclear family ideal.

Motivation towards achievement and success

In this third dimension, Lithuanians, with a score of 19 in Motivation towards Achievement and Success, often feel uncomfortable offering and accepting praise, claiming that they could have done better or that they haven’t really accomplished anything noteworthy. As a result, they are quiet, humble, and typically speak in a diplomatic and soft tone. On the other hand, according to Hofstede Insights (2023), Spain is a nation where consensus is crucial and has a score of 42. Extreme competition is not valued, nor is polarization well-considered.

Uncertainty avoidance

The avoidance of uncertainty is the fourth dimension. This dimension is the extent to which members of a society feel at ease with risk, uncertainty, and erratic circumstances, according to Hofstede (2010). Spain’s high score of 86 indicates that uncertainty avoidance is one dimension that best describes the country. According to Hofstede Insights (2023), Spain is regarded as the world’s second noisiest nation. Individuals prefer rules for everything, and they get stressed out by changes. However, Lithuania scored 65 which is lower on this dimension than Spain. While Lithuanians also have focus on uncertainty avoidance, it is nowhere as high as for Spanish.

Long term orientation

The fifth cultural dimension is long term orientation. Lithuania has a score of 49 on this dimension, meaning it does not strongly favor one side over the other. Nonetheless, Spain, a normative nation, receives a very comparable score of 47. According to Hofstede Insights (2023), Spanish people don’t worry too much about the future; they want to live in the present.

Indulgence

The sixth and final cultural dimension is indulgence, defined by Hofstede (2010) as a culture that allows the satisfaction of basic human needs related to enjoyment and having fun. Spain is not considered an indulgent society scoring low at 44. Societies that score poorly on this dimension are more likely to be pessimistic

and cynical. Lithuanian culture is one of restraint, with a way lower score of 16 than Spain. Additionally, Restrained societies restrict the fulfillment of their desires and place less value on leisure time than Indulgent civilizations do.

When it comes to workplace dynamics applying Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory offers an approach, to analyzing and comparing differences between Lithuania and Spain. By examining individualism, power distance and uncertainty avoidance this theory sheds light on how variations impact practices and organizational interactions. However, it's important to recognize this theory's shortcomings.

According to Majlergaard (2017), the majority of the subjects of Hofstede's 1960s research were white male IBM employees, giving rise to a limited viewpoint that was unable to adequately represent the population's variety. Furthermore, the diversity of human identity is oversimplified when conduct is exclusively determined by country culture. Beyond country, people have many identities. These identities include gender, age group, career, and social affiliations. Cultural disputes actually result more from disparities in age groups or professions than from national identities. (Majlergaard, 2017)

Simplifying distinctions could lead to assumptions and hinder efforts to bridge cultural gaps. While Hofstede's model effectively outlines some distinctions between Spanish and Lithuanian cultures, it does not present a complete and coherent picture. Additional literature delves deeper into these two cultures.

For example, we may explore a practice, in Spanish social norms known as "sobremesa". Amando de Miguel (2006) describes sobremesa as the period, after dinner when people stay at the table to engage in conversations and strengthen their connections. During sobremesa there is often a sense of hierarchy with hosts or older individuals leading the conversation. This is corresponding to Spain's higher power distance score, which shows a higher level of societal acceptance of hierarchical organizations. This tradition refers to the distinctive ways in which Spanish society values family, relationships, and communication. As evidenced by "sobremesa," the Spanish like to live in the moment and have a laid-back attitude about life, which is consistent with their low long-term orientation score. In a supermarket setting, the concept of "sobremesa" may show that Spanish employees might value forming connections and cultivating a feeling of closeness during breaks or group gatherings. They might also participate in casual conversations or gatherings after work.

In contrast, V. Kavolis (1997) describes Lithuanians as highly punctual and committed to their schedules, with strong expectations that activities or meetings will start on time, unlike the Spanish.

Furthermore, Laurinavičienė (2018) emphasizes risk aversion and cautiousness in Lithuanians, which can be seen in planning and assessing different risks before making an important decision. This slow but assuring approach helps avoid uncertain outcomes, as seen in Lithuanian business practices and personal lives. For instance, when Lithuanian employees plan promotions or launch new products, they may tend to assess potential risks and outcomes beforehand. They may go for a safer approach with specified methods and proven paths rather than an innovative approach with uncertain new ventures.

In contrast, this mindset is very different from that of the Spanish, who tend to be more adventurous. De Miguel (2006) often characterizes Spanish people as adventurous by their willingness to embrace the unknown and explore new possibilities.

Lastly, by introducing the concept of "convivencia" we can dig more into the Spanish culture.

Julian Marías (2000) touches on the topic of "convivencia", which means to live together, even though each person differs. Through Marías's work, it is evident how that principle has created Spanish society, giving additional value to the acts of appreciation, tolerance, and empathy among the different members of the community. Marías digs into the historic genesis of convivencia in Spain, which focused on language, religion, and social values such as hospitality, family ties, honor, respect for tradition, and a strong sense of community. In contrast, V. Kavolis (1997) describes Lithuanian society as emphasizing national identity and protecting cultural and linguistic heritage due to a history of foreign domination and struggle for freedom. This emphasis on solidarity and perseverance contrasts with the value of "convivencia", which embraces diversity and assimilation. The concept of "convivencia" could influence how employees interact with customers from different cultural backgrounds. Spanish employees may focus on establishing an inclusive environment and appreciating interactions that promote respect and empathy among a diverse group of supermarket customers. On the other hand, as Lithuanian workers often value their national identity and heritage, they may focus to maintain and celebrate their customs and language, while helping the customers in the supermarket.

Although convivencia aligns with one of Hofstede's dimensions, collectivism over individualism, "Hofstede insights" place Spain within a low score individualism. This contradiction shows that Hofstede's model has drawbacks as sometimes it can be too schematical, and therefore can't be used as the sole source for assessing cultural differences.

While these descriptions of cultural phenomena, for instance, "sobremesa" and "convivencia," provide insights in Spanish culture and the way of living, they are not studied in depth because of their subjective nature. It is also the case for Lithuanian characteristics, such as being risk-averse and careful. In the end, such impressionistic portrayals may not be enough to make meaningful cultural comparisons. Also, such literature is insufficient to understand cultural dynamics, especially in the supermarket setting.

Although the literature and the theory touched on in this paper can provide insight into how these cultural differences between Lithuanians and Spanish may manifest in a workplace setting, I was not able to find research that specifically focused on a direct comparison between Lithuanian and Spanish culture and their implications within a workplace context.

On the other hand, much of the research has been done on cross-cultural management comparing countries in Northeastern Europe, such as Lithuania and Poland, or Southern European countries, such as Spain and Portugal. However, there is a gap in research that has touched both Northeastern and Southern European countries. To overcome this limitation, new research is needed that is conducted by employing systematic methods.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The research approach, used in this study, is qualitative and inductive, using semi-structured interviews. Such kind of qualitative research was preferred because of its ability to offer rich, detailed insights and the depth of cultural dimensions in supermarkets belonging to the Spanish and Lithuanian companies and its influence on organizational success.

According to DeJonckheere & Vaughn (2019) semi-structured interviews provide researchers with a rich exploration of the participant's lived experiences, perceptions, behaviors as well as behaviors in their particular cultural environment. The research process conducted was inductive.

Semi-structured interviews offer flexibility in investigating participants' responses by way of exploring subtle dimensions of cultural orientations, style of leadership, employee attitudes, and outcomes of the organizations. Similarly, the qualitative approach makes it possible to work out ramifying and interrelated dimensions of diverse socio-cultural phenomena that may be passed aside without the use of qualitative methods. (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019)

3.2 Data collection & sampling

3.2.1 Selection of supermarket

A retail company with headquarters in Vilnius, Lithuania, operating supermarkets, hypermarkets and convenience stores under various names in several countries, including Spain, was chosen for the study because of my experience working in both countries. The experience highlighted differences between the supermarkets despite their common ownership by the same retail company.

3.2.2 Sampling strategy

The sampling method I adopted for my study is purposeful sampling, in the sense that the individuals I have chosen to sample were able to provide information that is the most reliable and informative response to my study questions. Also, it is important to understand though this type of sampling which helps target particular respondents can give a fair representation on a given topic, it may not achieve complete saturation as all possible ideas on the topic may not be fully covered.

Regarding the immediate frame of this bachelor's thesis, I have conducted the research by interviewing and observing five participants, including four from Lithuania, two of which have moved to work in Spain, and one interviewee from Spain.

Interviewee no.	Age	Nationality	Working Experience in:
1	44	Lithuanian	Lithuania and Spain
2	45	Lithuanian	Lithuania
3	21	Spanish	Spain
4	43	Lithuanian	Lithuania and Spain
5	19	Lithuanian	Lithuania

Figure 2 Characteristics of Interviewees

It is also worth noting that this sample may not provide the saturation effect. Failing to achieve the saturation effect could impose significant consequences. It might cause a lack of understanding of the cultural differences being studied, may limit the applicability of the results found, potentially raise the likelihood of bias in conclusions and overlook chances for valuable discoveries. (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021)

3.3 Research instruments

Online interviews were conducted with the intention of gaining qualitative insights into cultural nuances, leadership practices and organizational dynamics. Before the interviews were conducted, the research was approved by ethics committee of University of Twente, and participants were asked for their consent to participate. The interviews were 30 minute long and

were conducted in Lithuanian and Spanish. The interviewees and researcher were proficient in those languages. Microsoft "Teams" was used to transcribe the interviews, which were double checked by the researcher. Participants were provided with information about the purpose and nature of the study. They understood that the research aims to explore cultural differences and their impact on their workplace, and that the interview will be recorded.

Online interviews can offer a balanced approach by combining the pros of semi-structured interviews while addressing potential challenges. According to George (2023) semi-structured interviews can provide a mix of reliability and adaptability, helping researchers stay on track and promote discussions while avoiding distractions. Despite the advantages of online flexibility, semi-structured interviews can create some challenges in maintaining validity and ensuring comparability among responses. Additionally, there is a concern about research bias coming from leading questions or participants tendency to give acceptable answers. Developing these semi-structured interview questions involved thoughtful planning to achieve a balance between structure and spontaneity, ensuring active participation and neutrality from the participants. (George, 2023)

3.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative material from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to find patterns that reoccur, themes and new insights. To provide a full portrayal of cross-cultural management dynamics in Spanish and Lithuanian supermarkets, an all-round combination is made from quantitative findings along with qualitative ones.

Thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the data. Braun & Clarke (2006) provide a comprehensive guide to conducting thematic analysis in their paper "Using thematic analysis in psychology. In their approach, they outline several key steps: (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

- 1) **Familiarization with the data:** Immerse in the qualitative data to get a deep understanding of its content.
- 2) **Generating initial codes:** Label interesting features of data with codes, focused on relevance of research question.
- 3) **Searching for themes:** Identify patterns/themes within coded data.
- 4) **Reviewing themes:** Reviewing and comparing themes to extracted codes, to ensure they accurately capture the core of data and are distinct from each other.
- 5) **Defining and naming themes**
- 6) **Writing up:** Bringing conclusions forward by presenting profound details of each theme with provided evidence to complete the assessment of each theme through relevant quotes from the collected data.

A Gioia figure was used to effectively visualize the themes uncovered from the interviews. The Gioia method focuses on data examination by systematically coding and categorizing information. The interview data was arranged into themes by recognizing 1st order concepts which lead to 2nd order themes and finally developing aggregated dimensions. (Gioia 2013)

4. RESULTS

The results of interviews were carefully analyzed and transcribed to find themes shedding light on the distinctions, among supermarket workers in Spain and Lithuania. Through data coding distinct themes emerged, offering insights into the core research inquiry about these distinctions. This section outlines the discoveries from the data analysis, supported by

quotes from the interviews to demonstrate how these themes evolved. It's worth noting that 4 out of 5 interviews were conducted in Lithuanian and 1 interview was conducted in Spanish. The analysis revealed five aggregated dimensions which can be seen in Figure 3 and are: *Communication and Management Styles, Motivation, Social Interactions, Customer Loyalty, Cultural Adaptation and Integration*. Each of them have several 2nd order themes which contribute by giving a more insightful viewpoint about the topic. A more comprehensive data framework containing 1st order concepts is included in appendix C and paraphrased statements are included in appendix D.

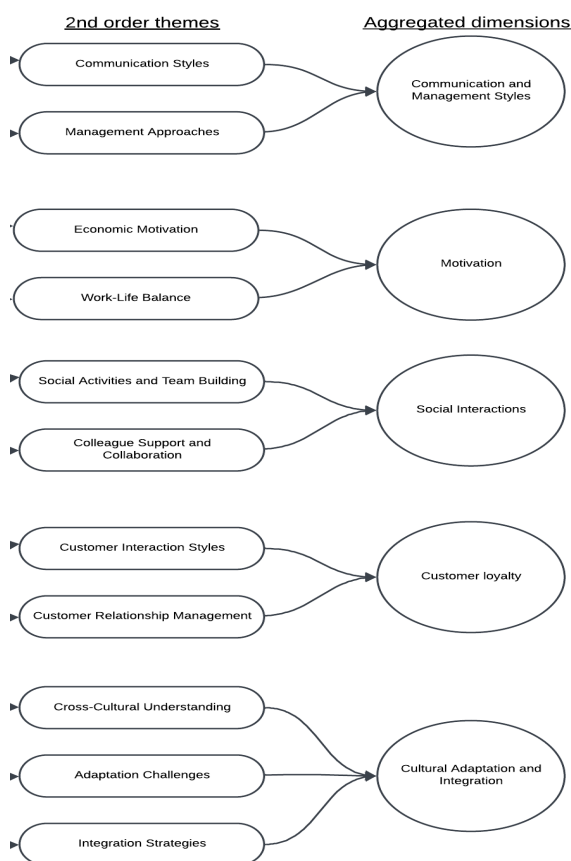


Figure 3 Gioia figure: Second and Third order Themes (Gioia 2013)

4.1 Communication and Management Styles

The first aggregated dimension which was identified and was addressing the research question is *Communication and Management Styles*. The key discoveries, from the thematic analysis in this area include two 2nd order themes: *Communication Styles* and *Management Approaches*. These two themes were combined into one aggregated dimension, because both elements play a role, in shaping employee interactions and reflect how communication styles and management styles collectively shape organizational culture and efficiency.

4.1.1 Communication Styles

Participants highlighted variations in *Communication Styles* between Spain and Lithuania impacting workplace dynamics and employee satisfaction. Lithuanian employees often characterized their own communication as reserved and formal. An employee who had experience in both countries pointed out this contrast noting, "*In Lithuania communication tends to be*

more reserved and indirect compared to Spain where people are more upfront." (Interviewee no. 1) Another employee, who also had experience working in both countries observed that "*Spanish employees generally exhibit an open communication style which Lithuanians sometimes perceive as lacking seriousness.*" (Interviewee no. 4) To better explain these differences the same employee mentioned "*The Spaniards are very loud people. When they speak all the voices sound. They are more upfront and expressive in their communication.*" (Interviewee no. 4) This directness and expressiveness can sometimes be viewed by Lithuanian employees as a lack of seriousness or professionalism. The same employee added that "*The Lithuanians did not have to be so strongly controlled as compared to Spanish. If they said that this and that had to be done then they knew exactly what had to be done without much discussion.*" This highlights a value on precision and self-control in communication contrasting with the spontaneous and vocal approach, in Spain. In Spain people tend to frequently communicate openly, being more casual and more expressive with their emotions and opinions. On the other hand, in Lithuania communication is usually more restrained and serious emphasizing clarity and avoiding unnecessary expressions. This difference in communication styles also translated into how workplace issues and feedback were handled. Lithuanian employees preferred written exchanges and structured meetings for work discussions whereas Spanish employees leaned more towards face-to-face dialogues and spontaneous interactions. An employee, who exclusively worked in Lithuania mentioned, "*Our usual mode of communication involves official channels and scheduled meetings which aids in maintaining clarity and order.*" (Interviewee no. 2)

4.1.2 Management Approaches

Cultural differences were evident in *Management Approaches*, between Spain and Lithuania.

In Lithuania the management approach often follows a hierarchy, where clear lines of authority and responsibility are emphasized. Employees typically prefer instructions and formal acknowledgment, from their superiors. An employee who worked only in Lithuania mentioned, "*Here in Lithuania we adhere to a system that clearly defines the roles of managers and employees.*" (Interviewee no. 5)

On the contrary Spain tends to adopt a flatter management style that emphasizes collaboration and collective decision making. An employee, who has experience working in Spain shared her insights by stating, "*Our managers are approachable and encourage sharing of ideas among the team. This fosters inclusivity but may sometimes blur the lines of responsibility.*" (Interviewee no. 3)

An employee who worked in both countries offered a viewpoint, "*The hierarchical setup in Lithuania ensures role clarity. May limit creativity at times. In contrast Spanish flatter structure promotes innovation and teamwork. Can cause some ambiguity regarding authority.*" (Interviewee no. 1)

Communication and Management Styles dimension sheds light on distinctions in workplace dynamics and leadership styles between supermarket employees, in Spain and Lithuania.

4.2 Motivation

The second aggregated dimension which was identified as *Work Motivation and Ethics* can be described through two 2nd

order themes which are *Economic Motivation* and *Work-Life Balance*.

4.2.1 Economic Motivation

Regarding Economic Motivation there were differences observed between Lithuanian and Spanish employees. In Lithuania the challenging economic conditions drive individuals to work harder in pursuit of job security. An employee, who has experience working in both countries mentioned, *"One of the main reasons why Lithuanians are so motivated is that the economic conditions are tougher. There's a stronger drive to secure and keep a job."* (Interviewee no. 1)

Such perspective was supported by an employee who has worked only in Lithuania, who stated that, *"Lithuanians are very motivated by the need to achieve financial security and support their families."* (Interviewee no. 5)

On the other hand, in Spain while economic factors are motivators there is also a strong emphasis on job satisfaction and personal fulfillment among employees. An employee shared her observations from working in both countries mentioning that Spanish workers are driven by a combination of rewards and the desire for workplace enjoyment and appreciation. *"Spanish employees are motivated by a combination of economic benefits and personal satisfaction. They want to enjoy their work and feel valued, they value their free time more and there is less pressure"* (Interviewee no. 4)

A Spanish employee confirmed this attitude by pointing out that in Spain monetary benefits are not the main motivators, for employees, *"In Spain, it's not just about the money. People want to feel happy and fulfilled in their jobs."* (Interviewee no. 3)

4.2.2 Work-Life Balance

Regarding Work Life Balance it emerged as an aspect showcasing the contrasts, in how workers in Spain and Lithuania navigate their professional lives. In Lithuania employees typically adhere strictly to work schedules maintaining a distinction between work and personal time. An employee, who worked in Lithuania mentioned, *"In our country we strictly follow our designated work hours. Once the workday ends, we shift our focus to life and family matters."* (Interviewee no. 2) Another Lithuanian employee emphasized this by saying, *"In Lithuania, if it is due tomorrow you will sit until midnight today until you finish the task. You always have to work. There was no break, until work is done"* (Interviewee no. 4) The same Lithuanian employee compared this to her experience working in Spain, highlighting a huge distinction in how employees approach working hours *"In Spain, they think that their working hours are from 8 to 5. If there is work left to do after 5, they would go home. Spanish spend more time on personal life and family. Work-life balance there is important. In Lithuania if work is not done we stay after work hours."* (Interviewee no. 4)

Such contrast shows that Spanish workers tend to adopt a more flexible approach to balancing work and personal life, often blending social interactions with work commitments. Two Lithuanian employees who have worked in both countries noted their observations, one of them mentioning, *"In Spain, there's a more relaxed approach to work schedules. People often socialize with colleagues after work, which helps build stronger relationships but can blur the lines between work and personal life."* (Interviewee no. 4). While the other employee also pointed out this distinction by stating that *"While Lithuanians are very disciplined about separating work from personal life, Spaniards are more likely to mix the two, which can lead to a more cohesive team environment but also potential burnout."* (Interviewee no. 1) These differences, in managing work life

balance impact how employees view their job satisfaction levels and overall motivation.

Spanish workers typically place a value on the social aspects of their jobs believing that these elements play a key role, in their overall happiness and motivation to perform well. According to a Spanish Employee *"In Spain spending quality time with colleagues and achieving a work life balance are essential for staying motivated."* (Interviewee no. 5)

On the contrary employees from Lithuania tend to prioritize job security and stability which significantly influences their motivation and dedication at work.

4.3 Social Interactions

The third aggregated dimension that was found related to the research question is Social Interactions and Team Dynamics. The key findings, from the analysis in this dimension include two 2nd order themes: *Social Activities and Team Building* and *Colleague Support and Collaboration*.

4.3.1 Social Activities and Team Building

Social Activities and Team Building emerged as important themes showcasing cultural distinctions between employees from Spain and Lithuania. In Lithuania team building activities are typically coordinated by management to promote unity and collaboration among employees. An employee, who solely worked in Lithuania shared, *"We participated in organized team building events like bowling and sauna nights to strengthen bonds with colleagues. These activities played a role in fostering a cohesive work atmosphere."* (Interviewee no. 2)

In contrast, Spanish employees tend to partake in more spontaneous and informal gatherings. An employee, who had experience working in both countries observed, *"In Spain, social gatherings are more informal and frequent. We often go out for tapas or drinks after work, which helps to build strong personal connections with colleagues."* (Interviewee no. 4)

Another Lithuanian employee who worked in both countries confirmed this opinion by mentioning, *"People in Spain spend a lot of time together outside of work, which fosters a sense of community and belonging."* (Interviewee no. 1)

These differences, in social activities mirror the broader cultural perspectives on work and social life. In Lithuania employees place importance on structured team-building events that are directly related to work, whereas in Spain, informal social interactions outside of the workplace are given priority.

4.3.2 Colleague Support and Collaboration

When it comes to colleague support and collaboration there are distinctions between Spain and Lithuania. Lithuanian workers tend to view their work environment as supportive yet formal with a focus on expectations for collaboration. According to Lithuanian employee, *"We always helped each other, especially during the change of products which were done at night. This sense of teamwork was essential for integrating new employees quickly and maintaining a smooth workflow."* (Interviewee no. 2)

On the other hand, in Spain, colleague support and collaboration are approached informally and more relaxed. Spanish employee reflects this sentiment; *"In Spain, colleagues are very supportive, but the interactions are more casual. We often collaborate spontaneously and help each other out without formal procedures."* (Interviewee no. 3)

An employee who has worked in both countries pointed out a key difference, by mentioning, *"Spanish employees are more likely to offer help and collaborate in an informal manner,*

which can create a friendly atmosphere but sometimes lacks the structure found in Lithuanian workplaces." (Interviewee no. 4)

Another employee drawing from his experiences in both countries offered a comparative view; "In Lithuania there exists a strong sense of obligation and accountability towards coworkers ensuring efficient task completion. On the contrary, Spain places importance on building connections, which can promote collaboration but occasionally might result in unclear task delegation." (Interviewee no. 1)

The differences in colleague support and collaboration mirror norms and workplace dynamics. Lithuanian employees typically depend on support systems and precise collaboration guidelines while the Spanish favor a more flexible and interpersonal approach.

4.4 Customer Loyalty

The fourth aggregated dimension that was identified is Customer Engagement and Service. The key discoveries, from the analysis in this dimension involve two 2nd order themes: *Customer Interaction Styles* and *Customer Relationship Management*.

4.4.1 Customer Interaction Styles

Customer Interaction Styles exhibited differences between employees in Spain and Lithuania. In Spain customer service is characterized by a friendly approach that aims to establish a welcoming environment. A Spanish Employee, mentioned, "Customer service practices here are relaxed and customer-focused. We make an effort to engage with customers, making them feel valued and comfortable." (Interviewee no. 3)

A Lithuanian employee, who had experience working in both Spain and Lithuania observed that "Spanish employees are generally more optimistic and proactive in customer interactions, often initiating conversations with customers to create a friendly environment." (Interviewee no. 4)

On the other hand, Lithuanian employees tend to follow a more formal and efficient customer service approach. An employee, who worked in Lithuania explained that "In Lithuania our focus is on providing quick and efficient service to meet customers' needs without any unnecessary delays." (Interviewee no. 2)

Another Lithuanian employee added that, "While we are polite and professional, there is less emphasis on casual conversation and more on maintaining a smooth and efficient operation." (Interviewee no. 5)

The differences mentioned showcase the cultural differences regarding customer service, where Spanish workers prioritize creating an engaging experience for customers while Lithuanian employees emphasize efficiency and professionalism.

4.4.2 Customer Relationship Management

Furthermore, Customer Relationship Management reveals distinct approaches between the two cultures. In Spain the emphasis lies on nurturing long-term relationships with customers. A Spanish Employee emphasized, "We aim to foster connections with our customers making them feel like part of our community. Regular customers are often greeted by name. We make an effort to remember their preferences." (Interviewee no. 3) A Lithuanian employee who has also worked in Spain, echoed this sentiment by mentioning, "In Spain, it's common to witness employees going above and beyond to make customers feel valued, which aids in fostering loyalty." (Interviewee no. 4)

On the other hand, in Lithuania customer relationship management is more transactional and leans towards an approach centered on reliability. A Lithuanian employee elaborated that "Our strategy is geared towards ensuring that

customers can depend on us for trustworthy service. We establish trust through our efficiency and dependability." (Interviewee no. 2) Another Lithuanian employee added, "Although we might not always engage in personal interaction, our customers value the reliability and professionalism we deliver." (Interviewee no. 5)

A Lithuanian employee shared a viewpoint based on his experiences working in both countries, "In Spain, many focus on personalizing the customer experience and creating a welcoming atmosphere, which can enhance customer loyalty. In Lithuania, the emphasis is on reliability and efficiency, ensuring that customers receive a consistent and professional service." (Interviewee no. 1)

In Lithuania the focus lies on being dependable and effective guaranteeing that customers receive a smooth service. The differences, in managing customer relationships mirror the cultural standards and anticipations. Spanish workers tend to value connections and engaging with customers whereas Lithuanian workers prioritize trust building through reliability and efficiency.

4.5 Cultural Adaptation and Integration

The fifth aggregated dimension identified that addresses the research query is Cultural Adaptation and Integration. This dimension was touched a lot by the 2 Lithuanian employees who moved to work to Spain. However other interviewees also shared their insights with experiences in working together with employees from other cultures in their home country.

The key discoveries in this domain include three 2nd order themes: *Cross-Cultural Understanding*, *Adaptation Challenges*, and *Integration Strategies*.

4.5.1 Cross-Cultural Understanding

Understanding Different Cultures emerged as a theme with employees acknowledging the importance of recognizing differences and their impact on workplace interactions. An employee, who had experience working in both Spain and Lithuania stressed, "There are differences in how work is approached in Lithuania and Spain. Understanding these distinctions were essential for teamwork." (Interviewee no. 1)

Another employee who also worked in both countries observed, "In Spain it's crucial to acknowledge that there's a more relaxed attitude towards time and deadlines compared to Lithuania, where punctuality and efficiency are highly valued." (Interviewee no. 4)

This awareness can aid employees in navigating cultural differences. Promotes mutual respect and collaboration. A Spanish employee, who worked exclusively in Spain stated, "In Spain many of us work with colleagues from different cultures, and being mindful of cultural differences helps prevent misunderstandings and fosters working relationships with these colleagues from diverse backgrounds." (Interviewee no. 5)

4.5.2 Adaptation Challenges

Challenges in Adapting also were prominent, highlighting the difficulties employees encountered when adjusting to a new setting. Language barriers were frequently cited as an obstacle.

A Spanish employee mentioned, "Communication styles, in Spain are very direct and open which can be challenging if you're not accustomed to such way of speaking." (Interviewee no. 3) A Lithuanian employee who moved to work in Spain added, "Getting used to the communication style in Spain was tough at first since it's quite different from the reserved communication style in Lithuania." (Interviewee no. 1)

Challenges also arose from norms and expectations. Another Lithuanian employee working in Spain explained, *"In Lithuania we adhere to rules and procedures unlike the flexible approach in Spain. Adapting to these varying expectations presented a challenge."* (Interviewee no. 4)

4.5.3 Integration Strategies

Integration strategies played a role in helping Lithuanian employees adjust and succeed in a Spanish cultural environment. Team integration activities and social inclusion were factors in this process. A Lithuanian employee emphasized, *"We always supported each other during tasks. This teamwork spirit facilitated my process of integration in Spanish workforce and the culture."* (Interviewee no. 1)

Another Lithuanian employee shared her experiences from Spain by stating, *"In Spain social gatherings outside of work such as going for tapas were crucial, for feeling part of the team. These informal interactions helped me establish bonds with my colleagues."* (Interviewee no. 4)

A third Lithuanian working in Spain shared a perspective, stating, *"In Lithuania, structured team-building activities are essential for integrating new employees, while in Spain, the emphasis on social interactions and informal gatherings helps create a sense of belonging."* (Interviewee no. 1)

These approaches seem to be important, for creating an inclusive workplace which helps employees from various cultural backgrounds to adjust and blend in harmoniously.

5. DISCUSSION

This part carefully examines the outcomes of the study by looking at the trends, similarities and distinctions discovered among supermarket workers, in Spain and Lithuania. The research question guiding this study was: "What cultural differences can be seen in the behavior of Spanish and Lithuanian supermarket workers?"

The results are explored in connection with existing literature. Discussion will also dig deeper into the implications of the results for stakeholders such as supermarket managers and employees. To provide a clear summary of the findings, the following table highlights general differences found between Spanish and Lithuanian employees.

Theme	Spain	Lithuania
Communication Styles	- Open and direct communication - Casual and expressive interactions	- Reserved and indirect communication - Formal and clear communication
Management Approaches	- Flatter management structure, promotes teamwork and innovation - Inclusive and approachable management	- Hierarchical management, emphasizes role clarity - Formal acknowledgment from superiors
Work Motivation	- Motivated by personal satisfaction and job enjoyment - Balanced work-life integration	- Motivated by economic conditions and job security - Strong drive for financial security
Work-Life Balance	- Flexible work schedules, often mix personal and work life	- Strict adherence to work schedules, clear separation of work and personal time
Social Interactions	- Frequent informal gatherings (e.g., tapas, drinks) - Emphasis on building personal connections	- Organized team-building activities (e.g., bowling, sauna nights) - Emphasis on structured social events
Colleague Support and Collaboration	- Informal, spontaneous support and collaboration - Friendly and relaxed team dynamics	- Formal, structured support systems - Clear obligations and accountability
Customer Interaction Styles	- Friendly, engaging, customer-focused - Builds long-term relationships with customers	- Formal, efficient, professional service - Focus on reliability and quick service
Cultural Adaptation and Integration	- High tolerance for cultural diversity	- Challenges with flexible norms, emphasis on formal integration strategies

Figure 4 Summary of key findings for Spanish and Lithuanian culture across several themes.

The research findings highlighted distinctions, in communication and management style between Spain and Lithuania. Spanish workers tend to engage in a more open and direct communication. If we look back at Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Spain has a higher uncertainty avoidance score of 86 compared to 65 for Lithuania. This is an interesting case since, in theory, the higher uncertainty avoidance would correlate less with a less open and more formal communication styles, according to Hofstede. This suggest that Hofstede's theory may not fully explain the observed differences in the behaviors, or that another dimension or factor might be influencing the behaviors.

However, this open and direct communication style, in Spain encourages an inclusive work environment, characterized by the concept of *sobremesa*, where informal social interactions typically after meals are significant. It seems that *sobremesa* extends into professional setting in Spain. Interviews revealed that Spanish workers frequently engage in conversations during breaks and after work hours fostering interpersonal bonds. These informal exchanges create an environment where employees feel at ease sharing ideas and tackling work challenges together.

On the other hand, Lithuanian employees lean towards a more formal communication approach reflecting their high uncertainty avoidance and lower power distance tendencies in Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions. Although, since Spain scored higher than Lithuania in both of those dimensions, it would be expected that Spain showed a more formal communication style, but the findings proved this wrong. While the more formal communication in Lithuania may promote clarity and structure it could potentially hold back sharing of ideas. To gain better understanding of these findings, it is valuable to look beyond Hofstede's dimensions and explore more emic studies which delve into cultural practices on a deeper level. Take, for instance the idea of *sobremesa*, where casual and extended conversations after meals are common, encouraging a more direct and open style of communication. Likewise, the concept of *convivencia* highlights importance of harmonious living and inclusive social interactions, which likely is contributing to the collaborative and expressive communication tendencies observed among Spanish employees.

Furthermore, the research found that Lithuania is more hierarchical than Spain. According to Hofstede's power distance dimension, Spain has a higher score of 57 compared to Lithuania's score of 42, that would infer a more hierarchical approach in Spain, results indicated the contrary. This difference indicates that many other areas, for example, certain organizational cultures or local practices, should be important at play. The hierarchical approach in Lithuania ensures role clarity and accountability for employees but may suppress creativity, while the flatter structure in Spain encourages innovation but can bring about ambiguity in roles and responsibilities. These differences are also seen in Kavolis's (1997) characterization of Lithuanian society as punctual and committed and in Laurinavičienė's (2018) focus on careful planning and risk aversion.

Economic motivation was found to be more significant for Lithuanian employees, who were influenced by challenging financial situations in the country and need for stable employment. This corresponds to the low Lithuania's indulgence score of 16 in Hofstede's model and shows as a restrained society with no need to rest and have fun. On the other hand, the Spanish employees were also interested in economic benefits, but they showed more interest in job satisfaction and personal enjoyment, which would reflect their

higher indulgence score of 44. This difference shows the importance of a broad economic and cultural context for determining work ethics and motivation.

Social interactions and team dynamics differed a lot in the two countries. In Lithuania, team-building events were more organized, and led by management reflecting their preference, for certainty. On the other hand, Spanish employees preferred spontaneous, and informal get-togethers, demonstrated by after working hours gatherings in local cafes or bars. Such behaviors reflect the nature of *convivencia*, which is the Spanish concept of living together despite the differences. *Convivencia* creates the feeling of community and mutual support, which inspires employees to get engaged with one another more openly and as well build stronger relationships interpersonally. In addition, it will foster informal interaction and the building of a community to enhance employee teamwork and satisfaction.

Furthermore, research also found that customer interaction styles differed, where Spanish workers had a more friendly and engaging approach by focusing on building and maintaining personal relations, contributing to long-term customer-worker relationships. This would represent a somewhat collectivistic orientation of the country, even though their score for individualism was 51 in Hofstede's cultural dimensions. However, the concept of *sobremesa* can be seen in their customer service values and practices, where a sense of ease and home-based feel is created. In customer service, *Sobremesa* would demonstrate in the willingness to engage with customers in personal conversations to make relationships and give a warm environment. On the contrary, research showed that Lithuanian employees, were more concerned with effectiveness and professionalism when interacting with customers, with focus on the service to be delivered. This would reflect in their higher score in individualism (60) compared to Spain. Lithuanian customer service is principled, with high preciseness and diligence in doing services accurately and promptly. According to Laurinavičienė (2018), this strategy falls within the dimension of cultural attribute to being responsible and reliable while focusing on building a long-term base of customer trust through the delivery of consistent, top-quality service. The professional and efficient model of service meets the customers' expectations for its relativity and reinforces the value of relativity in Lithuanian culture.

Additionally, the research found challenges with cultural adaptation issues for Lithuanians who moved to work in Spain. While some problems Lithuanian employees working in Spain faced were based on open relations and flexibility of cultural norms, Spanish employees pointed out the role of cultural tolerance and mutual respect in the workplace toward other cultures.

Hence, using the framework of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, Spain would have a higher level of uncertainty avoidance than Lithuania. At first look, it could appear that Spanish employees will not be able to adjust to less well-structured environments. However, the much more open and direct style of communication in Spain could further facilitate adjustment through transparency, hence reducing ambiguity. On the other hand, the Lithuanian employees who are used to a much more reserved and formal communication style, can find it very difficult to adjust to the flexible norms and open style of communication that Spain is associated with.

Furthermore, the concept of *sobremesa* emphasizes the importance of informal social interactions in Spanish culture. This practice reinforces the making of personal contacts, and it could smoothen adaptation for foreign workers in Spain. Equally, *convivencia*, underlining harmonious coexistence,

draws attention to mutual respect and understanding in multicultural settings.

Lastly, Kavolis (1997) and Laurinavičienė (2018) wrote of more conservative and cautious cultural affinity of Lithuanian employees, although characteristics of this nature would also impact flexibility in preparedness within the Spanish workplace.

Therefore, integration strategies that include activities such as team building, and social gatherings are very crucial to bringing together individuals from different cultures in an organization.

5.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study contribute to cross-cultural management literature that examines employee cultural differences between Southern and Northeastern European countries. Again, not all but some findings were supportive of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, specifically individualism and power distance, but some are clearly not aligned with it. For instance, employees from Spain showed a relaxed work approach and open communication yet they scored high on uncertainty avoidance, indicating other factors might be an influence.

The concept of *sobremesa* explains the informal social interactions and long-term customer relationships that Spanish employees are fond of. On the other hand, *convivencia* highlighting the importance of harmonious living and inclusive social interactions, which contributes to the collaborative and expressive communication tendencies observed among Spanish employees and explains the importance of informal gatherings for team cohesion. Furthermore, according to Laurinavičienė (2018), Lithuanian society can be put in the category of a cautious and structured one, which aligns with the observed hierarchical preferences and formal communication seen in Lithuanian employees. Another similarity, as mentioned by Kavolis (1997), is punctuality and commitment in Lithuanian culture, explaining the structured and formal manner in which communication and organizational engagements are approached in Lithuania.

Yet, the surprising hierarchical approach that has been in place within Lithuania, despite a lower power distance score than Spain, emphasize the fact that models used to explain such cultural differences need to be far more detailed. These findings suggest that Hofstede's dimensions are helpful as a framework but overgeneralize and oversimplify cultural dynamics.

This study reinforces the existing literature, emphasizes the need for culturally adaptive strategies, and introduces another need: consideration of regional variations and cultural practices in cross-cultural management.

5.2 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study can have practical implications for supermarket managers, particularly those who must manage multicultural teams in Spain consisting of employees from the Northeastern part of Europe, and not only Lithuania.

Cultural differences in communication styles, management approaches, and customer services will be apparent to a supermarket manager to attain a more harmonious and productive working environment. For instance, the knowledge that the Lithuanian employees are more formal and careful in their communication as opposed to the Spanish employees, who are open and usually direct, can help the manager create a communication strategy that overcomes these differences.

Furthermore, the study underlines that management styles need to be incorporated within the cultural context: Spanish managers may find it helpful to be a bit more hierarchical when

dealing with Lithuanian employees to define roles and give instructions. On the other hand, Lithuanian managers might want to adopt a more collaborative style in leading their team of Spanish employees to ensure innovation and a team spirit.

The findings also suggest that customer engagement strategies should match the workforce's cultural expectations. In Spain, where the emphasis lies on personalization in customers interaction and long-term relations, it can create customer loyalty. While in Lithuania, a focus on efficiency and reliability in service delivery would better meet customer satisfaction.

Moreover, the findings from this research could be employed to design specific training programs which prepare an employee for the job in a multicultural environment by enabling them to enhance their cross-cultural competence and achieve increased organizational performance.

Lastly, the results of this study could potentially have practical implications beyond the supermarket management, as Nair (2017) explained, supermarkets often mirror the broader business culture of a country. Therefore, the findings of this study may apply to more than just a supermarket management in Spain, Lithuania, and Northeastern European countries, but also to overall business cultures of these regions.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

This research is not without its limitations. To begin with, the qualitative approach, involving structured interviews could introduce bias from the researcher. The analysis is dependent on the interpretations and assumptions made by the researcher potentially influencing the results. To address this issue, the future studies could involve multiple researchers in the data analysis to ensure objectivity.

Furthermore, the sample size was relatively small with five supermarket employees, of whom only 1 was Spanish, 2 were Lithuanians working in Spain, and the last employee was Lithuanian working in Lithuania. While this sample provided interesting insights, a larger sample size could potentially enhance the findings and reveal more factors influencing cultural differences. Moreover, the employees working in Spain were mostly from Madrid, which might not fully represent the cultural aspects across Spain. Future research should include employees of different regions of a country. Similarly, although Lithuania is more homogeneous given its size, future studies should include participants from regions to validate the generalizability of findings. Another limitation of the study is that other key stakeholders such as customers and managers were not included in the study. Their insights could offer a different perspective on cultural dynamics within supermarkets. Future research should include interviews, with stakeholders to deepen our understanding of how cultural differences impact aspects of supermarket operations.

Additionally, the research did not take into consideration how organizational policies and economic circumstances impact employee behavior. These external factors could have an influence on cultural adaptation and should be considered in future studies for a more detailed analysis. The conclusions from the research are as well limited to the retail industry, it would be valuable to explore whether these cultural dynamics exist in other industries.

Given these constraints there are a few suggestions for future research. Increasing the sample size and integrating methods with quantitative approaches can enhance the studies credibility. Surveys and statistical analyses can validate patterns identified in interviews and offer more insights into cultural distinctions.

Future investigations should also delve into how organizational policies and economic conditions shape behaviors. Exploring how various management practices and organizational frameworks impact cultural assimilation can offer perspectives for enhancing cultural management strategies.

Lastly, comparative studies involving other European countries can deepen our comprehension of cross-cultural management. Research, in this field can help uncover similarities and distinctions in cultures, which can contribute to the development of management strategies that work universally. By studying application of specific cultural practices such as *sobremesa* or *convivencia*, in other countries can give a better insight into how they influence workplace interactions.

7. CONCLUSION

The research discovered behavioral differences between Spanish and Lithuanian supermarket employees. Spanish employees tended to have a more open communication, creating a family-like atmosphere at work, followed by a collaborative management approach, balanced economic incentives with personal satisfaction, favored informal social interactions, and interacted warmly with customers. In the contrast, Lithuanian employees preferred a more reserved communication style, they also showed a family-like atmosphere at work, but with more focus on maintaining strong and disciplined professional connections. This highlights a standard of prioritizing work with seriousness while keeping personal relationships distinct from professional ones even though friendships outside of work can be genuine and warm. Lithuanians also seem to follow a hierarchical management structure and were driven by economical needs rather than personal satisfaction, valued management structured social events, and focused on providing an efficient customer service.

It is crucial to emphasize the behaviors of individuals in the setting of supermarkets. Supermarkets hold significance as they act as representations of societal and business customs mirroring the cultural standards and principles of the regions they operate in. This makes them a unique environment, for examining cultural management practices. The everyday interactions among staff and customers, the teamwork dynamics and the managerial approaches in supermarkets offer a ground for observing and comprehending cultural behaviors. The conclusions drawn from this research highlight the necessity, for management strategies that are culturally adaptable to address these differences effectively and promote a cohesive and efficient work atmosphere.

These findings engage with existing literature in several ways. For example, they support the ideas of *sobremesa* and *convivencia* in Spanish culture, and as well as the cautious and structured approach highlighted by Kavolis (1997) and Laurinavičienė (2018) for Lithuania. However, the findings were not a perfect match with all the aspects of Hofstede's dimensions. For example, in having a higher uncertainty avoidance for Spain, Spanish employees are more open in communication than one would have thought. Additionally, even when Lithuania scores lower on the power distance score, the research found that they will prefer their management to be hierarchical. This suggests that while Hofstede's dimensions provide a helpful framework, they are not sufficiently refined to explain all the differences found in this study.

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10. APPENDIX A

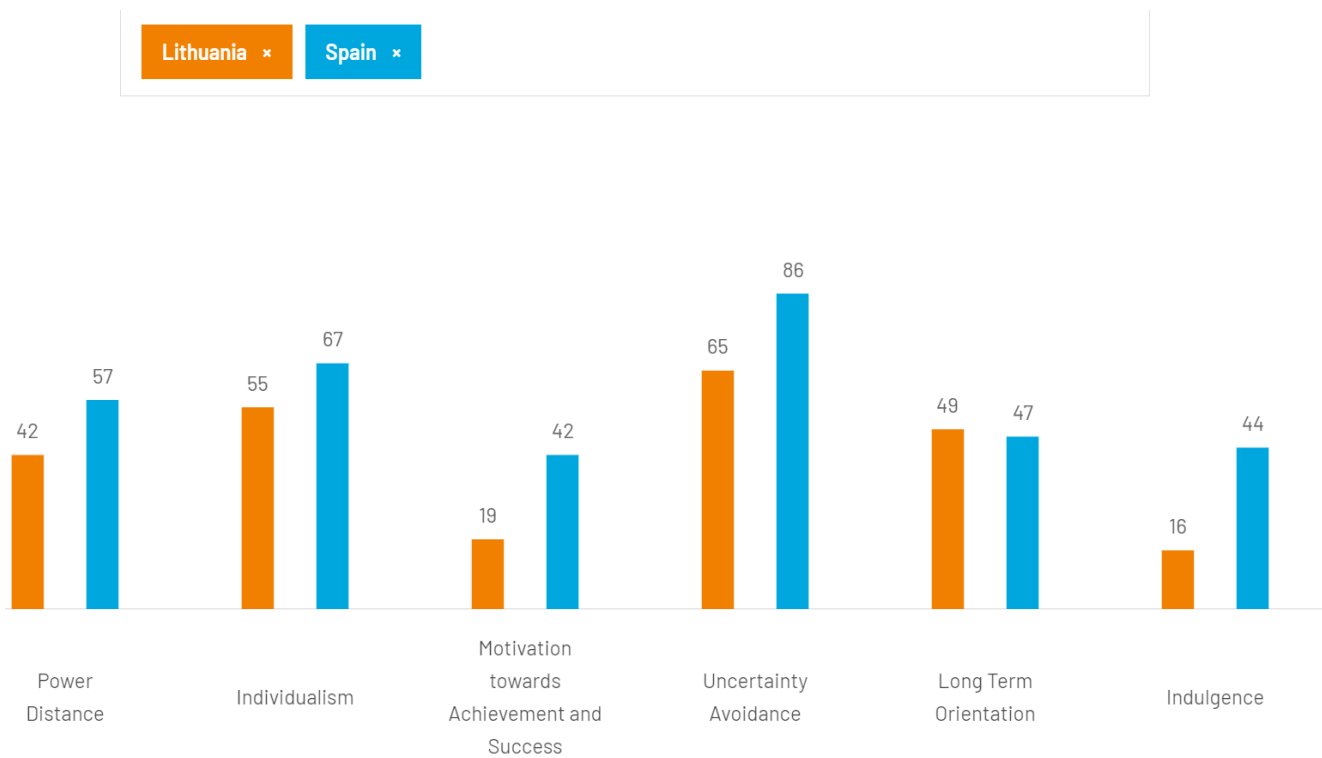


Figure 1. Six dimensions of Hofstede on Lithuania and Spain (Hofstede Insights, 2023)

11. APPENDIX B

Interviewee no.	Age	Nationality	Working Experience in:
1	44	Lithuanian	Lithuania and Spain
2	45	Lithuanian	Lithuania
3	21	Spanish	Spain
4	43	Lithuanian	Lithuania and Spain
5	19	Lithuanian	Lithuania

Figure 2. Characteristics of Interviewees

12. APPENDIX C



Figure 3. Gioia figure: Second and Third order Themes (Gioia 2013)

13. APPENDIX D

1st Order Concepts	Paraphrased Statements from Interviews
Direct Communication, Indirect Communication	<p>"The Spaniards are very loud people. When they speak all the voices sound. They are more upfront and expressive in their communication."</p> <p>"The Lithuanians did not have to be so strongly controlled as compared to Spanish. If they said that this and that had to be done then they knew exactly that had to be done without much discussion."</p> <p>"In Lithuania communication tends to be more reserved and indirect compared to Spain where people are more upfront."</p> <p>"Spanish employees generally exhibit an open communication style which Lithuanians sometimes perceive as lacking seriousness."</p> <p>"Our usual mode of communication involves official channels and scheduled meetings which aids in maintaining clarity and order."</p>
Hierarchical Management, Flat Management	<p>"Here in Lithuania we adhere to a system that clearly defines the roles of managers and employees."</p> <p>"Our managers are approachable and encourage sharing of ideas among the team. This fosters inclusivity but may sometimes blur the lines of responsibility."</p> <p>"The hierarchical setup in Lithuania ensures role clarity. May limit creativity at times. In contrast Spanish flatter structure promotes innovation and teamwork. Can cause some ambiguity regarding authority."</p>
Economic Conditions, Work Incentives	<p>"One of the main reasons why Lithuanians are so motivated is that the economic conditions are tougher. There's a stronger drive to secure and keep a job."</p> <p>"Lithuanians are very motivated by the need to achieve financial security and support their families."</p> <p>"Spanish employees are motivated by a combination of economic benefits and personal satisfaction. They want to enjoy their work and feel valued."</p> <p>"In Spain, it's not just about the money. People want to feel happy and fulfilled in their jobs."</p>
Work Schedules, Personal Life Integration	<p>"In Spain, they think that their working hours are from 8 to 5. If there is work left to do after 5, they would go home."</p> <p>"Spanish spent more time on personal life and family."</p>

	<p>Work-life balance there is important."</p> <p>"In our country we strictly follow our designated work hours. Once the workday ends, we shift our focus to life and family matters."</p> <p>"In Spain, there's a more relaxed approach to work schedules. People often socialize with colleagues after work, which helps build stronger relationships but can blur the lines between work and personal life."</p> <p>"While Lithuanians are very disciplined about separating work from personal life, Spaniards are more likely to mix the two, which can lead to a more cohesive team environment but also potential burnout."</p> <p>"In Spain spending quality time with colleagues and achieving a work life balance are essential for staying motivated."</p>
<p>Team Building Activities, Social Gatherings</p>	<p>"We participated in organized team building events like bowling and sauna nights to strengthen bonds with colleagues. These activities played a role in fostering a cohesive work atmosphere."</p> <p>"In Spain, social gatherings are more informal and frequent. We often go out for tapas or drinks after work, which helps to build strong personal connections with colleagues."</p> <p>"People in Spain spend a lot of time together outside of work, which fosters a sense of community and belonging."</p>
<p>Peer Support, Collaboration Techniques</p>	<p>"In Lithuania we always helped each other, especially during the change of products which were done at night. This sense of teamwork was essential for integrating new employees quickly and maintaining a smooth workflow."</p> <p>"In Spain, colleagues are very supportive, but the interactions are more casual. We often collaborate spontaneously and help each other out without formal procedures."</p> <p>"Spanish employees are more likely to offer help and collaborate in an informal manner, which can create a friendly atmosphere but sometimes lacks the structure found in Lithuanian workplaces."</p> <p>"In Lithuania there exists a strong sense of obligation and accountability towards coworkers ensuring efficient task completion. On the contrary, Spain places importance on building connections, which can promote collaboration but occasionally might result in unclear task delegation."</p>
<p>Customer Service Approaches, Handling Complaints</p>	<p>"If the client is not satisfied or something else and I asked the managers to solve that problem." Lithuania</p> <p>"In Lithuania we have a procedural approach to handling complaints."</p> <p>"In Spain, they communicate more and socialize more with clients than Lithuanians."</p> <p>"There will be more discussions in Spain about any client problem."</p> <p>"Customer service practices here are relaxed and customer-focused. We make an effort to engage with</p>

	<p>customers, making them feel valued and comfortable.”</p> <p>“Spanish employees are generally more optimistic and proactive in customer interactions, often initiating conversations with customers to create a friendly environment.”</p> <p>"In Lithuania our focus is on providing quick and efficient service to meet customers’ needs without any unnecessary delays."</p> <p>“While we are polite and professional, there is less emphasis on casual conversation and more on maintaining a smooth and efficient operation.”</p>
<p>Building Relationships, Service Standards</p>	<p>“Spanish employees are generally more optimistic and proactive in customer interactions, often initiating conversations with customers to create a friendly environment.”</p> <p>"In Lithuania our focus is on providing quick and efficient service to meet customers’ needs without any unnecessary delays."</p> <p>“While we are polite and professional, there is less emphasis on casual conversation and more on maintaining a smooth and efficient operation.” Lithuania</p> <p>"We aim to foster connections with our customers making them feel like part of our community. Regular customers are often greeted by name. We make an effort to remember their preferences." Spain</p> <p>"In Spain, its common to witness employees going above and beyond to make customers feel valued, which aids in fostering loyalty.”</p> <p>"Our strategy is geared towards ensuring that customers can depend on us for trustworthy service. We establish trust through our efficiency and dependability." Lithuania</p> <p>"Although we might not always engage in personal interaction, our customers value the reliability and professionalism we deliver.” Lithuania</p> <p>“In Spain, many focus on personalizing the customer experience and creating a welcoming atmosphere, which can enhance customer loyalty. In Lithuania, the emphasis is on reliability and efficiency, ensuring that customers receive a consistent and professional service.”</p>
<p>Cultural Awareness, Cultural Sensitivity</p>	<p>"There are differences in how work is approached in Lithuania and Spain. Understanding these distinctions were essential for teamwork."</p> <p>"In Spain it's crucial to acknowledge that there's a more relaxed attitude towards time and deadlines compared to Lithuania, where punctuality and efficiency are highly valued."</p>

	<p>"In Spain many of us work with colleagues from different cultures, and being mindful of cultural differences helps prevent misunderstandings and fosters working relationships with these colleagues from diverse backgrounds."</p>
Language Barriers, Workplace Norms	<p>"Communication styles, in Spain are very direct and open which can be challenging if you're not accustomed to such way of speaking."</p> <p>"Getting used to the communication style in Spain was tough at first since its quite different from the reserved communication style in Lithuania."</p> <p>"In Lithuania we adhere to rules and procedures unlike the flexible approach in Spain. Adapting to these varying expectations presented a challenge."</p>
Team Integration, Social Inclusion	<p>"We always supported each other during tasks. This teamwork spirit facilitated my process of integration in Spanish workforce and the culture."</p> <p>"In Spain social gatherings outside of work such as going for tapas were crucial, for feeling part of the team. These informal interactions helped me establish bonds with my colleagues."</p> <p>"In Lithuania, structured team-building activities are essential for integrating new employees, while in Spain, the emphasis on social interactions and informal gatherings helps create a sense of belonging."</p>

14. APPENDIX E

Theme	Spain	Lithuania
Communication Styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open and direct communication - Casual and expressive interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reserved and indirect communication - Formal and clear communication
Management Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flatter management structure, promotes teamwork and innovation - Inclusive and approachable management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hierarchical management, emphasizes role clarity - Formal acknowledgment from superiors
Work Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivated by personal satisfaction and job enjoyment - Balanced work-life integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivated by economic conditions and job security - Strong drive for financial security
Work-Life Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexible work schedules, often mix personal and work life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strict adherence to work schedules, clear separation of work and personal time
Social Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Frequent informal gatherings (e.g., tapas, drinks) - Emphasis on building personal connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organized team-building activities (e.g., bowling, sauna nights) - Emphasis on structured social events
Colleague Support and Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal, spontaneous support and collaboration - Friendly and relaxed team dynamics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal, structured support systems - Clear obligations and accountability
Customer Interaction Styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Friendly, engaging, customer-focused - Builds long-term relationships with customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal, efficient, professional service - Focus on reliability and quick service
Cultural Adaptation and Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High tolerance for cultural diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Challenges with flexible norms, emphasis on formal integration strategies

Figure 4: Summary of key findings for Spanish and Lithuanian culture across several themes.