Master Thesis

MSc Business Administration-International Management & Consultancy

BRIDGE THE CULTURAL GAP: HOW DUTCH EXPATRIATES PERCIEVE THE EMIRATI CULTURE

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Abstract

In the past decades, where globalization of business has widely increased, culture became an important factor in affecting business internationalization and the decision-making of a company regarding doing business abroad. In the case of the United Arab Emirates and the Netherlands, both countries have recently signed a bilateral agreement to increase their mutual business trade and globalization. As no studies have been conducted yet to explore how Dutch expatriates in the UAE perceive the Emirati cultural behaviors and cultural standards in personal and professional areas, this master study seeks to explore the Emirati culture from the perspective of Dutch expatriates by answering the following research question: *"How do Dutch expatriates in the UAE perceive the Emirati culture during daily interaction with Emiratis?"*

In order to answer this research question, this paper follows the qualitative theoretical framework of Thomas (1991), where cultural standards of a specific culture are indicated based on possible cultural clashes. For this reason, the qualitative research interviewing technique of "critical incidents" (Urquhart, et al., 2003) has been used by the researcher of this paper to explore Emirati cultural standards based on how Dutch interviewees living in the UAE and working with Emiratis daily perceive/have perceived Emirati culture during their interaction with Emiratis on personal and professional levels.

The findings of this study identified thirty cultural behaviors clustered in the following twelve Emirati cultural standards: highly indirectness, politeness, collective society, social division, the principle of Wasta, showing off social status, helpful and generous in hospitality, social life separation between genders, tolerance and acceptance towards other cultures and beliefs, fluency in business, high hierarchy, and the acceptance of strict rules and bureaucracy. Surprisingly, the critical incidents mentioned by the interviewees have led to new findings regarding possible cultural standard differences within Emiratis themselves. These differences are due to different social and demographical factors, namely, study abroad or locally, gender of the manager/employee, and the emirate they live in or come from. Moreover, the following tentative values may be the underlying source that impacts the way Emiratis behave on both the personal and professional aspects: interdependence, keeping harmony, Bedouin pride, and inshallah.

Keywords: Emirati cultural behaviors, Emirati cultural standards, tentative cultural values.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction to culture in international business and the trade history between UAE and NL

During the past decades, trade has been expanded from being limited in a specific geographical boundary to expand cross-border. From an economic point of view, globalization typically refers to the reduction in, or entire removal of, foreign trade barriers in order to facilitate the flow of goods across borders (Gurgul & Lach, 2014). Companies use globalization in different occasions, such as expanding abroad, employing people from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, collaborating with international partners, and increasing their sales abroad by grabbing opportunities in the international market (Islam, Fakhrorazi, Hartini, & Abu Raihan, 2019). As part of their globalization plans to expand joint international trade, the Netherlands (NL) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have recently signed a biliteral trade agreement boosting their mutual trade in 2021 and the upcoming years (Alghoul & Bashir, 2021). The plan also aims at motivating more Dutch and Emirati investors to explore business opportunities in both countries, especially in the sustainable energy sector, which can lead to influx of Dutch investors, business owners, and laborers to the UAE (Safa, 2021).

Looking back to the history of the mutual trade between both countries, it is clear to see that the pair have a trade partnership for about 50 years now (Ghobash, 2021). This trade relationship is mostly in the fields of energy, renewable energy, transportation, and communication (Ghobash, 2021). For this reason, the investment of Dutch companies in the UAE has increased in the recent years to reach more than 100 Dutch companies active in the Emirati market, such as Shell, ING, and Philips (Netherlands Business Council UAE, 2021). Besides Dutch companies over 7800 Dutch nationals live and work in the UAE (Ghobash, 2021). Moreover, global trade traffic between the NL and the UAE has seen a significant growth in the past years, where despite of COVID-19 pandemic impacts, the non-oil foreign trade between the pair reached to more than $3 billion (LD Export, 2021).

Talking about global trade, Fischer (2003) shows that trade globalization is not only affected by economical aspects, but other non-economic aspects, such as political, technological, and cultural aspects, which play important role in shaping globalization. In particular, culture has

been considered as one of the most important aspects impacting the decision-making of a company regarding doing business abroad (Leidner, 2010). As culture indicates the norms and values of the members of a specific social group and affects their behavior (Spencer-Oatey, 2000), developing cultural awareness can help companies to choose the appropriate strategies and communication tools to approach its business partners/customers abroad and avoid any possible clashes that could affect its business negatively (Matthews & Thakkar, 2012). For example, words can have different meanings between different cultures, and this can lead to misunderstandings, especially on the professional level (Moon & Woolliams, 2000), which can be managed by increasing cultural awareness.

According to Hofstede's dimensions (2004), one of the most popular cultural frameworks about cultural differences, both countries differ a lot culturally. The Emirati culture is characterized as a high-power distance, masculine, collectivistic culture, high uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004), whereas the Netherlands is characterized as low-power distance, feminine, individualistic, average uncertainty avoidance and long-term oriented (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Although well-established, Hofstede's framework has received several criticisms, for example in the case of the UAE, the results of Alteneiji (2015) show score variances compared to the scores of the UAE national culture in the study of Hofstede 30 years ago. According to Alteneiji (2015), the participants have scored significantly lower on the following three cultural dimensions, namely, lower on power distance, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance. Criticism on Hofstede's framework limitations, was also explored by Fang (2005), who shows that although the study of Hofstede seems to indicate that Sweden is feminine (2004), but currently more masculine side of Swedish working environment is observed, due to the high speed and scale of Swedish firms. The aforementioned critics generate more doubts about the Hofstede's (2004) quantitative studying methodology of inter and cross-cultural research. Additionally, one of the intrinsic limitations of quantitative cultural frameworks like Hofstede's is that they do not provide in-depth description of cultural behaviors and values as they do not grasp the richness and development of cultures (Clausen, 2010).

In particular, in the field of international business, some of the Emirati cultural behaviors and values have been seldom explored through thorough, qualitative research, since quantitative methods were mostly used to explain Emirati culture. Hence, few qualitative studies have been

carried out to unpack the Emirati cultural behaviors and values from the perspective of different expatriates, but <u>no studies have been done yet to explore how Dutch expatriates living and working in the UAE perceive the Emirati cultural behaviors, and cultural standards in personal and professional areas.</u> This leads to a gap in the literature, that obstructs indicating practical recommendation to Dutch investors, businessmen and laborers, who will be encouraged by the biliteral agreement to approach the Emirati market, to get in-depth knowledge on the typical Emirati cultural behaviors and values, which may affect their business and interaction with local Emiratis in the UAE.

1.2. Goal and contribution of this research (academic and practical contribution)

Therefore, this study contributes to the academic literature by filling the above-mentioned theoretical gap in the literature in the field of international business. Furthermore, this research expands and enriches the usage of the theoretical qualitative research methodology by Thomas (2003), which is barely used in literature in English, as Thomas and his followers were mainly writing in German, by identifying the Emirati cultural standards through the perspective of Dutch expatriates in the UAE. Based on the results of this research, practical recommendations are given for Dutch investors, businessmen, and laborers planning to invest and work with Emiratis in the future. This research explores the Emirati cultural standards through the perspective of fifteen Dutch expatriates living in the Emirates and working with Emirati nationals on a daily basis. By exploring the Emirati cultural standards and their underlying cultural values, recommendations will be given to Dutch future investors, businessmen, and laborers which communication tools and behaviors to adapt in order to achieve a successful collaboration with their Emirati colleagues or business relations and avoid any possible cultural clashes. To address the goal of this paper, the following central research question is formulated:

> *"How do Dutch expatriates in the UAE perceive the Emirati culture during daily interaction with Emiratis?"*

To answer, the main research question, the following sub-questions are answered:

- Which typical Emirati cultural behaviors are perceived by Dutch expatriates in the UAE during personal and business interactions with Emiratis?
- Which Emirati cultural standards are indicated according to the Emirati typical behaviors?
- Which tentative cultural values are the basement of the Emirati cultural standards?
- What recommendations can be given to Dutch businessmen or nationals desiring to work with Emiratis in the future?

1.3.   Outline of the paper

In this paper firstly, the theoretical background of this research is outlined, which is based on a solid literature research on the topic of this paper. Then the research methodology is indicated, where the research design and techniques used to address the main research question of this paper are illustrated. To address the abovementioned research question and its related sub-questions, this research adopts an in-depth qualitative methodology, specifically the intercultural qualitative research methodology by Thomas (1991), where cultural standards of specific cultures are investigated by using the critical incidents technique (Urquhart, et al., 2003). Moreover, data of this research will be collected by using semi-structured, exploratory, interviews. The interviews will be analyzed by following the Gioia's (2012) inductive coding methodology, which identifies a set of first, second, and third order themes (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012). After this, the results of this study are reported starting with identifying the Emirati cultural behaviors as first order themes, Emirati cultural standards as second order themes, then the tentative underlying values as third order themes. In the discussion section, the key and most important findings are interpreted in relation to the literature highlighting the differences between both Emirati and Dutch cultural standards on basis of this study and previously conducted research from the academic literature. Lastly, the limitations and future research of this paper, as well as the theoretical & practical implications of the research conclude this thesis.

Chapter 2: Theoretical background

This chapter provides solid and detailed information on the topic of this research. First of all, the relationship between business globalization and culture is discussed. Secondly, the term culture is defined. Furthermore, the national culture level of analyzing culture is pointed out, where the cultural dimensions theory of Hofstede (2004) is used to show general cultural differences between the Netherlands and the United Arab Emirates. In this sub-chapter, the limitation of Hofstede and other similar quantitative methodologies of cross and intercultural studies are discussed. Then, the concept of cultural standards of Thomas (1991) is introduced, where the qualitative methodology of studying cultural standards by Thomas is discussed. Finally, typical Dutch and Emirati cultural behaviors and standards are indicated by using qualitative cross and intercultural studies from the literature.

2.1. Culture and business globalization

In the past few years, more and more companies have started to expand abroad by setting up international trade relationships, approaching international markets, hiring multi-national employees, and establishing new subsidiaries across their geographical borders (Islam, Fakhrorazi, Hartini, & Abu Raihan, 2019). This is due to the trend of globalization, where trade has been expanded from being restricted to specific geographic boundaries to expanding across borders. Culture is an essential factor that impacts the global business performance of a company, where companies active internationally should take culture into consideration before approaching a new global market or establishing trade relationships abroad (Sycara, Gelfand , & Abbe, 2013).

However, the global market has various opportunities for companies, but the competition within the global market is fierce. Companies should always develop their competitive advantages to avoid possible threats in the global market and to ensure high business performance compared to their rivals. According to Cuadro-Montiel (2012) companies can achieve a competitive advantage in the global market by increasing their intercultural communication awareness compared to their rivals. Intercultural awareness plays a key role in adding value for the company

by avoiding cultural clashes with global players, which can affect business performance and international trade relationships of a company positively.

People from different countries belong to different cultural backgrounds, which can impact the way they interact and behave with each other. The higher the level of difference between both cultural norms and values, the significant miscommunication and cultural clashes occur during social interaction between both (Kim & Gudykunst, 1988). Moreover, culture affects not only the behaviors of individuals, but also their communication and negotiation styles (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, & Roy, 2017), which means that poor communication with international trade partners and customers leads to poor business performance of the company in the global environment.

In the age of globalization and digitalization, where the world has become more and more connected, companies should be aware of their communication approach strategies with partners and customers from the global market. Digitalization in the global market has increased the digital intercultural communication among business partners and customers by using various digitalized channels, such as social media channels and websites (Lifintsev & Wellbrock, 2019). For this reason, companies should be aware of culturally sensitive content when approaching a specific global market, which may differ from their domestic market. This shows that being aware of intercultural background of your partners and customers may avoid cultural sensitivity obstacles during business communication. According to Fletcher (2006) companies using digitalized channels to approach their global partners and customers should take into consideration their cultural background and perform adjustments on their website design, content, colours, etc. In some cases, the same design and content can be used for different cultural clusters, namely, countries similar to each other with their national cultures, however in some extreme cases a completely new website design and content should be set up to approach a specific target group.

Because cross-cultural interaction has become vital, the need to understand the different patterns among cultures has arisen (Matthews & Thakkar, 2012). Indeed, people within a specific group may share the same cultural values and norms (Godwyn & Gittell, 2012), they can also differ from each other, which is explained under the term "human unique personality". The differences between behaviors of individuals within a specific cultural group due to their unique personality may arise new sub-cultures within the same cultural group, which explains why generalizing and stereotyping of culture is not always the right path to be approached (Dahl, 2004).

Individuals may belong to several sub-cultures within the same national culture, this makes the analyzing of different sub-cultures and individual's behaviors not easy to be performed, for this reason, analyzing in-depth perspectives of people on national cultures can grasp the richness of cultural values of a specific culture (Dahl, 2004).

2.2.   Culture & its definition

Since birth, people are immersed within specific social values and norms shared within their family and specific social network groups (Little, 2016). These social values and norms indicate their manners of handling and evaluating different life situations, such as the differences between good/bad, moral/immoral, allowed/not allowed, and acceptable/unacceptable. Social norms and values differ from a person to other based on his/her specific cultural group. For this reason, understanding how the term culture has been defined in the literature is essential before performing any cross-cultural research. Various researchers have explained the term culture in different contexts and academic fields. Levin, Park, and Kim (2007) define culture as a "collective phenomenon" shared among the members of a specific social group, that differentiate the members of the groups from others (p. 207). Moreover, Hofstede (2004) as one of the most famous later thinkers in the field of intercultural studies defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (p. 4). In alignment with the mentioned definitions of culture, other researchers have expanded their definitions to include more concepts, where the term "culture" was finally associated to specific groups of people who share the same beliefs, patterns, norms, attitudes, and behaviors, which has a major impact on their interpretation on how other people act (Godwyn & Gittell, 2012; Spencer-Oatey, 2000).

Furthermore, it is also important to note that culture is divided into different levels, where not all levels are visible during human social interaction. According to Dahl (2004) culture is based on an "iceberg module", where it consists of the following two levels: invisible level and the visible level. The invisible level contains values that are not seen during the interaction with an individual, but these values play a key role initiating the visible level, namely, behaviors of individuals. Building on this, Hofstede (2004) expanded the levels of culture to four, namely, "values, rituals, heroes, and symbols. Hofstede shows that culture upper layers are dependent from the under-

layers, where the combination of these layers together represent a specific culture. Symbols are specific words, colors, and logos that have a special meaning within a specific cultural group, while heroes are (public) figures that represent the values of the culture. Finally, rituals are collective activities shared within the individuals of a specific cultural group, such as the way of greeting each other. Given the above perspectives on culture, in this thesis, the definition of culture by Godwyn and Gittell (2012) is adapted and considered as basement, which shows that **people within the same cultural group may share the same patterns. beliefs. attitudes, and behaviors, which consequently have a major impact on their interpretation on how other people act.**

2.3. Addressing (national) culture & critiques

Even though the above definition of culture is rather clear and well-accepted, there are considerable controversies about the level of analysis that should be used in addressing culture and cultural differences. According to Hofstede (2004), culture has the following levels and dimensions: national level, regional/ religious/linguistic level, gender level, organizational level, and individual level. National culture is defined as fundamental of the early childhood socialization process of people, which shapes their core values and beliefs (Hofstede et al., 2010). During the past decades, more and more researchers in the field of intercultural and cross-cultural studies have developed frameworks based on quantitative research, to indicate specific cultural aspects that may point out similarities and differences among various national cultures. The most used quantitative model is the cultural dimensions framework of Hofstede (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004)[1]. However, people may belong to different sub-cultures (Dahl, 2004), but their norms and values are the most shaped on basis of their national culture (Smith, 2004). For this reason, national culture indicated by various quantitative studies is common in cross-cultural studies, such as the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (2004).

Hofstede as one of the most famous later thinkers in the field of cross-cultural studies explains that defining specific cultural dimensions is important to add structure to a large amount

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[1] In this paper, the newest version of Hofstede's framework (2010) is not used, as it does not cover new updates on the Emirati culture.

of cultural information, otherwise the information is too complicated to grasp. For this reason, Hofstede (1980) conducted a quantitative cross-cultural research surveying employee of the multinational IBM cooperation subsidiaries in more than 50 countries. During this research, Hofstede had surveyed 116,000 multi-national individuals of IBM spread over 3 regions. Moreover, these questionnaires were analyzed using factor analysis at national culture level (countries level), which has led to the indication of four cultural dimensions, namely, Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, and Uncertainty Avoidance. These dimensions were expanded later to include two extra dimensions, namely, long-term orientation, and indulgence (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004).

The mentioned cultural dimensions have been commonly used in the past years by Hofstede and other researchers in studying cross-cultural research to measure cultural differences among various national cultures (countries) in order to avoid possible cultural clashes, take advantage of any cultural opportunities and respond the needs of the market. Below, the five dimensions of Hofstede's theory are briefly described (Hofstede et al., 2010).

- Power Distance: this dimension indicates the acceptance and expectation of inequality among people. In low power distance culture, power holders are not expected to use their power for their own benefits and employees expect to be consulted in important decisions. In high power distance cultures, social relations are autocratic. High power distance societies are made up of different social levels, where less powerful members of society should expect and accept the social inequality.

- Individualism vs. Collectivism: this dimension indicates the degree of interdependence among the members of a society. In Individualist societies people look after themselves and their nuclear family only. In Collectivist societies people are loyal to their extended families and tend to resolve problems by keeping harmony within the group.

- Masculinity vs. Femininity: This dimension indicates the distribution of roles between men and women in a society. In feminine cultures, men and women have the same tasks and they pay attention to emotions, environment, and weak people. In masculine cultures indicates that the society will be driven by competition, achievement, and success. Men

and women have different tasks and jobs not only in the society but also at home. The society is driven by competition, achievement, and success.

- Uncertainty avoidance: this dimension indicates the fear for the future within a society. How high is the uncertainty, how people are restricted to rules and religion to avoid any uncertainties. Members of this society feel threatened by ambiguous situations or innovative products.

- Long term vs. Short-term orientation: this dimension shows if society is focused on the future or at present. Short-term oriented societies focus on present issues, such as contracting a deal with a new partner without taking long-term relationship into consideration, while in long-term oriented societies the focus is on sustaining long-term relationships with business partners instead of winning negotiations and contracting a deal (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Talking specifically about both Emirati and Dutch national cultures, according to Hofstede's quantitative national culture study (2004), the Dutch and Emirati cultures extremely differ from each other. In the table below, table 1, the differences between the Emirati and Dutch cultures according to the cultural dimensions of Hofstede are presented (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004). It appears that the Dutch culture has a low power distance, where people have low hierarchy and employees are expected to be consulted in important decisions, while in the UAE power holders are expected to use high hierarchy level or power for their personal benefits. On the other hand, the Dutch culture scores high on the dimension of individualism, which shows that the member of this society are not interdependent on other individuals and are focused on their own goals and personal issues. In contrast, the Emiratis have an extended network of social relations and are interdependent on their cultural group members. For this reason, conflicts and directly given complaints are expected to be avoided in the Emirati culture in order to keep harmony in the group. On the dimensions of masculinity, the Netherlands scores very low, which means that gender does not affect the distribution of roles in home or work, while the Emirati culture scores average on this dimension, which means that roles are distributed according to gender and society is driven by competition, achievement, and success values. Furthermore, the Emirati culture scores high on

the dimension of uncertainty avoidance, which shows that Emiratis have the fear of future and unexpected issues. For this reason, the Emirati culture strictly follows religion rules to avoid any ambiguous situations. The Dutch culture scores average on this dimension, which shows that Dutch are more flexible in accepting ambiguous situations and innovative products. Finally, Hofstede (2004) has not researched how the Emirati national culture scores regarding the latest updated dimensions of Hofstede, namely, long-term orientation, and indulgence. For this reason, comparing both national cultures on the aforementioned dimensions is not possible in this case.

Hofstede's dimension	NL	UAE
Power Distance	38 Low Power Distance	90 High Power Distance
Individualism	80 Individualism	25 Collectivism
Masculinity	14 Femininity	50 (average) masculinity
Uncertainty avoidance	53 Average uncertainty avoidance	80 High uncertainty avoidance
Long term orientation	67 Long term oriented	-

Table 1, the differences between the Emirati and Dutch national cultures according to the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (2004)

Despite the fact that national culture impacts the norms and values of individuals coming from the same country, it should be taken into consideration that national culture does not necessarily predict the behaviors of these individuals, but it shows if the person belongs or does not belong to a specific national culture (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). This means that people within a specific group may share the same cultural values and norms (Godwyn & Gittell, 2012), but they can also differ from each other, which is explained under the term "human unique personality". The differences between behaviors of individuals within a specific cultural group due to their unique personality may give rise to new sub-cultures within the same cultural group, which explains why generalizing and stereotyping of cultures, under the term national culture, by using quantitative frameworks is not always the right path to tread (Dahl, 2004).

Due to various reasons, such as globalization, Heyes (2009) shows that culture may also evolve, which leads to changes in cultural behvaiors. To explain this point, the study of Alteneiji (2015) is a clear example, which has discussed cultural change. Alteneiji (2015) shows that the perspective how people may behave on some actions or events may change due to cultural evolution. In order to prove this statement, Alteneiji (2015) has quantitively researched the Emirati

culture by using a questionnaire, which allows the researcher to compare the scores of Emiratis on the cultural dimensions quantitative framework of Hofstede (2004) with already known scores conducted by Hofstede (2004) himself. The results of Alteneiji (2015) shows a variance compared to the scores of the UAE national culture in the study of Hofstede 30 years ago. According to Alteneiji (2015), the participants have scored significantly lower on the following three cultural dimensions, namely lower on power distance, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance.

Because of the aforementioned reasons and drawbacks, different studies have criticized the quantitative school within intercultural and cross-cultural studies, as it does not grasp the richness and development of cultural values. According to Clausen (2010), depending on national culture in cross-cultural and intercultural studies are insufficient to capture the depth of the culture under examination and cannot fully describe possible cultural clashes. Clausen (2010) also points out that generalized national culture studies, such as the study of Hofstede (2004), has emerged unnecessary stereotypes of cultural values of individuals belonging to specific national culture. Stereotypes are defined as "simplified categorizations and preconceptions of others" (Clausen, 2010). These stereotypes lead to the creation of fixed assumptions about a specific cultural group, that can restrain intercultural communication and lead to more cultural clashes (Beamer & Varner, 2005), especially in management issues (Clausen, 2010). Furthermore, depending on generalized national culture studies is not relevant to fully capture work-related cultural values, because these studies are rigid and do not take time period or type of work into consideration (Fang , 2005). Fang (2005) shows that although the study of Hofstede seems to indicate that Sweden is feminine (2004), but currently we can also see the masculine side of Swedish working environment, due to the high speed and scale of Swedish firms, which generates more doubts about the usefulness of quantitively studying of inter and cross-cultural researches, such as Hofstede. In sum, *relying on quantitative analysis of national culture in intercultural and cross-cultural studies is not sufficient, because it does not grasp the richness and development of intercultural behaviors and values.*

2.4. Cultural Standards

The above-mentioned arguments underline some intrinsic limitations of quantitative inter and cross-cultural studies and show their inability to grasp the richness and development of typical cultural behaviors on personal and professional aspects. This holds particularly true when researchers aim to understand the reason behind individuals' behaviors and cultural clashes during interaction among people from different cultural backgrounds. For this reason, in this paper, the qualitive research methodology framework of Thomas (1991) will be implemented to grasp the depth and richness of Emirati cultural values. Thomas, one of the first authors in the field of cross-cultural studies, started using qualitative research approaches to indicate cultural differences among national cultures, by which he established the cultural standards theory. According to Thomas (1991), having cultural awareness on other cultures means that you have a "system of orientation", which shows how in-depth is your knowledge about a specific cultural background, so you can behave according to this system.

Thomas (1991) adds that each national group has developed his own *cultural standards, which are indicators of the way the majority of a specific cultural group perceive, think and behave on different life situations*. In addition, Thomas (1991) has discussed that cultural standards of a specific cultural group are affected by its environment, where cultural standards specify which typical behaviors people of a specific cultural group show in social, private, and professional event. These typical behaviors are mostly observable and controlled by cultural standards. These cultural standards mostly take place unconsciously because they emerge from underlying and unobservable cultural values. This means that cultural standards of each specific cultural group identify what is "normal", "abnormal", "appropriate", and "inpatriate" for their cultural group (Thomas, 1996).

However cultural behaviors are observable, but cultural values are not directly observable during human interaction as they represent the underlying invisible source of typical cultural behaviors and standards, which strongly affects the selection and evaluation behaviors of people (Schwartz, 1999). Thomas and the other scholars following his framework have interchangeably used the terms cultural standard, cultural behavior, and cultural values in their research (Thomas, 1991; Rosemann, 2021). For these reasons, this paper modifies the research framework of Thomas (1991) by not using the afore-mentioned terms interchangeably, but separately. This means that this paper considers cultural behaviors as directly observable typical behaviors that emerge during

interaction, where similar cultural behaviors are clustered under the term "cultural standards". On the other hand, (tentative) cultural values are used totally separately from the terminologies "cultural standard" and "cultural behaviors" in this research, as they are totally different terms.

Due to the variance in cultural standards among different cultural groups, people from different cultural groups may behave differently in specific occasions, which can lead to cultural clashes (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009). This means that individuals from other countries interacting with the nationals of a specific country (or cultural group) will easily criticize the behaviors of the others and expect them to behave according to their cultural standards and orientation patterns. In order to understand how people of a specific country encounter the cultural standards of a specific national culture individuals need to immerge themselves in that culture and not observe from a bird-eye perspective such as researchers like Hofstede are doing. For this reason, Thomas (2003) focused on possible behavioral cultural clashes that can occur when people from different cultural backgrounds with different underlying cultural standards, encounter and used the qualitative research interviewing technique, "critical incidents", which is also implemented in the analysis of this paper (Urquhart, et al., 2003). Below, the Emirati and Dutch cultural characteristics are indicated on basis of the previous intercultural qualitative academic literature.

2.4.1. Arab/Emirati cultural characteristics

The UAE is a country in the Middle East and consists of seven Emirates, namely Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Um al-Qaiwain, Fujairah, Ajman and Ra's al-Khaimah (Tahir, 2018). The country belongs to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which besides UAE consists of the following countries: Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain. Due to its political stability and the oil revolution in the 1970's in the GCC region, the country has evolved significantly in the past few decades in the field of socioeconomic, education, and tourism (Maher, 2010). Expatriates in the UAE form more than 80% of the total population (Willemyns, 2008), and also form the greatest workforce source of the country. It is thus evident that UAE can be thought of as a conglomerate of different cultural backgrounds.

Besides the cultural dimension findings of Hofstede (2004), which shows that the Emirati and Dutch culture extremely differ, various qualitative research has shown that the UAE culture is very different from the western culture (Tahir, 2018). Maher (2010) shows that the core values of the

Emirati culture are driven by the national religion in the country, namely the "Islam", ass the case in other GCC region countries, such as Saudi Arabia, where religion is the underlying value of the various typical Emirati cultural behaviors on the personal and professional aspects. Also, the values of the origin of the majority Emiratis, which goes back to the Bedouin tribe, influence the typical behaviors of Emiratis, such as the leadership style, where Bedouin are used to accept all the decisions made by the leader of the tribe. (Riel, 2013). Moreover, the theory of Ibn Khaldun shows that Bedouins used to ensure solidarity of the society during conquering cities populated with urbanized people with different cultures and beliefs in order to avoid inequality, ensure social solidarity, and display civilization (Gregg, 2005). This is also the case in the UAE, where the country ensures freedom of religion choice and religious practices by non-Muslims, which is not familiar in other conservative Islamic societies (El-Aswad, 2013). The tolerance of Emiratis appears in their open and respectful behaviors towards non-Muslim expatriates, such as it is in the past years very usual in the UAE to decorate public places with Christmas decorations in the holiday season (Alteneiji, 2015).

Yet, albeit is modernized, various Emirati behaviors are not strongly changed (El-Aswad, 2013). Emirati women studying in English or American universities with Western teaching values in the UAE have not been affected extremely by the Western values and sticked to their core Emirati-Muslim cultural values (Maher, 2010). Crabtree (2007) agrees with Maher (2010) and shows that although the UAE has undergone huge social development, the Emirati family cultural values, which emerge from Bedouin values, have not been significantly affected. Crabtree (2007) points out that the Emirati families may value sons more than daughters, which is clear to see in their task division and career expectations. Male kids are expected to have a professional career and given more opportunities to lead the family and family business, while female kids are expected to marry after finishing education and in some cases, they might follow their career dream, but only in alignment with their families (Crabtree, 2007). Behaviors regarding social division between genders have been discussed in previous research and shows that Bedouin traditions support this behavior (Abu-Lughod, 2010). The following Emirati metaphor explains the aforementioned Emirati behaviors (Al Khamiri, 2015):

- "As they say, 'you'll always worry about your daughter"   هم البنات لين الممات

In business, Farrell (2008) agrees with Crabtree on the under-estimation of women workforce, especially in the managerial positions. Farrell (2008) also shows that extended family ethics and networks are very important factors in the entry of women into private working sectors and in holding managerial positions. According to Tahir's research (2018) western expatriate women, who are holding managerial position in Dubai find the cooperation with their Emirati male colleagues less effective. Emirati male workers are not used to be managed by women, especially in specific managerial positions, which can lead to low effectivity of cooperation and communication (Tahir, 2018).

Some research of the intercultural and cross-cultural literature analyzes Arab culture it as one undividable culture. In these researches the Arab culture, , where the Emirati culture is also part of it, is considered as a collectivist culture, where the members of this cultural group appreciate trust and long-term connections but tend to behave ambiguously, less open, and less trusting in strangers (Al Omoush, Yaseen, & Alma'aitah, 2012). This general point on the Arabic cultural behaviors has further been explained regarding the UAE specifically by Tahir (2018), who shows that trust and long-term oriented relationships are essential in business management with Emiratis, which has not been changed during the past years. Emiratis prefer to build trust and bond with their business partners before starting any serious business, which shows that no separation is done between work and personal life and that Emiratis seek to build up trustful, long-term relationships with business partners (Tahir, 2018). Willemyns (2008) contradicts Tahir (2018) regarding the recent change in Emirati business management behaviors during the past years, where he shows that Emirati business management behaviors have been shifted from extreme collectivist to modern, westernized management attitudes and practices.

Talking more on the cultural characteristics in the business in the UAE, the qualitative study of AlMazrouei and Pech (2015) show that the official spoken language in the UAE, namely Arabic, is the most important reason behind miscommunications and cultural clashes among Emiratis and expatiates, especially in business management. The reason behind this is the lack of English knowledge among the Emirati employees, which makes the communication between expatriate managers and these employees very difficult. Furthermore, the study of AlMazrouei and Pech (2015) also shows that time management has different meaning in the UAE according to the perspective of Western expatriate managers in the UAE. This research shows that in contrast to

the western culture, where time and deadlines are quite well-scheduled, in the UAE it is usual to postpone meetings or have delays on the last moment. The frequently used word by the Emiratis "inshallah", literally means "If God's will", expresses the underlying value of the afore-mentioned time management related behaviors by Emiratis. On the other hand, Naumova, Bilan and Naumova (2019) show that Emiratis value social status, which motivates them to purchase luxury goods in order to show prestige, generosity, and avoid any social shame feelings.

As it is clear some qualitative research has already been done to explore the Emirati cultural behaviors from the perspective of different expatriate groups living and working in the UAE, but no studies have been carried out to explore the Emirati behaviors and cultural standards from the perspective of expatriate Dutch businessmen in the UAE, which can help to unpack the cultural differences between NL and UAE. In order to fill this gap in the international business literature and give practical recommendation for Dutch businessmen planning to work or invest in the Emirates, this research addresses the aforementioned theoretical and practical gaps by performing an in-depth qualitative examination of the Emirati culture through the perspective of Dutch expats living and working in the Emirates. Because this paper is focused on the concept of cultural standards defined by Thomas (1991), which is written in German and mostly used in the German scientific literature, only little scientific research have been conducted to identify the cultural standards in English or other languages. Yet, the very little research done on the Arab/Emirati cultural characteristics by using the cultural standards theory by Thomas (1991) allows to identify the following elements (Rizk-Antonious, 2020; Iranee, 2013).

➢ **Relationship-oriented/Family orientation**
   Arabs in general and Gulf countries especially, such as the UAE have high relationship orientation. Individuals are not only loyal to their nuclear families but also to their extend families, where they tend to keep harmony and avoid any possible clashes that can ruin these long-term oriented relationships. For this reason, Arabs have a dense network of relationships, which include their extended family members and friends. In order to show loyalty, Arabs tend to avoid any possible conflicts between the group members in work or family to keep harmony. This means that open criticism, complaints, and direct reprimands are frowned upon.

➢ **Hospitality**

Arabs are known for their hospitality. Rejecting a gift or an invitation is seen as rejecting their generosity and hospitality, which lead to possible cultural clashes. The following Arabic saying explains this cultural standard (Abu Najim, 2021):

- إذا بغيت الجود دق أهله   If you want generosity, then ask for its people

➢ **Steep hierarchy**

Respected people, such as the elderly or people with special status, are first welcomed and especially appreciated. Kissing the forehead is a sign of respect. Managers are expected to use their power in order to make crucial decisions without consulting employees lower in hierarchy position.

➢ **Shame culture**

Arabs and especially Emiratis are very proud of their origins and culture. Though, they concern about other's opinions and try to avoid face shame by keeping their social values from any breach.

➢ **Tendency towards lengthy negotiations and haggling**

Most of the time, what has been said applies, as what is written does not matter much. Arabic words such as, "Inshallah" (God willing), "Boukra" (tomorrow), "Malesh" (does not matter) are widely used as indirect ways of communication. This can lead to misunderstandings by other cultures, especially during negotiations, where "Inshallah" (God willing) may mean "No" or "Yes".

2.4.2. Dutch cultural standards

In this sub-chapter the most important Dutch cultural standards perceived by Germans are indicated by using the thesis results of Rosemann (2021).

➢ **Collective decision making**

Dutch people tend to have a team decision making. At work, Dutch give feedback to each other and accept their tips to be accepted by their colleagues or managers. Employees can also give their ideas and opinions about some critical and strategical decisions in the company.

➢ **(Technological) innovativeness**

Dutch are very open for new and innovative technological solutions.

➢ **Flat hierarchy**

Dutch people see everyone as equal. For this reason, in the business life, Dutch employees are discussed in the decision making by their managers. Employees can approach their managers and higher direction directly without the need for an intermediate.

➢ **Friendly atmosphere**

Dutch are very friendly at work and try to avoid problems to ensure positive and enjoyable working ambiance.

➢ **Informality**

Dutch people tend to change some processes and rules according to the situation in an informal way. People do rarely address each other with "U" (you with respect) or with sir/madam, but instead with their first names, even in the case of managers and people with higher positions.

➢ **Directness**

Telling people your opinion directly without any filters is a typica Dutch behavior. Dutch people tend to express their feelings and feedback in a direct way without considering the way the other person will perceive it.

➢ **Freedom of action**

This cultural standard shows that Dutch people prefer performing their tasks individually, where each person independently does his/her best to accomplish the given task. This means

that Dutch people appreciate working in companies, where they are given all the freedom to indecently perform without the interference of their managers or other colleagues.

➤ **Solution orientation**

Dutch are known for taking responsibility to try their utmost to resolve problems mostly individually.

➤ **Job opportunity**

It is very usual to give work opportunities to young talents and people with high growth potential, where opportunities are equally given based on merit.

➤ **Anti-authoritarianism**

Not accepting any forms of bureaucracy and rules given from above but tend to question these rules.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

To carry out accurate research, a correct collection and analyzing process of data is required. This chapter introduces the research design and clarifies the reason behind the chosen instruments and techniques in order to collect, sample, analyze, and interpret the results of this research.

3.1. Research design

A qualitative research methodology was used during this study. The reason behind choosing qualitative research methodology for this research is because quantitative techniques cannot grasp the richness and development of cultural standards and its underlying values (Clausen, 2010), while qualitative research methodologies in intercultural studies have proven their ability in bringing in-depth understanding of behaviors and processes (Quadros Rigoni, 2016). It is also important to mention for the reader, that the researcher is aware of the limitations that are potentially combined to using qualitative methodologies in studying intercultural topics. Below, the related cons to qualitive design in cross-cultural studies (Kvale, 1996):

o The objectivity of the researcher may be biased by showing feelings and empathy with the interviewees, which can affect the outcomes of the study.

o Comparing cross-cultural similarities and differences is difficult due to the challenge of processing diverse context of data, which vary from each other, but at the same time should have common cross-national patterns (Quadros Rigoni, 2016).

As this study follows the qualitative theoretical framework of Thomas (1991), where cultural standards of a specific culture are indicated based on possible cultural clashes that occur when people from different cultural backgrounds with different cultural standards cooperate, the approach of this research is "Emic". "Emic" in cultural research refers to the study of a specific culture by having the inner perspective of view of individuals from other cultural background (Markee, 2012). By following Emic approach in this paper, we can understand how Dutch nationals perceive the Emirati culture, which will help us to indicate possible new Emirati cultural standards. For this reason, the qualitative research interviewing technique of Thomas, namely

"critical incidents" (Urquhart, et al., 2003), has been used and implemented by the researcher of this paper as this techniques enables the researcher through the interviews to identify the Emirati cultural standards through the perspective of Dutch expatriates living in the UAE and work daily with Emiratis.

3.2. Data collection

During this research, the theoretical framework of Thomas (1991) has been used in order to indicate Emirati cultural standards based on how Dutch expatriates in the UAE perceive/have perceived Emirati typical behaviors during their interaction with Emiratis on personal and professional levels. This means that primary data were collected by following inductive approach. During this inductive reasoning, primary data, namely observations of Dutch expatriate on typical Emirati behaviors, are set to generalized inferences, namely Emirati cultural standards. In this subchapter, the technique(s) used to collect the data, the focus of the research, and background information on the interview participants are identified.

Furthermore, data will be collected using in-depth semi-structured, exploratory, interviews, where besides the already prepared questions, the researcher may also ask the interviewees additional in-depth questions as needed to extract in-depth information (Galletta, 2001). This instrument was used because it can explore in-depth perspective and opinions of various respondents on the same topic, and its standardized format can be used to interview respondents from different professional, educational, and personal backgrounds (Barriball & While, 1994). Also, it allows the comparison between the emerging themes more easily. On the other hand, it is also important to mention that the researcher is aware of the disadvantages related to the usage of semi-structured interviews, namely the high time, energy and sophistication needed for the conduction and process of the interviews (Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey, 2010)

3.3. Sampling

To address the main research question of this paper, namely in-depth perception on the Emirati cultural behaviors through the perspective of Dutch expatiates in the UAE, participants were selected on basis of the following two conditions:

- They live/have lived in the UAE, which ensures that they have physical interaction with Emiratis on the personal level
- They work/have worked with Emiratis daily, which ensures that they perceive/have perceived professional interaction with Emirati nationals

On basis of the above conditions, the researcher contacted the embassy of the United Arab Emirates in the Hague, the chamber of commerce, the Dutch Embassy in the United Arab Emirates, and also utilized social media channels, such as Facebook and LinkedIn to achieve his target group of potential participants. Most of the interviewees were members of a Facebook group called "Dutchies in de Verenigde Arabische Emiraten", who were approached by the researcher by a post explaining the objective of his research and asking for potential participants, who may be interested to know more about the topic in case they desire to participate. Indeed, different potential participants voluntarily approached the researcher directly, where some people also suggested people who may also be interested. Hence, both purposive sampling and snowball sampling were adopted in this research.

The interviewer ensured the choice of a heterogenous participants with variance in terms of gender, age, duration of staying and working in the UAE, and the carrier sector in which the interviewees are active. This to ensure that the results concluded from the interviews with the focus group significantly represent the perspective view of population, namely Dutch expatriates in the UAE regarding the typical Emirati behaviors on both the personal and professional aspects. This is done by asking the candidates the following questions before selecting them as interviewees for this research:

- ➢ Do/did you live in the UAE?
- ➢ Do/did you work with Emirati nationals daily?
- ➢ How long have you been living and working in the UAE?
- ➢ What is your job position?
- ➢ In which industry is your company active in?
- ➢ What is your age?

Based on these preliminary questions, 15 Dutch expatriates in the UAE, who met the conditions set by the researcher, decided to participate on a voluntary basis. The gender of the participants is divided into 11 males and 4 females with an age group that varies from 32 to 64 years old. The interviewees are distributed over different professional sectors, each with his/her own job position. The work experience of the interviewees varied from 5 months to 13 years. In the table below, table 2, detailed information on the interviewees is indicated.

Number	Experience in the UAE with Emiratis	Age (years)	Gender	City/Emirate	Job position	Sector of company
1	2,5 years	42	Female	Abu Dhabi	RN	Healthcare
2	5 years	61	Male	Abu Dhabi	Clinical educatory	Healthcare
3	12 years	62	Male	Dubai	CEO	Saftey related products
4	10 years	32	Female	Dubai	Dutch Community Manager for Dubai Tourism.	Tourisim
5	10 years	37	Male	Abu Dhabi	CEO	Logistics &management
6	5 months	32	Male	Abu Dhabi	Head office management	Investments
7	9 months	49	Male	Abu Dhabi	Sr. Techn. Manager	Marine construction
8	7,5 years	57	Male	Dubai	Monitoring enginering	Aviation
9	7 years	50	Female	Dubai	CEO	Psychic abilities
10	13 years	51	Male	Dubai	General manager	Manufacturing
11	2 years	64	Male	Dubai	Software Engineering Manager	Aviation
12	3 years	35	Male	Dubai	Fysiotherpeaut	Healthcare
13	11 years	33	Male	Dubai	Strategy & development head of business	Aviation
14	6,5 years	52	Male	Dubai	Director Channel MEA	ICT cyber security
15	6 years	50	Female	Abu Dhabi	Hospital elite health/ultrasound systems	Medical/Healthcare

Table 2, detailed information on the interview participants

The interviews were separately held from July to August 2021 by using online video calling system, namely Microsoft Teams. The interviewees had the freedom of choosing the language of the interview, where the majority of the interviewees have chosen English as main language to conduct the interview except one interviewee who preferred talking in Dutch. The interviewees were asked questions divided on the following three themes: interaction with the Emirati culture on the personal level, interaction with the Emirati culture on the professional level, and the comparison between both Emirati and Dutch cultural behaviors. For more information on the interview protocol, see Appendix 1. Moreover, the interviews were recorded by using the video recording option offered by Microsoft Teams. In addition, in order to ensure the saving process of the interviews an additional program was used to voice record the interviews by using the application "Voice recorder". These recordings were saved in the portable computer of the researcher. On average the interviews took 45 minutes varied from 33 minutes to 66 minutes. Finally, it is also important to mention that both, the researcher and the interviewees, have signed

the consent form of this research, which was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Twente in July 2021.

The data delivered by the conducted interviews were transcribed verbatim. Personal information of the interviewees, such as their names and company were concealed during the transcription process according to the conditions of the signed consent form of this research, which was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Twente in July 2021. In this way anonymity and privacy were guaranteed. Also, some grammatical corrections were made for English interviews, while a double-check translation from Dutch to English was implemented by the researcher and a bilingual person to ensure a good reliability of transcribing and translating to the interview, which was conducted in Dutch.

3.4. Data Analysis

By following the Gioia's (2012) inductive research coding methodology, the conducted interviews were coded into first, second, and third order themes. Furthermore, thematic data analysis was followed to process the raw data of this research into final results (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was used because of its ability to enable the researcher to indicate differences in data easily, to divide large interview texts into codes and themes by following Gioia's (2012) methodology, and to discover new insights to address the research questions. The following six steps of thematic data analysis were implemented in this research.

➢ Familiarizing yourself with your data: The interviewer has transcribed the data by his own, reread the transcribed texts, and highlight critical incidents mentioned by the interviewees. Doing this have enabled the researcher to get familiar with the content of the conducted interviews.

➢ Generating initial codes: The transcribed interviews will be analyzed by setting initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) across the transcripts, which will help the author to analyze the data easily. These initial codes correspond to first order themes of e Gioia's (2012) inductive research coding methodology. In this research, the critical incidents mentioned by the interviewees were compared and similar incidents were coded into first order themes, namely "Typical Emirati cultural

behaviors". Each code represents a number of similar critical incidents that can be identified by a specific typical Emirati cultural behavior. This step was repeated thrice, where some codes were combined, modified, or removed in order to ensure an objective and reliable coding process that represents the perspective of the interviewees. During this step, the researcher has noticed a repetition of patterns among the 15 conducted interviews, for this reason the researcher was confident of achieved content saturation and stopped taking extra interviews.

➢ Searching for themes: According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the made initial codes or first order themes of Gioia's (2012) methodology with similar patterns will be aggregated together into potential themes, which correspond to the second order themes of Gioia's (2012) methodology, namely "cultural standards". Consequently, the second order themes, were set to third odder themes, namely the underlying values.

➢ Reviewing themes: this step has given the researcher an opportunity to check if the indicated themes cover all of the initial codes of the transcripts. In this case the second order themes were reviewed to ensure it covers all the first order themes generated by the critical incidents mentioned by the interviewees of this research. For extra validation on the initiated codes, the researcher has discussed the second and the third order themes with a Focus group consisted of two Emirati nationals, who have helped the researcher in reviewing the themes and explaining the underlying values beyond some of the cultural standards. This step helped the researcher to expand his insight on the topic and open up his thinking boundaries by avoiding his thinking limitations in a specific area and ensure avoiding any possible biases that can occur (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012).

➢ Defining and naming the themes: themes were named and given a description. In the case of this paper, the themes will represent the Emirati cultural behaviors as first order themes, Emirati cultural standards as second order themes, and the underlying values as third order themes.

➢ Producing the report: The above-indicated themes, namely Emirati cultural standards, were related to the main and sub-research question(s) of this paper and will finally indicate how Dutch expats in the UAE perceive the Emirati culture.

Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter the findings of the conducted research are indicated. The findings aim at answering the sub-questions of this research and finally answering the main research question:

"How do Dutch expatriates in the UAE perceive the Emirati culture during daily interaction with Emiratis?"

The critical incidents mentioned by the interviewees were coded into first order themes, which represent Emirati typical cultural behaviors on the personal and professional levels. Similar first order themes of this research were then linked together into second order themes, namely specific Emirati cultural standards. In order to deeply understand the cultural logic behind (some) of the conducted Emirati cultural standards during interaction on both the personal and professional levels, third order themes were identified, namely the tentative underlying cultural values. These tentative underlying values engender the interaction among various second order themes. Finally, the demographical and social variances among Emiratis were mentioned by the interviewees and the impact of these demographical and social variances on the Emirati cultural standards are briefly discussed on basis of the conducted interviews.

4.1 Emirati cultural standards

During the interviews several critical incidents were mentioned, which have led to 30 typical behaviors (first order themes). These Emirati typical behaviors were then coded into total number of 12 Emirati cultural standards (second order themes). In the table below, table 3, you can find the interpretation among the coded Emirati cultural behaviors (first order themes) perceived by Dutch nationals working and living in the UAE, which were the coded into second order themes, namely Emirati cultural standards, which are briefly defined. Each cultural standard objectively represents a specific group of similar typical Emirati behaviors. In this table, namely table 3, the total number of interviewees, who have mentioned critical incidents that have led to this coding process is indicated. Furthermore, the Emirati cultural standards are explained in this sub-chapter. For detailed explanation on the Emirati typical behaviors on the personal and professional sides perceived by the interviewees, namely Dutch expatriates in the UAE, check appendix 2.

Typical Emirati cultural behavior (first order themes)	Number of interviewees mentioned this behavoir	Cultural standard (second order themes)	Number of interviewees in total referred to this cultural standard	Definition of cultural standards
Indirectness of communication and unclarity in self-expression,	10	**Highly indirectness**	13	Indirectness and unclarity during self-expression, while one-to-one and non-conferential communication techniques are used
Not open for direct feedback or questions	7			
Individual contact rather than in group	4			
Avoid conflicts by giving compliments	10			
Polite/friendly in communication	7	**Politeness**	7	Friendly and calm in their interaction and discussion with their fellow locals and expatriates in both personal or professional areas
Family oriented	6	**Collective society**	13	Genuine relationships-oriented people, where showing loyalty and trust in each other is more important than buisness
Stick in small groups	6			
Shame and face losss society	6			
Focus on building genuine relationships, especially in business	10			
Mixture of private and work lives	5			
Society is divided in layers	5	**Social division**	14	Trust and openees towards expatriates is based on prejudgemnet of their natioanlity and social levels, which lead to unequal opportunities, especially on the professional aspect
Local people (Emiratis) get more privileges (feeling privileged)	7			
Governmental encouragemnet for Emiratis (Emiratization of the workforce)	10			
Prejudgement based on nationality, especially in busieess	10			
Reserved in dealing with starngers	7			
Network is the basis to achieve personal goals	7	**Principle of Wasta**	7	Usage of own interconnections as intermediary to achieve own objectives and resolve problems
Showing a high prestigious social level in their behaviors	6	**Showing off social status**	12	Showing others in personal and professional events pride in their heritage, social status, and work related (managerial) positions
Showing status by obtaining governmental and managerial positions	4			
Showing pride in their heritage and traditions	3			
Welcoming and geneoristy with guests	6	**Helpful and generous in hospitality**	11	Showing generosity to guests during hospitality and help expatriate colleagues or business partners to resolve any ambiguous or complex problems that they may face during their stay
Helping strangers in resolving private and professional problems	5			
Separation in roles and social activities between genders	6	**Social life seperation between genders**	6	Each gender is expected to have different social activities, tasks, and roles in the society
Tolerance in dealing with people with different religious beliefs	6	**Tolerance and acceptance towrads other cultures and beliefs**	14	Showing tolerance snd acceptance to people from different cultures and beliefs, which is also emphasized by the openness and adaptability of Emiratis to western business culture
Showing understanding to western business cultural behaviors	7			
Mixed of modern and conservative+A1:E21 society (freedom of actions)	9			

Typical Emirati cultural behavior (first order themes)	Number of interviewees mentioned this behavoir	Cultural standard (second order themes)	Number of interviewees in total referred to this cultural standard	Definition of cultural standards
Time fluency (low time sensitivity)	9	Fluency, especially in business	14	Different understanding of time and business deadlines, where bein late or postpoining meetings is not offensive.
Low strictness and punctuality in business and deadlines	5			
Relaxed and easy-going at workplace	10			
Vertical hierarchy in communication	7	High hierarchy	7	People treat each other accoridng to their socia/hierarchical positions
Following rules without questioning	11	Acceptance of strict rules and bureaucracy	11	Ity is expected and well-accepted that eople with higher (managerial) positions use their power to lay down (bureaucratic) rules and regulations.

Table 3, Emirati cultural standards perceived by Dutch nationals living in the UAE and working with Emiratis daily

4.1.1 Highly indirectness

Emiratis use highly indirect communication styles in their interaction with their fellow Emiratis or expatriates in the personal or professional aspects. The following Emirati typical behaviors perceived by Dutch expatriates refer to the cultural standard "highly indirectness": indirectness of communication and unclarity in self-expression, not open for direct feedback or questions, individual contact rather than in group, and avoid conflicts by giving compliments. This means that Emiratis do not express their feelings and opinions directly as they feel, but instead they reformulate them into constructive and indirect feedback or opinions in order to avoid offending people, which can lead to conflicts. For this reason, individual contact is mostly used rather than suggesting ideas and questioning people in public or group discussions. The indirectness in communication can be seen as one of the most important indicators that characterizes the Emirati professional persona.

> *"People don't speak their minds here. You can see that if two people from opposite Arabic tribes even if they are enemies, but they're sitting together and drinking tea and coffee like best friends." (Interviewee 2)*

"I think you will not get straight feedback on your performance. So that might make it difficult in a way to understand what is their opinion about your performance? So, your contract might be terminated without you even knowing what was not good in your performance? So, giving feedback is a very difficult one." (Interviewee 7)

"The interaction with managers, I think they in general they preferred one to one conversation, or at least, that was my impression. But, in a group, if I've whole room full of Emirati and I asked what your opinion is or give me some feedback, then it becomes silent, nobody is really stepping up." (Interviewee 11)

"You need to ask more questions to get it clear. They can be very open ended in communications and in let's say in making agreements. This can be quite tricky, so you need to really take your Dutch roots sometimes to really get clarity on what is yes or no." (Interviewee 14)

Hence, Emiratis use indirectly, one-to-one, and open-ended communication on personal and professional levels by relying on non-conferential techniques, such as giving compliments, not speaking their minds, and not telling conferential or personal sensitive facts to avoid any possible conflicts.

4.1.2 Politeness

The following Emirati typical behavior perceived by Dutch expatriates envisage the cultural standard "politeness": polite/friendly in communication. This shows that Emiratis are prone to show their politeness by having civil and friendly discussions to resolve a problem or discuss a topic, since being rude and unpolite is seen very offensive and can ruin relationships with Emiratis.

"I never ever had any trouble with the local people, even in case of my wife they were very friendly to her. She was adapted into an Emirati family which lives in Ajman. A very nice, open, and friendly." (Interviewee 8)

"When I have Emirati customer, I always say goodbye with a happy heart. That's the truth. If I have an expat customer, I sometimes have pain in my heart like because the remarks they make" (Interviewee 9)

"The discussions are always very polite, very civil, very friendly. I've never had an unpleasant chat really with any of them." (Interviewee 13)

Thus, Emiratis are friendly and calm in their interaction and discussion with their fellow Emiratis or expatriates in the personal or professional areas.

4.1.3 Collective society

Emiratis are group-oriented people, where this cultural standard is clear to see through their behavior in both the personal and professional areas. The following Emirati typical behaviors perceived by Dutch expatriates represent the cultural standard "collective society": family oriented, stick in small groups, shame and face loss society, focus on building genuine relationships, and mixtures of private and work lives. This means that Emiratis do not only appreciate the strong bonds within their own cultural group, such as extend family, bur also seek to establish genuine and intimate relationships with their business relations instead of focusing on only business topics. Emiratis tend to spend their free times, such as breaks at work or holidays talking about private issues mostly with their Emirati friends or family members, which is seen as prove of their loyalty and strong relationship bonds. Moreover, opinions of others are considerably important, where Emiratis may feel ashamed by behaving in a specific way that is not appreciated by their society. For this reason, an Emirati tends to carefully calculate his/her behavior on basis of how their society and family may react on it.

> "In the Arab world the standard what people say is like you first always have one or two coffee meetings, where there's nothing about business. This comes up and back on the family, the relationships, the connections, where the person needs to trust you. So, expect first a couple of meetings just to get to know you and ask those things before starting a business." (*Interviewee* 4)

> *"They're very much strong on the family bond. Unless you get married, you don't leave the house. For example, when I tell my local colleagues that my grandmother is old and not living in with my family, and we have her in an elderly home, then that's a big shame." (Interviewee 4)*

> *"So far, I haven't seen or spoken an Emirati, who will say sorry I don't understand this can you explain me why we are doing this? What is the purpose of doing that? This can lead to losing their face. So, you will look weak." (Interviewee 7)*

> *"Working mainly with Emiratis themselves. I notice Emiratis tend to cling to themselves as well, and like probably will talk about the work environment, but also within their own group. I see that Emiratis try to work together as Emiratis, not so much interacting with the other colleagues, only if it's necessary." (Interviewee 11)*

> *"Especially at work, there's a lot of talk about holidays and family and they want to hear about your holidays and what you're planning and or they want to talk about the Dutch football team." (Interviewee 13)*

From the above-mentioned quotations, it can be concluded that Emiratis are relationship-oriented, where and for them showing loyalty and trust in each other is more very important than when doing business. Family's and own cultural groups' opinions are far more important than the opinion of the individual. This leads to the creation of behavioral patterns in the society, where in which the individuals of this cultural group feel ashamed to perform some behaviors as they are seen as "not appropriate" by the majority of the Emirati society.

4.1.4. Social division

The Emirati society is divided in different social layers, where people get inequal chances as they get prejudged on basis of their nationality, background, and social level during both the personal and professional interactions. The following Emirati typical behaviors perceived by Dutch expatriates represent the cultural standard "social division": society divided in layers, Emiratis get more privileges, governmental encouragement for Emiratis, prejudgments based on nationality, and reserved in dealing with strangers. Emiratis show low trust and distant relationship approach in approaching ambiguous situations or people, especially in business. Due to the low trust, Emiratis tend nowadays to be more prudent when doing business with expats by showing some unclear behaviors, such as applying extra conditions for collaboration. However, Emiratis are reserved in dealing with strangers, but the nationality of an expat plays a major role in the way Emiratis may behave and show trust in an expat. This leads to the creation of unequal chances within the society, which consequently leads to social division. Finally, the encouragement and given opportunities by the Emirati government to its own people, especially in the case of Emiratization of workforce, leads to special privileges for Emiratis, which also leads to social division in the whole society.

> *"The whole society is separated here, so Emiratis live in their own neighborhoods, almost like in a separate state. So, there are very few Emiratis that live in the same place as others live. I'm living in a complex from the hospital. I think there's maybe one or two Emiratis living here. The rest is simply staying in their own places with only Emirati neighbors, etc." (Interviewee 2)*

> *"I was in a sales job also for hotels and there I had some clients in general they were in the first time a little bit distant. That is, in general, their attitude towards expats." (Interviewee 4)*

> *"When announcing job opportunities, they will tell you on the website, these job opportunities are only for locals, or these are for both. Yeah. Or they only for expats*

*that happens us. So, then they will. Then they need only an expat from Europe or from
America for that specific job." (Interviewee 8)*

*"Also, the salaries, Emiratis who are being assigned as a software engineer will be paid
as the scale of a senior software engineer, which is one grade higher than the actual
level of the actual technical level." (Interviewee 11)*

*"Emiratization over here in the private sector is also like upcoming and therefore there
are some people that need to be employed. And they were given this job because it's
good for their standard, but not because they are the smartest." (Interviewee 15)*

Thus, the Emirati society is divided in social levels, which leads to unequal opportunities for people, especially on the professional aspect. Although, Emiratis behave reservedly towards ambiguous situations and strangers, the nationality of an expat indicates the way an Emirati may behave and trust in you.

4.1.5. Principle of Wasta (Network is the basis)

The Emirati society is based on interconnections and extend network to achieve personal and professional objectives. The typical Emirati behavior, namely using network to achieve personal goals and resolve problems, which is perceived by the Dutch interviewees represents the Emirati cultural standard "principle of Wasta". This means that Emiratis highly depend on their network and connections to achieve a specific position, business agreement, or resolve any problem. Family and family network connections are expected to play an important role in providing support for their kids, where the name of the family and the tribe may play an important role in obtaining the needed connections.

*"You have to work on your network to use the principle of Wasta. I will give you an
example, I had a problem with hospital and with insurance and I know a guy, who sent
me information of his connection. So, I talked with this Health Authority guy and when
I use his name in communication with the insurance companies and with the hospital,
they all know him, and they are careful with what he will think about them. So, in that
way he helped me." (Interviewee 3)*

*"I had a problem with my car, I got a fine, which couldn't be me, but according to
police, I was there in certain point in time, and I never been there at all. So, I discussed
it with one of the local colleagues who was a part of my team and he said, well, my
uncle, he's with the police, if you don't mind, I will ask him so this is typical that they*

know somebody, and they would like to help you so they will contact the guy they know." (Interviewee 11)

"Someone in my team had a car accident and it wasn't her fault, still she was blamed because the person who ran into her was an Emirati. So, when she told the story to one of our Emirati colleagues, he said let me go to the police station with you and have a chat with them and then suddenly everything is sorted out very quickly." (Interviewee 13)

In sum, the society is strongly based on the principle of Wasta, which means intermediary, according to which everyone uses his/her own interconnections as intermediary to achieve his/her own objectives.

4.1.6. Showing off social status and pride

Emiratis seek to prove their social status and assets in the society not only on both the personal and professional sides. The following Emirati typical behaviors perceived by Dutch expatriates represent the cultural standard "showing off social status and pride": showing a high prestigious social level in their behaviors, showing status by obtaining governmental and managerial positions, and showing pride in their heritage and traditions. This means that Emirati purchasing behavior is also affected by this cultural standard, where they tend to purchase good quality and luxurious products not only for their selves, but also in case they want to gift them to someone. They do not compare products to each other's, which means that they are low detail and price-quality oriented. Besides purchasing behaviors, Emiratis also always work to be the first, the best, and the brightest in various sections, where according to the interviewees the city of Dubai is the best example on how Emiratis show high social level of development. Not only in social events, but also on the professional side, Emiratis tend to prove their social level. This can be seen by the type of works Emiratis prefer to do because it may represent a specific social level, especially work in governmental institutions as it may give them a specific prestigious appearance. Last but not least, Emiratis are very proud of their nationality, heritage and cultural traditions. Even though Emiratis are modernized, but they still tend to keep their cultural and religious traditions, even the young generation is encouraged to stick to these traditions, which make them proud of being who they are now.

"The atmosphere in the country is totally different here that people are proud. In the 50 years the development has been going very quick, so think of it that you now have a generation where the grand father came from Sharjah to Dubai on his camel in three days and his grandson is now taking his Maserati car and does it in 15 minutes. These two people are sitting together on one table, but they do recognize that they are from the same background. The country is very much involved in taking care that all traditions are recognized by the younger generation." (Interviewee 3)

"If a baby got born, there will be a gift of €100 euros, while in the Netherlands you would maybe give a box of chocolates or a bouquet of flowers." (Interviewee 4)

"I noticed that the Emiratis are in a lot of government positions. So, you meet them at the immigration, when you arrive at the airport and although officials but except all other jobs, the were not Emiratis in general, at least we arrived in 2012. At that time, they were mainly working for government and the government institutes and not in shops or anywhere else. In the malls for instance, you see them stopping but you don't never see an Emirati working in a shop." (Interviewee 11)

"Emirati culture is just show everything you have. Probably show more than you have. They always want to be the first and the biggest and the fastest." (Interviewee 13)

In sum, Emiratis prefer to show others in personal and professional events how proud they are of their heritage, their social status, and work related (managerial) functions.

4.1.7. Helpful and generous in hospitality

Emiratis are very warm, helpful, and generous people, especially in hospitality. This occurs not only on the professional aspect, but they seek to offer their help and generosity on the personal side too. The following Emirati typical behaviors perceived by Dutch expatriates envisage the cultural standard "helpful and generous in hospitality": welcoming and generosity with guests and helping strangers in resolving private or professional problems. This means that an Emirati would welcome you to his/her house, serve you different types of dishes, offer you a drive back to home, etc. During Ramadan, Emiratis set long tables of food and invite family, relatives, but also expatriate friends to share iftar with them. Also, Emiratis are very willing to help, especially with expats, where they offer them help not only at work, but also on personal level, such as helping in submitting governmental applications. This cultural standard of helping each other shows also that

the giving favor to someone by helping is also making him indebted to return this favor back, which is an equal sum of giving now and taking it back later.

> *"They are really willing to help. I will give you an example. I was halfway to country on a road trip and got a flat tire. Now I had my equipment with me because I'm also off roading, so I have a compressor with me. So, I was thinking to get away to a gas station where I can do the repair. Immediately people stopped and say come, let me help you and I know where this garage is, just follow me. Do you have air enough to get there? Just come and follow me and after that come and have dinner with me." (Interviewee 3)*

> *"And they are very helpful. If you ask them anything they are willing to help. For instance, with the driving license, reverting the Dutch driving license to the UAE one. We have in our project a department called General Services. And that is mainly Emiratis working there, because they relate a lot to local government. One of my colleagues there said get in the car and he drove up to the police station to arrange it for me. They put in the time and the effort to take you along. And indeed, it was arranged." (Interviewee 7)*

> *"I treated Emirati people in in their homes as well. I would say that they are generous, for example, I would have been picked up by a driver and before I start the treatment, I get a lot of food, tea, and snacks. After the treatment, I would always get a gift or a tip." (Interviewee 12)*

Thus, Emiratis show high generosity to their guests during hospitality and do their best to help their expatriate colleagues or business partners to resolve any ambiguous or complex problems that they may face during their stay in the UAE.

4.1.8. Social life separation between genders

The Emirati society recognizes a clear separation of roles, tasks, and social activities between genders. The following Emirati typical behaviors perceived by Dutch expatriates envisage the cultural standard "social life separation between genders": separation in roles and social activities between genders. This means that Emiratis follow some conservative social life limitations, where women have their own tasks, places to go, social activities, and even in governmental institutions specific departments. The communication between men and Emirati women should be kept in the professional frame, while any further communication could be seen offensive.

"Majlises, which is like a common area where the men of the family talk about different subjects and this can be both social and work related. They can discuss projects, they can discuss employees' conflicts, they come up to things and think about the future. This is still a thing that they keep like as a tradition that they still do. The men have their man things that women go shopping or have the kids or something like this. So, this separation is still very much" (Interviewee 4)

"The communication is different from a man to woman. A man is not supposed to talk to a woman other than business. You can also not talk to an Emirati husband and say how beautiful his wife looks, that's offensive. If you say that they think like, why are you looking at my wife, but what's the matter with you? He's not supposed to look at my wife. They don't see it as a compliment. It's offensive Interviewee (Interviewee 9)

"Female Islamic Emirati patients prefer to have a female physical therapist as well. Usually I don't see them, but in some cases when there's a treatment that only I can do or there's no female available, then I see them as well and usually they are covered, so I tried to do the treatment as much covered as possible and it depends also on the patient, because some people take rules very strictly, but there's also females that have less problems with male physio therapist for example." (Interviewee 12)

To conclude, the Emirati society has some conservative limitations regarding social life of genders, for which each gender is expected to have different social activities, tasks, and roles in the society.

4.1.9. Tolerance and acceptance towards other cultures and beliefs

Emiratis show acceptance and tolerance towards beliefs and cultural standards of expatriates during interaction on personal and professional sides. The following Emirati typical behaviors perceived by Dutch expatriates represent the cultural standard "tolerance and acceptance towards other cultures and beliefs": tolerance in dealing with people with different religious beliefs, showing understanding to western business cultural behaviors, having mixture of modern and conservative society. This means that Emiratis behave very openly and respectfully to other cultural traditions, religious, and beliefs. During interaction with expatriates from different religious beliefs they show high tolerance and do not restrict others freedom of worshiping or following their religious traditions. The tolerance is also emphasized in the speeches of the leaders of the country, where the year 2019 was called by the Emirati government the year of tolerance. Moreover, on the professional aspect, Emiratis tend to respect European-Dutch behaviors and

sometimes they also show openness to adapt Western business cultural behaviors to their own behaviors. The openness of Emiratis is also shown of their ability to avoid any language barriers to communicate with expatriates, where Emiratis speak English on a professional level.

On the other hand, the Emirati society is nowadays not only a conservative society, but it became more a mix of conservative and modern society. People are very modernized, and this keeps developing compared to the past decades where different regulations in the UAE were indicated to limit and prohibit some non-Islamic actions, especially in the case of expats, where they are not more limited or prohibited in some areas, such as hotel bars getting license to sell alcohol drinks. In sum, people have more freedom of personal actions, unless these actions are hazardous for the public image of the society. This clearly shows the conservative and modernized mixtures of the Emirati society.

> *"Here in the Emirates everybody speaks English. Everything is in English. I have even Arabic Emirati friends that don't speak Arabic. So, the Emirates is very much open to other people as we have more than 200 nationalities. So, they have openness for others, flexibility, and adaptability." (Interviewee 4)*

> *"The hotels in Dubai as well as in Abu Dhabi, they have liquor license that means that they are allowing them to serve alcohol. In the past, I remember 10 years back, it was a little bit strangely looked at when you were holding hand in hand hands if you are a couple but now it's not that strict anymore and that's what I'm saying that during the years it became less strict." (Interviewee 5)*

> *"Religion is beautiful in Dubai, why I wrote a book about it. There's a place here where we have a church, a mosque, a Buddhism temple, and a Hinduism temple all on the same place. For example, you go to the mosque, then you have to say hello to everyone. The Holly Mary statue is in the middle of the square, where you can put a light." (Interviewee 9)*

> *"If you see in business, I've got a lot of connections and they're always open to listen to you and to change or to take up your feedback of what your cultural way of doing things is or how you would do something, they accept it." (Interviewee 10)*

Thus, the Emirati society shows syncretism with regard to people from different cultures and beliefs. This is also emphasized by the openness and adaptability of Emiratis to western business culture which has led to the existence of a conservative and open/modernized society that is rapidly changing.

4.1.10. Fluency, especially in business

Emiratis are very flexible and fluent in dealing with time, deadlines, and work. This cultural standard does not apply only in having flexibility in the professional life, but also in the personal life, where the "Inshallah", which means God willing represents how Emiratis deal with rigid deadlines. The following Emirati typical behaviors perceived by Dutch expatriates represent the cultural standard "Fluency, especially in business": low time sensitivity, low strictness and punctuality in business and deadlines, and behaving as relaxed/easy-going at workplace. This means that in the UAE, it is very usual to arrive late at your private or professional appointments, business meetings, work, or any social event. People are expected to show up late and are flexible in changing the agreed meeting time. Besides low time sensitivity, Emiratis have also no rigid deadlines or decisions; a deadline can be shortened or postponed easily, even sometimes without any discussion. Planning and agreements within the company or between business partners can be easily adjusted or changed if the manager or the owner of the company desires that change. Last but not least, Emiratis in general tend to show the behavior of relaxed/not interested at workplace.

> *"We have a beeper system. If you are looking for someone, you beep the button that refers to that specific person. But unfortunately, they never took their beepers with them. As a result, they are always unreachable. For example, you do not have this in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands if you need a colleague, you know where the person is and if you send an email, you will also receive a response back." (Interviewee 1)*

> *"I get like a content calendar in my work, and I need to plan and schedule that for a whole month. It can happen that the management, or personally one of the people within the management, don't like a certain topic. So even though you have planned already, and it has been approved and everything has been looked. They can still say no, I don't like this, please change it or please cancel, but that's common here." (Interviewee 4)*

> *"For example, Emirati people they will often show up late at appointments. In Holland, when the appointment is at 8:00, the person is there already 5 minutes before, so they are sure they're on time, but Emiratis they can be 10 minutes, 15 minutes, half an hour late and they will not even bother to call as well." (Interviewee 12)*

In sum, Emiratis have different understanding of time and business deadlines. Being late at an appointment or changing plans at the last minute tend to be very normal in the UAE. For this

reason, many Emiratis show relaxed and easy-going behaviors at work, which can be understood as laziness by other result-oriented cultures, such as the Dutch one.

4.1.11. High hierarchy

In the professional life, Emiratis follow high hierarchy communication styles to interact with their colleagues, business relations, and clients. The following Emirati typical behavior perceived by Dutch expatriates represents the cultural standard "high hierarchy": vertical hierarchy in communication. This means that in the UAE people with higher positions, as they represent the higher layer of the company, are expected to use their power to validate rules and decisions that may not be agreed on by the majority, especially in the professional life. Emiratis may change their behavior or work performance only in case when this recommendation comes from their manager, while they are do not prefer hearing any work-related tips from a subordinate. Managers are called by sir or madam and are expected to be approached in an appropriate behavior which corresponds to the position of the employee.

> *"If something needs to be changed, then it has to come from the manager as a new rule that will be agreed upon. But when I tell a colleague that it could actually be better by doing it in a different way, then they say who do you think you are? because you are just a colleague you are not a manager." (Interviewee 1)*

> *"For colleagues on the same management level, we call each other by the first name. But the people in the need to the managers, they call their managers mostly by Sir. The lower level of employees, they say Sir to the to the higher employees, namely to the managers." (Interviewee 5)*

> *"And so, there was some conflict and I noticed they had some interactions, but not really so much directly, but they try to do it through their managers and the team leaders to try to get it solved." (Interviewee 11)*

Thus, the Emirati business culture is recognized as following vertical high hierarchy, according to which most of the time important decisions and changes are made by managers.

4.1.12. Acceptance of strict rules and bureaucracy

Besides following high hierarchy in communication, Emiratis easily accept and follow rules on, without any questioning or discussing why these rules are set. The following Emirati typical behavior perceived by Dutch expatriates represents the cultural standard "acceptance of strict rules and bureaucracy": following rules without questioning. This means that in the UAE people utterly adapt strict laws and rules, which may be seen from a Dutch-western perspective, bureaucratic rules, and may contain a lot of forms and paper works, especially in governmental institutions. This occurs especially in business projects, where Emiratis may be not willing to change working rules easily, even if some of these are not convenient or efficient.

> *"Here in the UAE and specifically Abu-Dhabi I find there's some very strong mentality that is based on rules, but it is their own rules. There's a level of bureaucracy, but that is very strict." (Interviewee 2)*

> *"I think Emiratis and that is both positive but can also be negative. Emiratis have very much about a rule set, but then more like that is bureaucratic rules. So, if this rule is there, then it's there, and it is not working the way around. They do not question the rules. We see it happening in the project, it's there and it must be like that. If you want to discuss why is the rule there, how do we apply it properly like this? What is the intention of this rule? that is a no go." (Interviewee 7)*

> *"But there's also a lot of bureaucracy, there's still a lot of forms and paper and stamps and things that you need to get in order to get things done. Although they try to or digital transform everything, and they're doing a lot of automation and everything is with the app, you still feel that if you fill in the app that there's a printer behind it and that there's still paper coming out of it." (Interviewee 14)*

In sum, Emiratis expect that people with higher (managerial) positions to lay down rules and regulations. Not only expect, but Emiratis also easily accept these bureaucratic rules and regulations without questioning them, as they trust that individuals in managerial roles have the knowledge to use their power for the benefit of the public.

4.2. Tentative underlying values: interaction among the findings

After indicating the Emirati cultural behaviors through the interviews of this research, which have led to the 12 Emirati cultural standards mentioned in chapter 4.1., most of these cultural standards can be clustered together into an overarching theme indicating tentative underlying cultural values. Values are the underlying beliefs, which strongly affect the selection and evaluation behaviors of people (Schwartz, 1999). Cultural values are not directly observable, but they are deducted from the behaviors and the cultural standards, which are observable during interaction. In the table below, table 4, it is possible to find the distribution of the first and second order themes, namely Emirati cultural behaviors and their associated cultural standards, on third order themes, namely tentative underlying values of the Emirati culture. Because indicating the real underlying values behind cultural standards is difficult process and needs a thorough research focused on this aspect, this paper uses the term "tentative underlying values", as the tentative underlying values of the Emirati culture were indicated based on the perspective of the fifteen Dutch interviewees and the focus group.

Typical Emirati cultural behavior (first order themes)	Cultural standard (second order themes)	Tentative Emirati cultural value (third order themes)
Family oriented	Collective society	Interdependence (Inbound/outbound balance)
Stick in small groups		
Shame and face losss society		
Focus on building genuinerelationships, especially in		
Mixture of private and work lives		
Network is the basis to achieve personal goals	Principle of Wasta	
Society is divided in layers	Social division	
Local people (Emiratis) get more privileges (feeling privileged)		
Governmental encouragemnet for Emiratis (Emiratization of the workforce)		
Prejudgement based on nationality, especially in busieess		
Reserved in dealing with starngers		

Typical Emirati cultural behavior (first order themes)	Cultural standard (second order themes)	Tentative Emirati cultural value (third order themes)
Indirectness of communication and unclarity in self-expression,	Highly indirectness	Keeping harmony
Not open for direct feedback or questions		
individual contact rather than in group		
Avoid conflicts by giving compliments		
Polite/friendly in communication	Politeness	
Vertical hierarchy in communication	High hierarchy	
Separation in roles and social activities between genders	Social life seperation between genders	Bedouin pride
Tolerance in dealing with people with different religious beliefs	Tolerance and acceptance towrads other cultures and beliefs	
Showing understanding to western business cultural behaviors		
Mixed of modern and conservative society (freedom of actions unless it is not hazardous for the public)		
Following rules without questioning	Acceptance of strict rules and bureaucracy	
Showing a high prestigious social level in their behaviors	Showing off social status	
Showing status by obtaining governmental and managerial positions		
Showing pride in their heritage and traditions		
Welcoming and geneoristy with guests	Helpful and generous in hospitality	
Helping strangers in resolving private and professional problems		
Time fluency (low time sensitivity)	Fluency, especially in business	Inshallah
Low strictness and punctuality in business and deadlines		
Relaxed and easy-going at workplace		

Table 4, Tentative Emirati cultural values

> **Interdependence (Inbound/outbound balance)**

This study shows that the following cultural standards in both the professional and personal areas, namely collective society, social division, and principle of Wasta, emerge from the tentative underlying cultural value "interdependence". The Emirati society is a collective society, where Emiratis are loyal to their family and own small cultural group, on who they count to achieve their professional and personal objectives. This high level of loyalty to each other, makes Emiratis indebted to turn the loyalty back to their loyal individuals in the future, which maintains and strengthens the interconnections among the people of the society. Because Emiratis appreciate the

value of being interdependent on each other to achieve personal objectives and resolve difficult personal and professional issues, they tend to maintain their collectivity by strengthening the strong interconnection bonds among the members of the Emirati society by showing loyalty and providing favors to each other in different cases. For this reason, Emiratis are also prudent while dealing with strangers, namely outsiders from own cultural group, as these strangers may cause problems that can affect the group's atmosphere. This tentative value can be illustrated using in the following statements mentioned by the focus group and the interviewees:

> أنا وأخوي على ابن عمي، وأنا وابن عمي على الغريب (There's this saying like *"I could have a fight with my brother. But if my cousin has a fight with my brother, I will have a fight with my cousin and I stand behind my brother"*). *(Interviewee 13)*

- **Keeping harmony**

This study shows that the following cultural standards, namely highly indirectness, high hierarchy, and politeness, emerge from the tentative underlying cultural value "keeping harmony". Emiratis tend to be indirect and polite during interaction with their fellow Emiratis or other expatriates in both the personal and professional areas. They make sure not to directly express their own preferences and ideas, especially in public, as these may be seen rude, offensive, and may not correspond with the society preferences. This means that they put the interest of the group ahead of their personal interest and show high level of dignity and trust to each other, which is clear to see in the high hierarchy followed by the Emirati society, where people with high social status and elderly people are respected. The aforementioned behaviors come into action by Emiratis in order to keep harmony among and avoid any emerging problems among the members of their network, which can negatively affect their interconnections.

- **Bedouin pride**

Other cultural standards, i.e., showing-off social status, helpful and generous in hospitality, acceptance of strict rules and bureaucracy, tolerance and acceptance towards other cultures and beliefs, and social life separation between genders, can be instead grouped under the umbrella of

the underlying tentative value "Bedouin pride". The origin of the Emiratis comes from the tribes. Emiratis are proud of their Bedouin heritage, traditions, and values and do not accept to deviate from it, although the country has a rapid modernization. For this reason, different Emirati behaviors emerge from the Bedouin tribe values and identity. Emiratis learn from their early ages to appreciate their original values inherited from their fathers and grandfathers, which has enabled them to achieve the fast development and progress occurring in the country. This means that Emiratis tend to show to others how proud and honored they are of their heritage values, nationality, and traditions, where family or tribe names can play an important role in showing the social prestigious level of individuals. Also, social activities and roles of men and women are somehow separated as it shows adherence to the old Bedouin traditions, which in the case of (Emirati-Arab) Bedouins has been emerged from the Islamic morals. Moreover, Emiratis are also very willing to help their expatriate colleagues and show them the Emirati Bedouin generosity and hospitality by serving different types of food or offering services to them. Not only with expats, but also among each other, Emiratis tend to gift each other luxurious, high-quality gifts which can show their wealth and generosity. This tentative value can be illustrated using in the following statement mentioned by the focus group:

➢ لا يعجز القوم إذا تعاونوا (People are not helpless if they cooperate)

Furthermore, the adherence of Emiratis to their tribe values is clear to see in the way Emiratis accept bureaucratic and strict rules laid down by people with higher social status as they believe that these people are trustworthy to lead and lay down rules for the public benefit. For this reason, Emiratis accept strict (bureaucratic) rules without questioning. Finally, it is important to mention that Emiratis show tolerance and acceptance towards other cultures and religion beliefs, which emerges from their Bedouin history, where it was very normal during conquering (urbanized) countries to let strangers (no-Bedouins) to freely free to practice their religion traditions, religion events, and cultural beliefs in order to show solidarity and equality between Bedouins and urbanized people.

- **Inshallah**

An important tentative underlying value that emerged from the results of this thesis is "inshallah". This value comprises the cultural standards (and their respective behaviors) of fluency, especially in business. The resulted cultural standards of this research show that Emiratis are very flexible in their social and professional lives, which can be perceived by other cultures as unpunctual attitude. The reason behind their unpunctuality is being flexible in performing changes, where it is very common in the UAE not to arrive on time or to reschedule or postpone a professional meeting in the last minute. They expect from each other to be very flexible to understand the reason behind any delay and to cooperate with rapid and unexpected changes.

This means that Emiratis do not get surprised if a meeting is postponed or not held at the supposed time. They do expect that deadlines can be changed according to any personal or professional upcoming events, which may affect the deadline of a project or assignment. However, employees in the UAE are expected to perform their utmost at their jobs, but they do not take initiative to suggest new ideas or perform changes without them being asked by their managers. Additionally, Emirati employees tend to show an easy-going attitude during problem resolution and discussions, which can be understood by others as they are insouciant at workplace, which consequently may lead to false impression on the Emiratis at workplace.

4.3 Demographical and social differences

In this sub-chapter the observed variances in behaviors within Emiratis due to their social and demographical aspects are explained.

4.3.1. Variances within Emiratis

After indicating the Emirati cultural standards on the personal and professional aspects and explaining the underlying values behind the findings of this study, this research points to some demographical and social variances differences that may affect the Emirati cultural standards emerged in this thesis. The interviewees have indeed characterized some demographical and social variances within the Emiratis during interaction on the personal and business areas, which may be the reason behind some typical Emirati behavior differences. The interviewees have mentioned the following points which are briefly explained below:

- ➢ Behavioral differences at workplace between Emiratis who studied abroad, and Emiratis who studied in the UAE.
- ➢ Behavioral differences at workplace between Emirati men and Emirati women
- ➢ Behavioral differences within the seven emirates of the UAE and their effects on the typical behaviors of their locals

Most of the interviewees have noticed that "studying abroad" affects the following Emirati cultural standards: ***highly indirectness, social division, tolerance and acceptance towards other cultures and beliefs, and fluency in business.*** The interviewees have noticed that during interaction and experience with their Emirati colleagues or business relations there is a distinction between Emiratis who have received their study abroad and Emiratis who have received local education. The results of this research show that Emiratis who have studied abroad, especially in Europe, the UK, and the US are more open-minded in adapting to western cultural standards in the business. This means that their communication level is more direct and clearer than their fellow local who have not received their degree abroad. Furthermore, the interviewees have put the spot on the fact that most of the Emiratis who received their degree abroad are more punctual in time, planning, and deadlines. For this reason, they are also more motivated for work and show no easy-going behavior as their other fellow local colleagues. The below mentioned quotations by the

interviewees indicate how Dutch working and living in the UAE with Emiratis perceived behavior variances between Emiratis studied abroad and Emirati studied in local schools.

> *"For the Group of Emiratis that I'm working with, who are well educated abroad are relatively open, let's say to Western standards and is easier to deal with them."* *(Interviewee 2)*

> *"I have a very good client, who did his training in Tilburg and in Denmark. The level of communication with this guy is similar as when I am talking with a well-trained and educated Dutchman, so it's fine. But with his colleague, who is a very nice man, but has never been in Europe studying, I feel that talking to him is on another level than his colleague educated abroad."* *(Interviewee 3)*

> *"A lot of Emiratis studying abroad, so they go either to the UK or US and there they will do their studies. The new generation of Emiratis are a bit more abroad and well educated in that sense. But the older generation, who have not been given European or Western education, are harsher."* *(Interviewee 5)*

Furthermore, concerning the cultural standard fluency in business, various interviewees referred to critical incidents in which they focused on the role of Emirati women in professional life. The interviewees indicated that Emirati women are highly motivated and goal-oriented at work, where they try to prove to their society that they deserve the positions they are getting in the professional life. This is also supported by the Emirati government to empower more women's professional roles. Moreover, some interviewees who have mentioned critical incidents about women being highly motivated on the professional life, also lined up the fact that in their perspective Emirati women are more motivated, open and ambitious than their fellow Emirati men colleagues in the professional life. The quotations below indicate how Dutch perceive the differences between Emirati men and women in fluency and motivation at workplace.

> *"Women are far better and motivated at work than man. So, women work harder. I think that this has to do with the society as well, because the work gives women in the UAE a level of independence, as they responsibility and they have their own income. So, this is an opportunity for women to develop themselves, and to prove themselves."* *(Interviewee 2)*

> *"I think half of my group of trainees were women. I found those women very motivated, very to the point. They were really ambitious, and they had a lot of self-*

confidence. The Emirati women were easy to coach because they are really motivated. The men, I found a little bit less there.” (Interviewee 11)

Finally, some of the interviewees have indicated differences among the seven emirates of the UAE, in which each emirate has its own characteristics that may affect the cultural standards of its locals, namely social division & tolerance and acceptance towards other cultures and beliefs. The interviewees have mentioned that local Emiratis living in the large emirates, such as Dubai and Abu-Dhabi, are less conservative and more open to values and standards of other cultures, although they may show some distant behavior towards expats. On the contrary, people living in the desert tend to stick more to the Bedouin values of being friendly and welcoming. However, they may be more conservative and less open to other cultural and religious backgrounds, such as in Sharjah, according to which no alcohol is authorized and sold, which clearly contrasts with, for instance, the situation in Dubai.

> *"When you are in the city, you feel some arrogance towards expats in general. I would say, not in personal contact, but just in general. For example, if you walk across a mall, you feel that arrogance sometimes. I do a lot of desert driving by the way and if you go to the desert and you run into Emiratis, then they are super friendly. It's a completely an opposite experience than the big cities.” (Interviewee 14).*

Chapter 5: Discussion

The aim of this research was to answer the following research question, ***"How do Dutch expatriates in the UAE perceive the Emirati culture during daily interaction with Emiratis?".*** This question was answered through this paper by exploring the Emirati cultural behaviors, where similar behaviors were consequently related to specific cultural standards, then their tentative underlying cultural values were identified. By answering the main research question and sub questions of this research, the researcher seeks in this chapter to strengthen the results of this research by comparing the conducted Emirati cultural standards indicated by this research with already known Emirati cultural characteristics by the literature so far. In the literature, the terms "cultural standard", "cultural behaviors", and "cultural values" were interchangeably used by Thomas (1991) and few other researchers. This paper adopts a slightly different approach from the framework of Thomas (1991) and considers cultural standards as clusters, where each cultural standard contains a group of similar cultural behaviors, while cultural values are considered as totally different term than the afore-mentioned terms, for detailed information, check chapter 2.4. of this paper. Because the framework of Thomas (1991) is not widely sued in the literature to explore the Emirati culture, this research discussion compares the indicated Emirati cultural standards to Emirati cultural characteristics, behaviors, and standards as these terms were interchangeably used in the literature so far dependent on the framework used by each researcher.

Also, the researcher desires to illustrate the academic importance of this study in enriching the knowledge of Emirati intercultural literature by adding new cultural standards and tentative cultural values to the Emirati culture, which were neglected so far. The academic novelty of this paper is underlined in this chapter. Finally, this study compares the differences between Dutch and Emirati cultural standards, which enable the researcher of this paper to give practical recommendations for Dutch businessmen or nationals desiring to work with Emiratis in the future in order to avoid any potential cultural clashes that may negatively affect their personal and professional interaction.

- **Discussion on the Emirati cultural standards**

This study shows that Dutch expatriates in the UAE perceived 30 Emirati cultural behaviors, which can be summarized in the following 12 cultural standards: highly indirectness, politeness, collective society, social division, principle of Wasta, showing off social status, helpful and generous in hospitality, social life separation between genders, tolerance and acceptance towards other cultures and beliefs, fluency in business, high hierarchy, and the acceptance of strict rules and bureaucracy.

Although the cultural standard "highly indirectness" was very shortly highlighted in the intercultural literature (Rizk-Antonious, 2020), it was more general discussed in relation to the Arab cultural standards and not specifically the Emirati culture. This study confirms the findings of Rizk (2020), which showed that the Arab cultural standard "highly indirectness" is also applicable on the Emirati culture. Moreover, this study indicates the following new Emirati cultural behaviors that emerge from the cultural standard "indirectness", which have been neglected so far in the literature: not open for direct feedback and individual (one-to-one) contact rather than group discussions. Furthermore, in agreement with Rizk (2020), Al Omoush, et al. (2012), and Hofstede (2004) this paper also shows that the UAE is a collective society, where people are strongly bonded and loyal to their own cultural group and consider social shame and face loss in behaving on personal and professional levels. Talking about the professional aspect, this paper corroborates the results by Tahir (2018) on the Emirati culture and shows that Emiratis prefer to establish genuine relationships with their colleagues, customers, and business relations instead of talking on business.

However, aligned with Farrell's research (2008), this thesis also expands on the cultural standard "principle of Wasta". Whilst Farrell (2008) only discussed this Emirati behavior in a specific event, namely the entrance of women in work sectors, this paper extends this Emirati behavior to include different personal and professional aspects, in which network is used for personal achievements. In addition, it can be concluded that the cultural standard "helpful and generous in hospitality" was partially discussed in the study of Iranee (2013) and Rizk (2020), namely the generosity of Emiratis, but behaviors regarding the helpfulness of Emiratis were neglected so far in the literature. This paper enriches research on the Emirati cultural standards by

adding the cultural standard "helpfulness", which shows that Emiratis prefer to help their expatriate colleagues and business partners to resolve their personal and professional problems.

Furthermore, confirming the findings of Naumova et al. (2019) regarding Emiratis valuing social status, this paper shows that Emiratis tend to display their social status to others by purchasing luxury and high-quality products. In addition to showing social status through specific purchasing behaviors, this paper adds the following new behaviors to the cultural standard "showing off social status", which were neglected until now in the literature: showing pride in their heritage and traditions & showing status by obtaining governmental and managerial positions. This means that Emiratis do not prefer to do regular jobs, as they do not prove high social status, but instead they prefer to do managerial jobs, where they can show off their social status and power.

In addition, this study validates previous research by Al-Mazrouei and Pech (2015) and Rizk (2020) on the fluency of Emiratis regarding time and business deadlines. This paper reports that the UAE is an "Inshallah" society, which shows that Emiratis have low time sensitivity, which is clear by their relaxed/easy-going behaviors at work, which is explained as laziness by other cultures, as the case in the research of Tahir (2018). Moreover, this study also confirms the findings of Rizk-Antonious (2020), Iranee (2013), and Hofstede (2004) regarding the cultural standard "high hierarchy". The previous studies and this study show that Emiratis, especially in the professional level, follow vertical hierarchy, where managers are expected to use their power in making important decisions and resolving problems without the need to ask the majority of the subordinates.

Furthermore, different researchers have discussed the Emirati cultural standard "social life separation between genders" (Rizk-Antonious, 2020; Iranee, 2013; Farrell, 2008). This paper also indicates this Emirati cultural standard and shows that tasks, roles, and most of the social activities are separated in the UAE between men and women. Also, this paper confirms the findings of Alteneiji (2015) and the research of El-Aswad (El-Aswad, 2013), which have all discussed aspects related to the cultural standard "tolerance and acceptance towards other cultures and beliefs". The afore mentioned papers have showed that although the UAE is an Islamic society, people demonstrate high tolerance and acceptance towards other beliefs and cultures. Hence, this research can enrich the body of knowledge on this Emirati cultural standard by adding new behaviors to it,

especially on the professional level. This paper illustrates that Emiratis tend to show openness and adaptability to ease the communication with expats, for example by avoiding language barriers by speaking in English on private and professional areas. This specific finding contradicts the results of Al-Mazrouei and Pech (2015), which showed that many cultural clashes between Emiratis and expatriates are induced by language barriers, where most of the Emirati employees and managers have lack of knowledge in English.

It is important also to mention that this paper suggests new cultural standards to the Emirati culture, namely "acceptance of strict rules and bureaucracy", "politeness", and "social division". Starting with "acceptance of strict rules and bureaucracy", this cultural standard has never been discussed before in the literature; thus, this paper adds this cultural standard as novelty to enrich the knowledge regarding Emirati culture. More specifically, this cultural standard shows that Emiratis expect that people with higher (managerial) positions to lay down rules and regulations and they easily accept these (bureaucratic) rules and regulations without questioning them as they trust that individuals who lay down these rules and decisions not only on national level, but also professional level, to have the knowledge to use their power for the benefit of the public. Moreover, the Emirati cultural standard "politeness", which was indicated in this paper, has never discussed in the literature before so it was neglected. This cultural standard illustrates that Emiratis behave friendly and calm in their interaction and discussion with their fellow Emiratis or expatriates in the personal or professional areas.

Similarly, the cultural standard "social division", together with its cultural behaviors, was never discussed in the literature before. This paper brings this cultural standard as novelty to the Emirati cultural standards, showing that the Emirati society is divided in social levels. This leads to unequal opportunities for some expatriates compared to Emiratis and expatriates from some specific nationalities, especially on the professional aspect. However, the literature neglected most of the cultural behaviors that are emerged from the cultural standard "social division", but the Emirati behavior of being reserved in dealing strangers, has already been briefly discussed before in the literature as an Arabic cultural behavior (Al Omoush et al., 2012; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004). This paper also confirms the findings of Al Omoush et al. (2012), which shows that the Arab cultural behavior of being reserved towards strangers is also applicable on the Emirati culture.

- **Discussion on the tentative Emirati cultural values**

The Emirati cultural standards identified by this paper were further discussed to indicate the respective tentative underlying values. This paper explores the following tentative cultural values: interdependence, keeping harmony, Bedouin pride, and inshallah.

This paper confirms the findings of Riel (2013), which shows that the Bedouin values are essential deriver behind different Emirati cultural standards, more specifically the following cultural standards: showing-off social status, helpful and generous in hospitality, acceptance of strict rules and bureaucracy, tolerance and acceptance towards other cultures and beliefs, and social life separation between genders. As most of the Emiratis are Bedouins or have Bedouin roots, their behaviors and cultural standards have been affected by their traditional tribe values, where this thesis shows that Emiratis accept bureaucratic and strict rules without questioning, which confirms previous research (Riel, 2013) , which shows that Bedouins are used to follow on-man leadership, where rules and regulations laid down by the leader are accepted without questioning. Moreover, helping strangers and showing high generosity and hospitality to their guest is a must In the Bedouin traditions, which is also in the case of Emiratis as indicated through the results of this paper. The following Emirati metaphor validates this tentative Emirati cultural value (Abu Najim, 2021):

➢ إذا بغيت الجود دق أهله   If you want generosity, then ask for its people

Furthermore, this paper aligns with Ibn Khaldun's theory, which shows that Bedouins used to ensure solidarity of the society during conquering cities populated with urbanized people with different cultures and beliefs in order to avoid inequality, ensure social solidarity, and display civilization (Gregg, 2005). This means that because Emiratis are proud of their Bedouin heritage, they still use this way of approaching people with different cultures and beliefs, especially expatriates working in the UAE, as experienced by the interviewees. Additionally, in accordance with (Abu-Lughod, 2010), the separation between men and women regarding social roles, tasks, and activities are Bedouin traditions. So, it is clear that the Bedouin values of Emiratis still have impact on the social division between genders in the country, which has led to conservative behaviors, where most of Emirati families have different task division and career expectations for male and women (Crabtree, 2007). This tentative value can be illustrated using in the following Emirati metaphor indicated by previous research (Al Khamiri, 2015):

➢   هم البنات لين الممات   "As they say, 'you'll always worry about your daughter"

Furthermore, Hofstede (2004) has mentioned the interdependence within the Emirati society during the discussion of the cultural dimension individualism and collectivism and the fear of strangers and ambiguous situations during the discussion of the cultural dimension uncertainty avoidance. Although Hofstede has briefly discussed the interdependence within the Emirati society, these were not directly indicated as tentative cultural underlying value by Hofstede (2004). This paper confirms the aforementioned findings of Hofstede (2004), but adds the terms "interdependence" to the Emirati culture as tentative underlying values.

Besides the above-mentioned tentative cultural values, it is important also to mention that this paper suggests new tentative Emirati cultural values to the Emirati culture, namely Inshallah and keeping harmony. The potential reason behind Emiratis being fluent in time and business is the value of "Inshallah" or as explained "flexibility", which shows that Emiratis appreciate flexibility "Inshallah" in changes not only on personal aspects, but also in their professional life. Moreover, Emiratis behave in specific ways in both the personal and professional areas to show fellow members of society that they do their utmost to keep positivity and harmony within the group. This tentative value can be seen as sub-value as it might be emerged from a higher tentative value, namely "Interdepended". In this thesis this tentative underlying value is considered separately as it is seen by the researcher and the focus group as the main motivator of different cultural standards.

- **Discussion on the demographical and social differences within Emiratis and their impact on Emirati cultural standards**

Besides indicating Emirati typical behaviors, cultural standards, and their tentative cultural underlying values, this research also indicates social and demographical differences within Emiratis based on the perception of Dutch expatriates in the UAE to the Emirati culture. Talking about differneces between Emirati men and women and their impact on their behavior at workplace, this paper confirms the findings of Tahir (2018), which show that Emirati women are much more motivated at workplace and easy to corporate with than Emirati male employees and managers.

Moreover, this paper adds the following two new social and demographical differences within Emiratis that impact several Emirati cultural standards, study abroad/study locally and variances within the people of the seven emirates of the UAE. This paper shows that "studying abroad" may affect the following Emirati cultural standards: highly indirectness, social division, tolerance and acceptance towards other cultures and beliefs, and fluency in business, while the variances among the seven emirates of the UAE, where each emirate has its own characteristics that may affect the cultural standards of its locals, namely, social division & tolerance and acceptance towards other cultures and beliefs.

- **Discussion on the differences between Dutch end Emirati standards.**

This paper confirms the findings of Hofstede (2004) and it shows that both Dutch and Emirati cultures vary from each other culturally, especially in business. The most important difference between the Netherlands and the UAE regarding cultural standards is "directness in communication". This thesis indicates that Emirati are very indirect in their communication as it is offensive to express emotions and feedback directly. In contrast, the findings of Rosemann (2021) show that the Dutch culture is highly direct in communication, where Dutch quickly express their own opinion. Moreover, both cultures differ regarding "hierarchy", in which Emiratis follow vertical hierarchy in dealing with people with higher (social) status, which is in contrast with the Dutch culture where people with different social positions deal informally and equally with each other. This also leads to another difference between both cultures, namely "acceptance of bureaucracy", where Dutch do question every rule and regulation even if they are laid down by the management of people with high social/political situation. This is because one the Dutch cultural standard is "anti-authoritarianism" (Rosemann, 2021). On the contrary, Emiratis expect that (strict) rules may be laid down by people with (managerial) position and accept these rules without questioning them.

Furthermore, Rosemann (2021) identifies the cultural standard "job opportunity", which indicates that Dutch people give everybody with high potential of growth a job opportunity, which means that these opportunities are equal and based on merit and experience. Compared to this in the UAE the following two cultural standards "principle of Wasta" and "Social division" show that both cultures vary in this aspect. Emiratis may use their network to achieve personal

objectives, such as job opportunities, which is clear to see in the Emirati job descriptions, where it is normal to mention the nationality of the required person, as many job positions require only Emirati nationals, which can be seen as inequality of opportunities between Emiratis and expatriates. In the table below, table 5, the most important differences between the Dutch and Emirati cultural standards are illustrated based on the results of Rosemann (2021) and the findings of this paper.

Differences in cultural standards	
Dutch cultural standard	Emirati cultural standard
Directness	Highly indirectness
Flat hierarchy	High hierarchy
Informality	
Anti-authoritarianism	Accepatnce of strict rules and bureaucracy
Job opportunity	Social division
	Pricniple of Wasta

Table 5, differences between the Dutch and Emirati cultural standards

5.1. Practical Implications

For number of reasons, this study is important to be considered by Dutch employees seeking to work in the UAE with Emiratis in the future and for international managers in Dutch companies planning to expand or approach the Emirati market. Firstly, this paper captures the cultural related critical incidents faced by Dutch expatriates in the UAE during interaction with Emiratis on both personal and professional aspects. By analyzing these critical incidents, the researcher has indicated Emirati typical behaviors, cultural standards and also the tentative values that may explain these cultural standards, which may help Dutch businessmen and nationals to have a better understanding of how Emiratis behave and also why do they behave in some specific way.

Furthermore, since this thesis discusses the differences between both cultures, this study can help preventing cultural barriers and potential clashes by giving practical recommendations to Dutch employees, businessmen, and investors who are planning to work with Emirati in the future

to better understand the Emirati culture and to take into consideration, which behaviors should eb avoided or adjusted to ensure successful business relationship.

More specifically, the researcher suggests the following practical recommendations:

- Try to adjust your Dutch directness by being polite in your directness without letting your fellow Emirati colleagues or business partners feel confronted as Emiratis are indirect people in communication. Hence, you may think of avoiding direct questions which entails a "yes" or "no" answer, since this could make the other party feel uneasy.

- Emiratis are very fluent and flexible in business and appointments; this means that you do not have to be surprised if a planning is changed at the last minute or your meeting is postponed. Also, it is very normal to arrive late at appointments. For this reason, it is better to be prepared for long-taking and haggling negotiations and show high flexibility and patience in replying to any time and planning related changes proposed by the counterpart.

- Emiratis tend to build genuine connections, so, as direct Dutch businessmen aiming to keep things professionally on target, do not start your communication with your Emirati business relation by talking about business. Instead use the first 30 minutes talking on mutual points, such as family, and other social interest to build up genuine relationships and to win their trust as Emiratis behave reservedly against strangers.

- Use one-to-one communication with your business partner or colleague when you want to share or provide feedback or opinions. Emiratis do not favor group discussions and feedback since they may lead to shame and face loss behaviors that can negatively affect mutual relationships.

- In contrast to the Dutch culture, Emiratis are a high hierarchical culture, in which younger people respect elderly people and individuals with high social or job

positions. This means that it should be considered what the social status of the person is in order to choose the appropriate title to address him in personal and professional events. For this reason, sending a young and unexperienced Dutch person to represent your company and meet a senior experienced Emirati manager, might not be the ideal choice, as the Dutch young candidate might not be taken seriously for his/her young age and relatively low experience by the counterpart.

Chapter 6: Limitations & Future Research

As the case with any exploratory inter-cultural research, limitations are inevitable and should be considered by the researcher. In this paper, the sample size is limited, since only 15 Dutch expatriates living in the UAE and working with Emiratis on daily basis were interviewed. Due to lack of control by the researcher on the sample size and its distribution (4 females and 11 males, all over 30 years old), the results might be biased and not be representative of the Emiratis society. Therefore, the generalization of results might be limited, and findings should be interpreted with caution. Therefore, future qualitative studies in the field of inter-cultural research can think of extending the results of this thesis by considering the inclusion of more interviewees, with a more equal distribution between male and female interviewees to obtain more generalizable findings. Not only the sample size and gender distribution, but also choosing interviewees with age group under 30 would maybe lead to (potential) new Emirati cultural standards as they mostly interact with young Emirati generation, who may vary from the older generation (generation 30 above).

Furthermore, this paper indicates variances within Emiratis on how different social and demographical factors (e.g., study abroad vs locally, gender of the manager/employee, and where the Emirati live or come from) may affect the typical Emirati behaviors and lead to variances among the nationals on both the personal and professional aspects. Since it was beyond the scope of this research, this thesis did not explore these factors further. Yet, given the surprisingly importance of these factors emerged by the critical incidents mentioned by Dutch expatriates in the UAE, future research may wish to explore the impact of such factors through both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

To conclude, this paper addresses the Emirati culture by exploring the Emirati cultural behaviors and cultural standards perceived by Dutch expatriates living in the UAE and working with Emiratis. This study shows that Dutch expatriates in the UAE perceived 30 Emirati cultural behaviors, which can be summarized in the following 12 cultural standards: : highly indirectness, politeness, collective society, social division, principle of Wasta, showing off social status, helpful and generous in hospitality, social life separation between genders, tolerance and acceptance towards other cultures and beliefs, fluency in business, high hierarchy, and the acceptance of strict rules and bureaucracy. According to this paper, the indicated cultural standards can be explained by the following tentative values, where each tentative underlying value may explain one or more cultural standard(s): interdependence, keeping harmony, Bedouin pride, and inshallah.

Taking about the academic importance, this paper has modified the framework of Thomas (1991) regarding the usage of the terms "cultural behaviors", "cultural standards", and "cultural values". In this thesis they were considered as three different concepts, whereas they were used interchangeably by Thomas (1991). This paper suggests separation and specification of the aforementioned terms. Furthermore, after comparing the indicated Emirati cultural standards and tentative cultural values with the known Emirati characteristics by previous studies, the results of this thesis confirm some findings from the existing literature regarding the Emirati culture, but also contradicts other findings by bringing into light new themes. Indeed, the results show that the following cultural standards were neglected so far in the literature.

Hence, this paper enriches the Emirati culture by adding these standards as novelty: acceptance of strict rules and bureaucracy", "politeness", "helpfulness", "showing off social status", and "social division". This research also extends the body of knowledge on Emirati cultural standards by adding new behaviors to it, namely: not being open to direct feedback; individual (one-to-one) contact rather than group discussions; and showing understanding to western business cultural behaviors. Also, new tentative Emirati cultural values were added to the Emirati culture, such as "interdependence" and "Inshallah". According to this paper, these tentative values may be the underlying source that impacts the way Emiratis behave on both personal and professional aspects.

Surprisingly, the critical incidents mentioned by the interviewees have led to new findings regarding possible cultural standard differences within Emiratis themselves. These differences may be due to different social and demographic factors, namely study abroad vs locally, gender of the manager/employee, and where the emirate live or come from. These factors may affect the cultural behaviors and standards and should be researched in-depth by future studies.

Moreover, based on the above-mentioned results, practical recommendations were given to Dutch employees, businessmen, and investors, who will be encouraged by the biliteral agreement between the NL and the UAE (Alghoul & Bashir, 2021) to start business trade with Emiratis. These recommendations are regarding how to approach the Emirati market by getting in-depth knowledge on the typical Emirati cultural behaviors, standards, and values, which will enable them avoiding potential cultural clashes that may affect their business relationships with Emiratis. In sum, this paper showed that regardless of how both Dutch and Emirati cultures vary from each other but having in-depth cultural awareness regarding the Emirati culture by reading this thesis, a bridge can be built between both cultures to overcome these cultural differences and achieve common goals, especially in business.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Protocol

1. How/Why did you decide to work in the UAE?
2. How did you imagine the Emirati culture and Emirati people before your first contact with an Emirati person?
3. What was the most positively surprising behavior you experienced about the Emirati culture during interaction with Emiratis?
   - ➢ Why is this a positive aspect in your perspective?
   - ➢ Then what do you think is the reason behind this?

4. What was the most negatively surprising behavior you experienced about the Emirati culture during interaction with Emiratis?
   - ➢ Why is this a negative aspect in your perspective?
   - ➢ Then what do you think is the reason behind this?
5. In which aspects do you think that Dutch culture is similar to the Emirati culture?
   - ➢ Why do you think that?
   - ➢ Can you give examples on behaviors of Dutch and Emirati nationals sharing the same cultural aspects?
6. In which aspects do you think that Dutch culture differ from the Emirati culture?
   - ➢ Why do you think that?
   - ➢ Can you give examples on behaviors of Dutch and Emirati nationals sharing the same cultural aspects?

7. Have you ever had a cultural shock with the Emirati culture? If yes, can you point it out?
   - ➢ Why do you think this happened?
   - ➢ How did you behave during this event?
   - ➢ How would you behave now?
8. Can you point out one or more event moments when an Emirati failed to perceive your behavior?

➢ Why do you think this happened?

➢ How did you behave during this event?

➢ How would you behave now?

9. How do you experience the communication with Emirati people?

➢ Which language do you use to communicate?

➢ Do you face any language problems?

10. What would you like to improve in your fellow Emirati to enhance the communication during business meetings?

➢ Why do you think this aspect should be improved?

➢ To what extent does this aspect affect communication with Emirati people?

11. How do you differentiate an Emirati national from any other national?

➢ What characteristic do you easily spot in an Emirati national?

➢ What are the most important values of yours as an Emirati?

12. How do you differentiate a Dutch national from any other national?

➢ What characteristic do you easily spot in a Dutch person?

13. If you can exchange one cultural aspect of you culture with the Emirati culture, what would you take and what would you give and why?

Appendix 2: Emirati cultural behaviors perceived by Dutch nationals

- **Indirectness of communication and unclarity in self-expression**

During the interviews with the research interviewees, the word indirect was frequently mentioned in different forms. According to the Dutch interviewees, Emiratis tend to not give their opinions directly but use indirect communication to express their opinions and feelings. For example, they never say No but use the word "Inshallah" instead, which is an open answer can mean Yes, Maybe, or No. The interviewees find that Emiratis do not expect from each other to express their selves directly as how they feel, but communication should be filtered to an indirect message. This typical Emirati cultural behavior is also a very important indicator of an Emirati professional character, which can sometimes lead to unclarity and miscommunication, especially in business agreements, which are mostly not based on direct and clear conditions.

> *"So, the whole point of the story is, let's say you are not saying what is directly on your mind." (Interviewee 2)*

> *"You need to ask more questions to get it clear. They can be very open ended in communications and in let's say in making agreements. This can be quite tricky, so you need to really take your Dutch roots sometimes to really get clarity on what is yes or no." (Interviewee 14)*

> *"The fact that people are not used to have bad news about health or whatever like directly into their face." (Interviewee 15)*

- **Not open for direct feedback or questions**

Emiratis find it offensive to give or receive direct feedback and questions. According to some of the critical incidents mentioned by the interviewees, Emiratis feel offended by getting feedback, especially from their fellow colleagues. To avoid any misunderstandings by the high sensitivity of direct feedback, Emiratis tend to think of the consequences of their feedback before saying it, which is mostly reformulated into a proper, indirect, no offensive, and constructive feedback.

> *"If you have any criticism on anybody specifically when you have Emiratis you need to learn how to say, what to say, and what you want to achieve in the end. So, you never say somebody is doing something wrong completely. Let's say, you*

always start by you're doing a great job, but I've observed you can also try another way." (Interviewee 2)

"I think you will not get straight feedback on your performance. So that might make it difficult in a way to understand what is their opinion about your performance? So, your contract might be terminated without you even knowing what was not good in your performance? So, giving feedback is a very difficult one." (Interviewee 7)

"If you use the wrong tone when you start accusing people and you start pointing out how bad everything is here. This does not work at all." (Interviewee 13)

- **Individual contact rather than in group (closed attitude in group discussions)**

The interviewees have mentioned that Emiratis may express their selves and feelings better in individual meetings than in group discussions, especially on the professional level. The interviewees indicate that Emiratis may not dare or feel comfortable to ask questions, discuss an issue, or express their feelings in business meetings, where many people are included, while on the personal/individual level they can express their opinions better.

"Their conflict is resolved offline, one to one discussion, and not in a public." (Interviewee 6)

"The interaction with managers, I think they in general they preferred one to one conversation, or at least, that was my impression. But, in a group, if I've whole room full of Emirati and I asked what your opinion is or give me some feedback, then it becomes silent, nobody is really stepping up." (Interviewee 11)

"I think in smaller groups or one on one there will be a lot more comfortability." (Interviewee 13)

- **Avoid conflicts by giving compliments (diplomatic way in giving opinions)**

From the critical incidents given by the Dutch interviewees, it can be indicated that Emiratis avoid direct clashes and problems with their colleagues and business partners at work by giving compliments. According to the interviewees, Emiratis can give compliments even if it is not the truth, which is seen as their way of communication and expressing their feeling with others. Moreover, an Emirati would keep quiet and will avoid any chances to confront you with anything that can lead to problems and may negatively affect the groups harmony.

"I had the impression that the managers did not really want to criticize harmony, but it is also a little scared. I don't know if "afraid" is the right word, but they just did not want any trouble." (Interviewee 1)

"People don't speak their minds here. You can see that if two people from opposite Arabic tribes even if they are enemies, but they're sitting together and drinking tea and coffee like best friends." (Interviewee 2)

"Having conflicts and resolving it is not typically Emirati. So, they try to avoid conflict and have that sorted out before it becomes conflict in public." (Interviewee 6)

- **Polite/friendly in communication**

Various interviewees have mentioned situations in which their Emirati colleagues, business partners, and customers behaved very polite in their personal and professional interactions. Emiratis tend to keep their temper without showing any emotions that could hurt the other person, since being rude and unpolite is seen very offensive and can ruin relationships with Emiratis. For this reason, Emiratis are prone to show their politeness by having civil and friendly discussions in order to resolve a problem or discuss a topic.

"I never ever had any trouble with the local people, even in case of my wife they were very friendly to her. She was adapted into an Emirati family which lives in Ajman. A very nice very open and friendly." (Interviewee 8)

"When I have Emirati customer, I always say goodbye with a happy heart. That's the truth. If I have an expat customer, I sometimes have pain in my heart like because the remarks they make" (Interviewee 9)

"The discussions are always very polite, very civil, very friendly. I've never had an unpleasant chat really with any of them." (Interviewee 13)

- **Family oriented**

Emiratis are highly collectivist society, where family is number one priority. The interviewees mentioned in this research that Emiratis prefer to spend their free time with family, take care of their nuclear and extend family, and they stay loyal to them. Furthermore, family is also important topic to be talked about during business meetings and at workplace.

> *"The family has an influence, and you will not act against the will of your family." (Interviewee 3)*

> *"They're very much strong on the family bond. Unless you get married, you don't leave the house." (Interviewee 4)*

> *"Well, what I very like in their culture is their family traditions, they are very family oriented. All of them have big families in general, they're very close with all the family, especially in Ramadan time pre COVID of course." (Interviewee 11)*

- **Stick in small groups (loyal and respectful to own people)**

Through the perspective of the Dutch interviewees, it can be concluded that Emiratis tend to stick together in their own small cultural group consisted of only local Emiratis (family and friends). According to few interviewees, Emiratis show their loyalty and respectfulness towards each other by forming own Emirati groups, which is obvious in the professional life as most of the Emiratis tend to spend their breaks with Emirati colleagues rather than with expats.

> *"Working mainly with Emiratis themselves. I notice Emiratis tend to cling to themselves as well, and like probably will talk about the work environment, but also within their own group. I see that Emiratis try to work together as Emiratis, not so much interacting with the other colleagues, only if it's necessary." (Interviewee 11)*

> *"I think in general I would say that the Emiratis are culturally more focused on their own environments. So, their own families and their own friends and everything." (Interviewee 14)*

> *"Sometimes I do meet people outside, and then you have like a nice conversation, but it stays like that. I do believe that Emiratis do not like mix too much with foreigners but stay within their family and social areas." (Interviewee 15)*

- **Shame and face loss (opinion of others are considerably important)**

The critical incidents mentioned by the interviewees indicate that Emiratis do their best effort in order to avoid any shame and face losing emotions. This is done by doing some specific behaviors, which is carefully calculated on how the society and family may react on it. This means that Emiratis may value the opinions of their surroundings more than their genuine opinion and may act in a specific way only to avoid shame and face loss in the cultural group.

> *"For example, when I tell my local colleagues that my grandmother is old and not living in with my family, and we have her in an elderly home, then that's a big shame." (Interviewee 4)*

> *"So far, I haven't seen or spoken an Emirati, who will say sorry I don't understand this can you explain me why we are doing this? What is the purpose of doing that? This can lead to losing their face. So, you will look weak." (Interviewee 7)*

> *Their values and norms indicate how you should behave amongst females or with family or outsiders. For some perspective it's two different worlds. All your behavior at work and how social you can be and then how strict you can be among your family members. (Interviewee 15)*

- **Focus on building genuine relationship, especially in business**

The majority of the Dutch interviewees mentioned that doing business in the Emirates is totally different than doing business in the Netherlands. In the UAE you are expected to build up genuine relations with your colleagues, customers, or business partners before talking about business. Emiratis prefer getting to know the background of their business relation before putting trust in the person and starting a business relationship. This means that it is unusual to expect signing a contract from the first appointment, but more having coffee meetings and sharing social interests and family issues. Emiratis appreciate an expat that shows his vulnerability to get to know them better, which can deliver big opportunities on the long run.

> *"I would go to have a cup of tea with you and have a conversation or something like that. So, actually they don't accept it when you say, well, I'm coming only for business and let's talk now about business. So, they expect from you from the beginning to build up relation with them, talk about personal life, which is absolutely important." (Interviewee 2)*

"In the Arab world the standard what people say is like you first always have one or two coffee meetings, where there's nothing business. This comes up and back on the family, the relationships, the connections, where the person needs to trust you because it all comes back at the tribal origins of this region where they needed to meet each other from another tribes. And if they did not know the tribe, they need to first sit with you to know who's your father? And of course, with Western people they cannot ask for who's your, so they need to find other ways to test the waters. So, expect first a couple of meetings just to get to know you and ask those things before starting a business." (Interviewee 4)*

"My man has colleagues that will not speak to his Emirati boss, because the contact is not there. So, my husband has a better contact with the boss because he does speak to him also about his children, his life, and what he thinks about life. If you do that with Emirati then you build a bond, then they will like you too." (Interviewee 9)*

- **Mixture of private and work lives**

According to some of the interviewees, private and work life are not separated in the UAE. It is very usual to share your family, social and private issues with your colleagues and business partners. In some critical incidents mentioned by the interviewees, it is also clear to see that even the HR employees and management will interrupt on your private life and offer you're the help to resolve it.

"Like my boss, for example he will still be very much involved if my family member is sick, or if there's anything to do with the family relation thing, they will put extra on it and they will advise you as well." (Interviewee 4)*

"There are a lot of emails when, for example, a father/mother died of a former colleague, there's an email sent around throughout the company." (Interviewee 6)*

"Especially at work, there's a lot of talk about holidays and family and they want to hear about your holidays and what you're planning and or they want to talk about the Dutch football team." (Interviewee 13)*

- **Society is divided in layers**

According to the interviewees, it is clear to see that the society in the UAE is divided in different layers. The research shows that Emiratis socially are not in touch with other ethnical groups or expatriates, where Emiratis live in their own neighborhoods surrounded by mostly Emiratis. On the professional side, the society is also divided into layers, where people are distributed on different work layers, such as low-class workers, employees, middle and top

management. This all clearly shows that the Emirati society, namely, the mix of nationals and expatriates, is not homogenous regarding social aspects.

> *"The whole society is separated here, so Emiratis live in their own neighborhoods, almost like in a separate state. So, there are very few Emiratis that live in the same place as others live. I'm living in a complex from the hospital. I think there's maybe one or two Emiratis living here. The rest is simply staying in their own places with only Emirati neighbors, etc." (Interviewee 2)*

> *"There's almost this social life separation between the expats and the Emiratis." (Interviewee 13)*

> *"They live in their own areas. The expats live in other areas. We bought a house in Dubai, so we have our own place in in a nice neighborhood. I don't think there's a lot of Emiratis living there maybe one or two in the in the whole area, so in social life you don't interact that much with them." (Interviewee 14)*

- **Emiratis have more privileges (such as another rules, low accountability)**

According to the interviewees, on Emiratis apply another social rule than expatriates, which can be considered as privileges on the social and professional sides. The Dutch interviewees mentioned critical incidents that shows that Emiratis Being privileges creates a type of division in the society. For example, Emiratis are not easily fired from their job, instead they are rotated to another position.

> *"They already know that in a few years they will be promoted, while if you are not national you have to prove a lot of things and do all kinds of things at work to get the promotion. You have to give 150% of efforts, only then you qualify for promotion. While for Emiratis, different rules apply." (Interviewee 1)*

> *"I do know for a fact that Emiratis cannot be touched. So, they kind of live by their own rules. And there is no. Coming too late or leaving too early for them." (Interviewee 7)*

> *"Also, the salaries, Emiratis who are being assigned as a software engineer will be paid as the scale of a senior software engineer, which is one grade higher than the actual level of the actual technical level." (Interviewee 11)*

- **Governmental encouragement for Emiratis (Emiratization of the workforce)**

The majority of the interviewees mentioned critical incidents that show the support of the Emirati government for the Emirati nationals, especially on the professional aspect, which empowers the position of Emiratis. This is clear to see in the "Emiratization" of the workforce, which has been implemented in the past years, which aims at replacing expatriate workforce with

Emiratis, especially young people with higher degrees in managerial positions. In return Emiratis to show high loyalty, which goes beyond the fact of their loyalty to their family or friends, but also to their government and the way Emiratis respect and follow the leadership of the country. Furthermore, Emiratis get encouraged at work, especially Emirati women and the young generation, which clear to see in the rapid position promotions, graduate programs, the replacement of expat managers by Emirati ones, and the higher minimum wages compared to expats.

> *"They implemented Emiratization, which means that they need to have a certain percentage of Emiratis within the company and some of these Emiratis are just there to be there, just they need to be there." (Interviewee 5)*

> *"And because the Emirati have a special status, there was a mandate introduced that 10% of all staff should be Emirati. So, when that mandate kicked in, I think it was in 2014 or something, then more Emirati started joining our department and they had a special status." (Interviewee 11)*

> *"Emiratization over here in the private sector is also like upcoming and therefore there are some people that need to be employed. And they were given this job because it's good for their standard, but not because they are the smartest." (Interviewee 15)*

- **Prejudgments based on nationality**

According to the majority of the interviewees, Emiratis base their trust in strangers on the nationality of the expat, which clearly lead to type of nationality prejudgment. The incidents mentioned by the Dutch interviewees show that Emiratis may change their behavior according to the nationality of the person interacting with. This affects not only the social life, but also professional interaction between Emiratis and other nationalities, where according to the events mentioned by the interviewees, it is clear that expats are categorized in nationality layers in the perspective of the Emiratis, where the layer in which your nationality exists specifies the behavior and the amount of trust of the local Emirati dealing with you. The interviewees highlighted on the point that Emiratis prejudge the person based on his nationality, which may strongly affect the interaction with this person, especially on the professional aspect. Moreover, it's very normal in the UAE to mention the nationality of the person acquired for a specific job or position in a job advertisement.

> *"When announcing job opportunities, they will tell you on the website, these job opportunities are only for locals, or these are for both. Yeah. Or they only for expats*

that happens us. So, then they will. Then they need only an expat from Europe or from America for that specific job.” (Interviewee 8)

“And again, I think there's also a little bit of a division in how they look at you based on where you're from. I think if I would be from X, it might have a very different perception than when I'm Dutch.” (Interviewee 14)

“I am getting treatment as being entitled and privileged and when I'm in a queue or whatever they take me out of the queue and then give me some privileges while the other people, just need to stay in line or don't get the same treatments.” (Interviewee 15)

- **Reserved in dealing with strangers**

According to the interviewees, Emiratis show low trust and distant relationship approach in their foreign business colleagues or partners. Due to the low trust, especially in business, Emiratis tend nowadays to be more prudent when doing business with expats by showing some unclear behaviors, such as applying extra conditions for collaboration.

“To be very honest, but there is a fundamental difference because of the social structure, and I can tell you right now I don't have any Emirati friends. I've never been in the home of an Emirati, but Saudi Arabia I have many Saudi friends and I came to their homes or whatever, so clearly they keep it kind of border and invisible border, which is difficult to cross.” (Interviewee 2)

“They’re also seriously reserved and that is quite understandable, because an area where there is money that attracts crooks. A lot of my Emirati friends have been losing money because of that, because people came here to rich country, now will get rich too. The first year it does not work. Second year it does not work and push the gun again, taking away some money, leaving a lot of damage so people are reserved.” (Interviewee 3)

“I was in a sales job also for hotels and there I had some clients in general they were in the first time a little bit distant. That is, in general, their attitude towards expats.” (Interviewee 4)

- **Network is the basis to achieve personal goals**

According to the observations of the interviewees, Emiratis depend highly on their network and connections to achieve a specific position, business agreement, or resolve any problem. The society is obvious based on the principle of Wasta, which means intermediary, where

everyone uses his own interconnections as intermediary to achieve his own objectives. Family and family network connections are expected to play an important role in providing support for their kids, where the name of the family and the tribe may play an important role in obtaining the needed connections.

> "You have to work on your network to use the principle of Wasta. I will give you an example, I had a problem with hospital and with insurance and I know a guy, who sent me information of his connection. So, I talked with this Health Authority guy and when I use his name in communication with the insurance companies and with the hospital, they all know him, and they are careful with what he will think about them. So, in that way he helped me." (*Interviewee* 3)

> "I had a problem with my car, I got a fine, which couldn't be me, but according to police, I was there in certain point in time, and I never been there at all. So,I discussed it with one of the local colleagues who was a part of my team and he said, well, my uncle, he's with the police, if you don't mind I will ask him so this is typical that they know somebody and they would like to help you so they will contact the guy they know." (*Interviewee* 11)

> "Someone in my team had a car accident and it wasn't her fault, still she was blamed because the person who ran into her was an Emirati. So, when she told the story to one of our Emirati colleagues, he said let me go to the police station with you and have a chat with them and then suddenly everything is sorted out very quickly." (*Interviewee* 13)

- **Showing a high prestigious social level in their behaviors**

Many Dutch interviewees have mentioned incidents that refer to the behavior of Emiratis in different social events to show their social status. According to theses interviews, Emiratis tend to purchase good quality and luxurious products not only for their selves, but also in case they want to gift them to someone. They do not compare products to each other's, which means that they are low detail and price-quality oriented. They may also purchase impulsively and in mass sometimes for their selves and to gift the same product to the whole family members. Besides purchasing behaviors, Emiratis also always work to be the first, the best, and the brightest in various sections, where according to the interviewees the city of Dubai is the best example on how Emiratis show high social level of development.

"If a baby got born, there will be a gift of €100 euros, while in the Netherlands you would maybe give a box of chocolates or a bouquet of flowers." (Interviewee 4)
"As a country itself as you see, Dubai wants to be #1 in almost everything, so that is what surprisingly you learn during the years is that if they do something, if it is an attraction or if it's a building or if it's a work or whatever they want to be the number one in doing that. It's a rich country so they like show off." (Interviewee 5)

"Emirati culture is just show everything you have. Probably show more than you have. They always want to be the first and the biggest and the fastest." (Interviewee 13)

- **Showing status by obtaining governmental and managerial positions**

Besides showing social status during social events, some Dutch interviewees have particularly mentioned critical incidents on the professional side, which refer to the behavior of Emiratis in showing prestigious status by seeking to obtain governmental and managerial positions. Emiratis tend to prove their power during interaction with expats, especially in business. This can be seen by the type of works Emiratis prefer to do because it may represent a specific social level. Also, the interviewees mentioned that Emiratis seek to work in governmental institutions as it may give them a specific prestigious appearance.

"They work for the government and for banks with very high salaries and very low requirements." (Interviewee 10)

"I noticed that the Emiratis are in a lot of government positions. So, you meet them at the immigration, when you arrive at the airport and although officials but except all other jobs, the were not Emiratis in general, at least we arrived in 2012. At that time, they were mainly working for government and the government institutes and not in shops or anywhere else. In the malls for instance, you see them stopping but you don't never see an Emirati working in a shop." (Interviewee 11)

"No Emirati would be a taxi driver for example, this does not exist., so typically if you interact with an Emirati through work there would be the higher educated or the ones in the skilled jobs. There might be exceptions, but in general, unlike Oman for example, where you would see Omani taxi drivers here this does not happen at all." (Interviewee 13)

- **Showing pride in their heritage and traditions**

Apparently, Emiratis are very proud of their nationality, heritage and cultural traditions. This is clear to see in the critical incidents that three out of the Dutch interviewees. According to these interviewees, despite the fact that Emiratis are modernized, but they still tend to keep their cultural and religious traditions, even the young generation is encouraged to stick to these traditions, which make them proud of being who they are now.

> *"They are very likely to maintain their local standards and it has more to do with the fact that the Demographics you need to understand." (Interviewee 2)*

> *"The atmosphere in the country is totally different here that people are proud. In the 50 years the development has been going very quick, so think of it that you now have a generation where the grand father came from Sharjah to Dubai on his camel in three days and his grandson is now taking his Maserati car and does it in 15 minutes. These two people are sitting together on one table, but they do recognize that they are from the same background. The country is very much involved in taking care that all traditions are recognized by the younger generation." (Interviewee 3)*

> *"You have to be careful that because they are very proud of themselves. It's a very proud culture, you have to be careful that you don't leave it that way that they have the feeling that you are hurting them in their being." (Interviewee 8)*

- **Welcoming and generosity with guests**

According to some of the interviewees, Emiratis are very warm and generous people. An Emirati would welcome someone to his/her house, serve him/her different types of dishes, offer a drive back to home, etc. During Ramadan, Emiratis set long tables of food and invite family, relatives, but also expatriate friends to share iftar with them. The afore-mentioned aspects mostly occur in case the relationship between the Emirati and the expat has been built on long-term and in-depth genuine connection.

> *"The way they treat guests is amazing. Like for example in the Netherlands, when you go to your neighbor, you will have to make an appointment and ask can I come tomorrow at 8 o'clock. And then there's a coffee and cookie and then you're supposed to leave in one hour or something like that. Here I was so surprised, I came to the Emirati family, they treated me like if I was a queen. They took food and everything out of the cupboards. They rather have you stay with them instead of going in an hour to*

your house, they are very warm, open, welcoming, sharing, and generous."
(Interviewee 9)

"I treated Emirati people in in their homes as well. I would say that they are generous, for example, I would have been picked up by a driver and before I start the treatment, I get a lot of food, tea, and snacks. After the treatment, I would always get a gift or a tip." (Interviewee 12)

"They're very welcoming by the way to expatriates. They invite you into their homes sometimes if you if you have business discussions with them." (Interviewee 14)

- **Helping strangers in resolving private or professional problems**

From the in-depth interviews of this research, it can clearly be concluded that Emiratis are very willing to help, especially with expats. According to the critical incidents of some of the interviewees, Emiratis have offered help to them not only at work, but also on personal level, such as helping in submitting governmental applications.

"They are really willing to help. I will give you an example. I was halfway to country on a road trip and got a flat tire. Now I had my equipment with me because I'm also off roading, so I have a compressor with me. So, I was thinking to get away to a gas station where I can do the repair. Immediately people stopped and say come, let me help you and I know where this garage is, just follow me. Do you have air enough to get there? Just come and follow me and after that come and have dinner with me." (Interviewee 3)

"And they are very helpful. If you ask them anything they are willing to help. For instance, with the driving license, reverting the Dutch driving license to the UAE one. We have in our project a department called General Services. And that is mainly Emiratis working there, because they relate a lot to local government. One of my colleagues there said get in the car and he drove up to the police station to arrange it for me. They put in the time and the effort to take you along. And indeed, it was arranged." (Interviewee 7)

"They really help you. For example, my husband had something with the car. Then the Emirati boss tried everything to get it fixed. While that is not what they do at the company, but that's what he did to help." (Interviewee 9)

- **Separation in roles and social activities between genders**

It is noticed by some of the interviewees that social life is separated between men and women. Emiratis follow some conservative social life limitations, where women have their own tasks, places to go, social activities, and even in governmental institutions specific departments. The communication between strange men and Emirati women should be kept in the professional frame, while any further communication could be seen offensive, especially in the presence of family members. However, the fact that social life is separated, but women are respected and well treated in the Emirates, where a person can get into jail in case of women harassment in public.

> *"Majlises, which is like a common area where the men of the family talk about different subjects and this can be both social and work related. They can discuss projects, they can discuss employees' conflicts, they come up to things and think about the future. This is still a thing that they keep like as a tradition that they still do. The men have their man things that women go shopping or have the kids or something like this. So, this separation is still very much" (Interviewee 4)*

> *"The communication is different from a man to woman. A man is not supposed to talk to a woman other than business. You can also not talk to an Emirati husband and say how beautiful his wife looks, that's offensive. If you say that they think like, why are you looking at my wife, but what's the matter with you? He's not supposed to look at my wife. They don't see it as a compliment. It's offensive Interviewee (Interviewee 9)*

> *"Female Islamic Emirati patients prefer to have a female physical therapist as well. Usually I don't see them, but in some cases when there's a treatment that only I can do or there's no female available, then I see them as well and usually they are covered, so I tried to do the treatment as much covered as possible and it depends also on the patient, because some people take rules very strictly, but there's also females that have less problems with male physio therapist for example." (Interviewee 12)*

- **Openness in dealing with people with different religious beliefs**

Some of the interviewees have also highlighted on the point that Emiratis behave very open and respectful to other cultures, religious, beliefs and genders. The interviewees mentioned that Emiratis tend to stick together and live in their own quartiers with mostly Emirati nationals, but during interaction with expatriates from different religious beliefs they show high tolerance and do not restrict their freedom of worshiping or following their traditions. Not only Emiratis behave

with high tolerance and acceptance to others, also the leaders of the country emphasis in their speeches on the freedom of belief and showing tolerance among everyone.

> *"Emiratis are very tolerant. A couple of years ago it was the year of tolerance. As long as you don't harm anyone, you can do here whatever you want." (Interviewee 4)*

> *"Religion is beautiful in Dubai, why I wrote a book about it. There's a place here where we have a church, a mosque, a Buddhism temple, and a Hinduism temple all on the same place. For example, you go to the mosque, then you have to say hello to everyone. The Holly Mary statue is in the middle of the square, where you can put a light." (Interviewee 9)*

> *"So also, the leadership of the country and the way they talk to their people is really being open to cultures. Being open to other people, and not try to push your culture on the other thread, so there's a high sense of tolerance against other religions of people." (Interviewee 14)*

- ***Showing understanding to western business cultural behaviors***

Although, Emiratis may be offended by some Dutch/European behaviors, which may vary from Emirati behaviors, but Emiratis are very open to learn European-Dutch behaviors and adapt them, especially in the professional life. The interviewees noticed that using some European ways of communicating in a propre manner, such as directness and clarity in business, can be accepted and appreciated by Emiratis. Furthermore, all interviewees have mentioned that there were no language barriers faced to interact with Emiratis, especially in business relations. Arabic is the official language of the country, but the majority of businessmen speaks English on a very good and professional level.

> *"Here in the Emirates everybody speaks English. Everything is in English. I have even Arabic Emirati friends that don't speak Arabic. So, the Emirates is very much open to other people as we have more than 200 nationalities. So, they have openness for others, flexibility, and adaptability." (Interviewee 4)*

> *"They quite like the European way of doing business because it is straight and direct and especially with the Dutch people. They like to learn from us in these aspects because I think they like the way Europeans work to say in general." (Interviewee 5)*

> *"If you see in business, I've got a lot of connections and they're always open to listen to you and to change or to take up your feedback of what your cultural way of doing things is or how you would do something, they accept it." (Interviewee 10)*

- **Mixed of modern and conservative society (freedom of actions)**

As the most Islamic Arab countries, many interviewees acknowledge that religion is the underlying basis of different cultural behaviors in the UAE. However, they also noted that the Emirati society is nowadays a mix of conservative and modernized behaviors. Emiratis are very modernized people; this keeps developing compared to the past decades where different regulations in the UAE were indicated to limit and prohibit some non-Islamic actions. Therefore, even though Islam is still the foundation of the regulations of the UAE and the basis of many cultural behaviors, but there is a huge regulations development to a modern free society, especially in the case of expats, where they feel not more limited or prohibited, such as hotel bars getting license to sell alcohol drinks. The interviewees explained that people in the UAE have more freedom of personal actions, unless these actions are hazardous for the public image of the society, which show the conservative and modernized mixtures of the Emirati society.

> *"In our hotel we had several restaurants and the bar that was open always till 2:00 AM." Interviewee (4)*

> *"The hotels in Dubai as well as in Abu Dhabi, they have liquor license that means that they are allowing them to serve alcohol. In the past, I remember 10 years back, it was a little bit strangely looked at when you were holding hand in hand hands if you are a couple but now it's not that strict anymore and that's what I'm saying that during the years it became less strict." (Interviewee 5)*

> *"I'm seeing slow progress and it's in on the business side. It used to be a crime to sign a blank bounced check and you immediately went to prison for that. The prisons were full of people who had bounced checks. That has changed. They've decriminalized writing bank checks, so there are improvements in in that way." (Interviewee 10)*

- **Time fluency (low time sensitivity)**

The majority of the Dutch interviewees mentioned that in the UAE time has another definition than in the Netherlands, where people appreciate appointments and are expected to be on the exact agreed time. Obviously, time does not work like this in the UAE, where it's very usual to arrive

late at your private or professional appointments, business meetings, work, or any social event. People are expected to show up late and are flexible in changing the agreed meeting time. Emiratis are not sensitive for time, they do not get upset and do not expect from the other person to be mad when the agreed time is not precisely kept, they take this topic easily, which shows their low time sensitivity.

> *"Because they say on everything "inshallah", which is beautiful. But for example, at 15:00 o'clock you think your order will be there, right? But it's inshallah, so it can be 18:00 o'clock as well." (Interviewee 9)*

> *"For example, Emirati people they will often show up late at appointments. In Holland, when the appointment is at 8:00, the person is there already 5 minutes before, so they are sure they're on time, but Emiratis they can be 10 minutes, 15 minutes, half an hour late and they will not even bother to call as well." (Interviewee 12)*

> *"Time is very fluent over here, so if you have an appointment at 10:00 o'clock you can come anywhere between 9:30 and 11:00 or even at 12:00 and then still expected to be on time to your appointment." (Interviewee 15)*

- **Low strictness and punctuality in business and deadlines**

Few of the interviewees have also mentioned that Emiratis are very flexible in business. Emiratis have no rigid deadlines or decisions; a deadline can be shortened or postponed easily, even sometimes without any discussion. Planning and agreements within the company or between business partners can be easily adjusted or changed if the manager or the owner of the company desires that change. Furthermore, business relations may call each other whenever they want and sometimes visit each other without any previous made appointments. Last but not least, contract terms, product/service prices, and contract conditions are negotiable in the UAE.

> *"The business culture is totally different, and I will give you an example. If I go to the Netherlands and I want to meet somebody, I need to plan that 3-4 weeks ahead, but this side of the world is slightly different. If I send an email, people read it, but nine out of 10 times they do not react. If I give them a call, I should know at least one of his two or three mobile numbers because it's landline he will not pick up." (Interviewee 3)*

> *"I get like a content calendar in my work, and I need to plan and schedule that for a whole month. It can happen that the management, or personally one of the people within the management, don't like a certain topic. So even though you have planned already, and it*

has been approved and everything has been looked. They can still say no, I don't like this, please change it or please cancel, but that's common here." (Interviewee 4)

"Sometimes, maybe decisions are being postponed and they actually don't say why, but they actually postpone a decision." (Interviewee 6)

- **Relaxed and easy-going at workplace**

The half of the interviewees of this research highlighted on the point that many Emiratis in general tend to show the behavior of laziness/not interested at workplace. Many Emiratis tend to not perform well in their positions according to the Dutch perspective, where employees are expected to do their utmost at their jobs. Most of the Emiratis do not take the initiative to do extra things at job, such as finding a solution for work-related problems.

"We have a beeper system. If you are looking for someone, you beep the button that refers to that specific person. But unfortunately, they never took their beepers with them. As a result, they are always unreachable. For example, you do not have this in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands if you need a colleague, you know where the person is and if you send an email, you will also receive a response back." (Interviewee 1)

"For example, I know number of people, they just stay away for a week whatever. We never know whether they're coming back or not." (Interviewee 2)

"They walk into their designated area where they can punch in, which means that they started working. Then they go out, get their coffee and they come back like half an hour later." (Interviewee 15)

- **Vertical hierarchy in communication**

In the professional life, the interviewees have experienced high hierarchy while working with their Emirati colleagues and managers in the UAE. However, employees are usually asked to give their ideas and tips, but rules and decisions come from the highest layer of the company. Emiratis will change their behavior or work performance only in case when this recommendation comes from their manager, while they are do not prefer hearing any work-related tips from a colleague from the same layer as him/her. Managers are called by sir or madam and are expected to have an appropriate behavior which correspond to the position of the employee.

"If something needs to be changed, then it has to come from the manager as a new rule that will be agreed upon. But when I tell a colleague that it could actually be better by doing it in a different way, then they say who do you think you are? because you are just a colleague you are not a manager." (Interviewee 1)

"For colleagues on the same management level, we call each other by the first name. But the people in the need to the managers, they call their managers mostly by Sir. The lower level of employees, they say Sir to the to the higher employees, namely to the managers." (Interviewee 5)

"And so, there was some conflict and I noticed they had some interactions, but not really so much directly, but they try to do it through their managers and the team leaders to try to get it solved." (Interviewee 11)

- **Following rules without questioning**

According to the interviewees, Emiratis follow strict laws and rules, which may be seen from a Dutch-western perspective, bureaucratic rules, which contains a lot of forms and paper works, especially in governmental institutions. However, Emiratis do not discuss or try to change these rules, but they follow and accept it utterly, especially in business projects, where Emiratis may feel uncomfortable by changing working rules easily, even if some of these are not convenient or efficient.

> *"Here in the UAE and specifically Abu-Dhabi I find there's some very strong mentality that is based on rules, but it is their own rules. There's a level of bureaucracy, but that is very strict." (Interviewee 2)*
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> *"I think Emiratis and that is both positive but can also be negative. Emiratis have very much about a rule set, but then more like that is bureaucratic rules. So, if this rule is there, then it's there, and it is not working the way around. They do not question the rules. We see it happening in the project, it's there and it must be like that. If you want to discuss why is the rule there, how do we apply it properly like this? What is the intention of this rule? that is a no go." (Interviewee 7)*
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> *"But there's also a lot of bureaucracy, there's still a lot of forms and paper and stamps and things that you need to get in order to get things done. Although they try to or digital transform everything, and they're doing a lot of automation and everything is with the app, you still feel that if you fill in the app that there's a printer behind it and that there's still paper coming out of it." (Interviewee 14)*