

HOW TIME PERSPECTIVES IMPACT PLANNING BEHAVIORS

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A Comparison between German and Indian Managers



Results Report

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Introduction

Through globalization the world's nations and societies have become more integrated and economy functions on an increasing global basis. Companies set up branches abroad and especially India, as one of the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), has become a target for many Western firms due to India's major economic growth. Also the economic relations between Germany and India have increased steadily and Germany was identified as the fifth most investing country for India whereas India was identified as the leading emerging market investor in Germany (Annual Review of the IGCC, 2012). As globalization is accompanied by an expanding global competition many organizations experience an emphasis on speed and the temporal dimension of work has become more and more important (Orlikowsky & Yates, 2002). With regards to this temporal dimension of work there seem to be major differences between German and Indian business cultures as they do not only differ in their orientation towards time but also manage time in very different ways (see also: Gesteland & Gesteland, 2010; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). A deepened knowledge of cultural distinctions between German and Indian managers with regards to how they perceive as well as plan their time may help to reduce cultural prejudices and misunderstandings and further promote cross-cultural collaborations.

The present study aimed to contrast German and Indian managers regarding their time perspective (TP), which refers to individuals' psychological orientation towards the past, the present, and the future (e.g., Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) and further analyzed the impact of TP on planning behaviors. Although it is important to understand how cross-cultural distinctions in individuals' TP influence their behaviors the majority of research on TP has been conducted in Western cultures only and mainly focused on potential effects of a future TP (Lens, Paixão, Herrera, & Grobler, 2012). Nevertheless, a future TP may not be the only TP influencing individuals' behaviors hence this study examined not only effects of future TP but also effects of present and past TP on managers' planning behaviors. One purpose of this study was to explore if and how German and Indian managers differ in their *future TP*, *present-hedonistic TP*, *present-fatalistic TP*, and *past-negative TP*¹. Another purpose of this study was to analyze if and how those TP impact managers' *general planning*, *lack of planning*, *long-range planning*, and *short-range planning*, while taking into account potential cultural distinctions. The present study was based on a quasi-experimental and cross-sectional research method and quantitative data was collected by using a self-report instrument including the following inventories: Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999), the Goal Orientation Scale (Malouff et al., 1990), and the short-range planning sub scale of the Time Management Questionnaire (TMQ; Britton & Tesser, 1991). Participants were recruited in the period from October 2012 until March 2013 and altogether 212 persons provided their great support through taking part in this survey. After data cleaning the final sample consisted of 89 German managers (22.5% female, 77.5% male; $M_{age} = 46.12$ years, $SD = 8.58$) and 100 Indian managers (16 % female, 83 % male; $M_{age} = 38.61$ years, $SD = 10.48$).

¹ All variables that were investigated in this study will be outlined on the next page.

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Outline of the Variables

Time Perspective (TP)

TP refers to the process whereby individuals divide the continuous flow of their social and individual experiences of time into distinct time frames of the past, the present and the future (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). This thesis examined the following dimensions of TP:

- *Future TP*, which reflects an orientation towards future goals and rewards. Individuals with a strong future TP often complete projects in time because they can resist temptations if they know that work has to be done (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999).
- *Present-hedonistic TP*, which reflects a hedonistic, risk-taking attitude towards life. Individuals with a strong present-hedonistic TP often do things impulsively and find it important to put excitement in their lives (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999).
- *Present-fatalistic TP*, which reflects a fatalistic, helpless, and hopeless attitude towards life. Individuals with a strong present-fatalistic TP believe that fate determines life, thus they tend to think that forces they cannot influence control their life path (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999).
- *Past-negative TP*, which reflects a negative, aversive view towards the past. Individuals with a strong past-negative TP often think of what they should have done differently in life and about the bad things that have happened to them (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999).

Planning Behaviors

In general, planning involves activities that serve an effective time use (Claessens, Van Eerde, Rutte, & Roe, 2007). Specific planning behaviors refer to how individuals decide which tasks they perform, how they should prioritize these tasks, and how they deal with distractions (Claessens, Van Eerde, Rutte, & Roe, 2004). The present study examined the following dimensions of planning:

- *General planning*, which reflects positive aspects of planning. Individuals with a high extent of general planning often plan for the future and develop plans to reach their goals (Malouff et al., 1990).
- *Lack of planning*, which reflects negative aspects of planning. Individuals with a high extent of lack of planning view goal setting as a waste of time and consider planning for over a year ahead as pointless (Malouff et al., 1990).
- *Long-range planning*, which involves planning within a long time frame of months or years. Individuals with a high extent of long-range planning often think about their career goals and about what they are going to do in one year (Malouff et al., 1990).
- *Short-range planning*, which involves planning within a short time frame of a day or maximum a week. Individuals with a high extent of short-range planning plan their course of the day before starting it and schedule the activities they have to do on work days (Britton & Tesser, 1991).

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Outline of the Results

One purpose of this study was to investigate if and how German and Indian managers differ concerning their *future TP*, *present-hedonistic TP*, *present-fatalistic TP* and *past-negative TP*. The conducted multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) revealed the following findings: on the one hand, there were no cultural differences between German and Indian managers with regards to their future TP ($F(1,187) = .09, p = .77$) and present-hedonistic TP ($F(1,187) = .15, p = .70$). German as well as Indian managers were identified as highly future- and relatively present-hedonistic oriented. On the other hand, there were significant cultural differences between German and Indian managers with regards to their present-fatalistic TP ($F(1,187) = 10.95, p < .00$) and past-negative TP ($F(1,187) = 45.78, p < .00$). Indian managers were identified as more present-fatalistic and more past-negative oriented than German managers. Figure 1 displays German and Indian managers' strength of future TP, present-hedonistic TP, present-fatalistic TP, and past-negative TP.

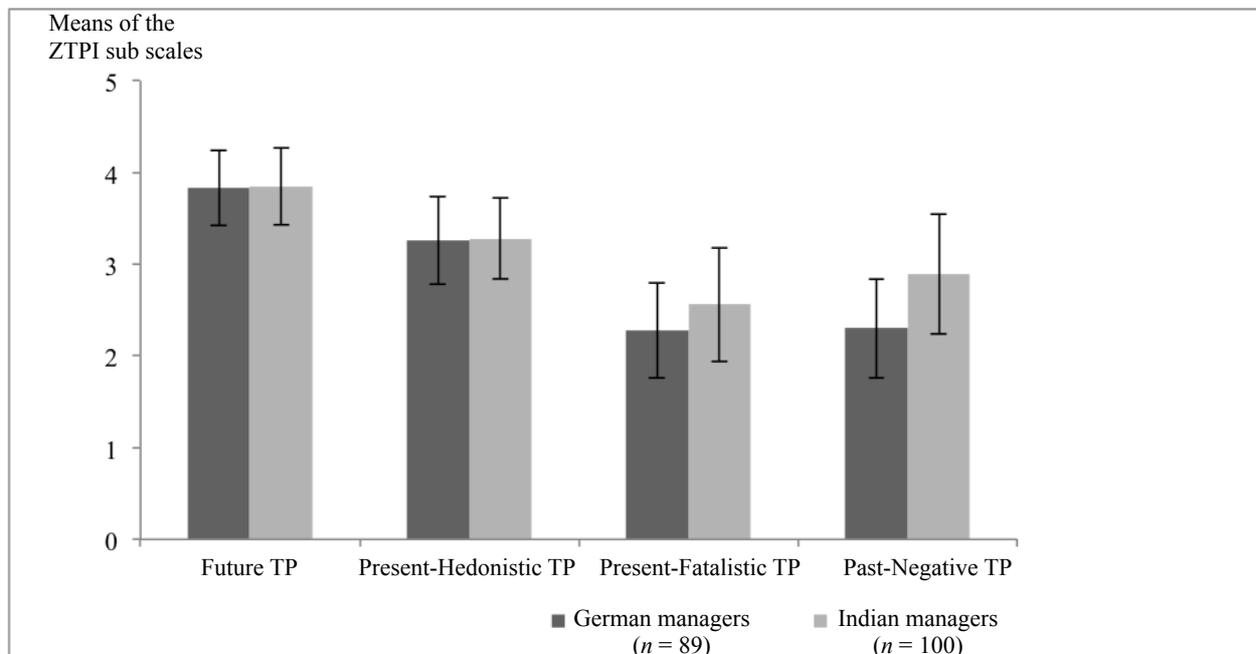


Figure 1. Illustration of German and Indian managers' strength of TP in the form of means of the four sub scales of the ZTPI; error bars represent standard deviations.

Another purpose of this study was to examine how German and Indian managers' TP impact their *general planning*, *lack of planning*, *long-*, and *short-range planning*. The hierarchical multiple regression analysis that were conducted revealed the following findings: first, with regards to *future TP* there was a positive impact of future TP on general planning for German managers ($\beta = .52, p = .00$) and Indian managers ($\beta = .23, p = .05$). Further, there was a positive impact on long-range planning for German managers ($\beta = .42, p = .00$) and Indian managers ($\beta = .33, p = .01$). On the contrary, there was a negative impact of future TP on lack of planning for German managers ($\beta = -.36, p = .00$) and Indian managers ($\beta = -.30, p = .01$). Further, there was a negative impact on short-range planning for German managers ($\beta =$

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-.54, $p = .00$) and Indian managers ($\beta = -.47$, $p = .00$). Second, with regards to *present-hedonistic TP* there were no associations between present-hedonistic TP and either German or Indian managers' planning behaviors. Third, with regards to *present-fatalistic TP* there was positive impact of present-fatalistic TP on lack of planning for German managers ($\beta = .21$, $p = .06$) and Indian managers ($\beta = .29$, $p = .04$). Moreover, there was a negative impact of present-fatalistic TP on exclusively German managers' long-range planning ($\beta = -.22$, $p = .06$). However, there were no associations between present-fatalistic TP and either German or Indian managers' general planning and their short-range planning. And last, with regards to *past-negative TP* there were no associations between past-negative TP and either German or Indian managers' planning behaviors.

Differences between German and Indian Managers

The present study revealed a small number but significant differences between German and Indian managers concerning their TP: first, with regards to *present-fatalistic TP* the present study revealed that Indian managers are more present-fatalistic oriented than German managers. This is in line with a 'ten-country comparison' that identified India as the most fatalistic country and Germany as the least fatalistic country (Mendonca, Yu, Deller, Stahl, & Kurshid, 2000). It is conceivable that Indian managers' strong present-fatalistic TP is determined by their belief in Karma. In India individuals believe in the doctrine of Karma hence Indians tend to consider human nature as unchangeable and often believe that their future is conditioned (e.g., Gopalan & Rivera, 1997; Mendonca et al., 2000). Second, with regards to *past-negative TP* this study revealed that Indian managers are more past-negative oriented than German managers. It is possible that Indian managers' strong past-negative TP results from an emphasis of the Indian culture on traditions and cultural heritage (Gopalan & Rivera, 1997).

Moreover, this study revealed one significant difference between German and Indian managers concerning the impact of TP on their planning behaviors: there was a negative impact of *present-fatalistic TP* on German managers' long-range planning whereas there was no impact on Indian managers' long-range planning. Although Indian managers were revealed as more present-fatalistic oriented Indian managers' strong present-fatalistic TP did not seem to negatively impact their long-range planning. One possible reason for this cultural difference could be that German and Indian cultures differ in how they conceptualize fatalism. In German society the concept of fatalism might be connoted more negatively than in Indian society. If German managers believe that fate determines their lives, this thought might involve more negative feelings such as help- and hopelessness. It is possible that those negative emotions decrease German managers' motivation to perform present behaviors such as long-range planning. On the contrary, in Indian society the concept of fatalism might be connoted more positively. If Indian managers believe in fate this thought might involve more positive feelings such as hope and security. It is probable that those positive feelings do not decrease Indian managers' motivation to perform present behaviors such as long-range planning.

Similarities between German and Indian Managers

Although this study revealed some differences between German and Indian managers concerning their TP German and Indian managers share the following similarities: first, with regards to *future TP* the

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present study identified German as well as Indian managers as highly future-oriented, which supports previous findings of the GLOBE study (Brodbeck & Frese, 2007; Chhokar, 2007). This finding further provides support for the assumption that globalization imposes the future-oriented market economy of industrial countries on developing countries that used to be more present- or past-oriented (Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004). Second, with regards to *present-hedonistic TP* this study revealed that German as well as Indian managers are relatively present-hedonistic oriented. These findings might suggest that there are no cultural differences between German and Indian managers concerning their future and present-hedonistic TP. Nevertheless, it is also conceivable that possible cultural differences with regard to managers' future and present-hedonistic TP have been undermined by effects of situational or individual variables. A future TP can be positively influenced by variables such as education, job and also success (cf., Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008). Therefore, these variables may have contributed to the strong future TP of German and Indian managers because the majority of the total sample held a master's degree (54.0 %) and worked in top management positions (47.1%). Moreover, a present-hedonistic TP has been shown to be strongly associated with individuals' life as well as job satisfaction (cf., Shipp, Abbie, Edwards, Jeffrey, Lambert, & Schurer, 2009). Thus, it is reasonable that managers' satisfaction with their jobs is one potential contributory cause of their strong present-hedonistic TP.

Moreover, this study revealed a number of similarities between German and Indian managers concerning the impact of TP on their planning behaviors: first, with regards to *future TP* as assumed based on Vroom's expectancy theory (1964) the findings revealed that future TP impacted German and Indian managers' general planning positively and lack of planning negatively. The findings further confirmed the hypothesis that future TP impacted German and Indian managers' long-range planning positively and short-range planning negatively. As proposed a strong future TP might facilitate managers to attach higher value to their future work goals and to anticipate that present planning will result in those goals and therefore increase their motivation to perform planning behaviors. Second, with regards to *present-fatalistic TP* this study revealed one significant association, namely that present-fatalistic TP negatively impacted German and Indian managers' lack of planning, in particular. As predicted a strong present-fatalistic TP might decrease managers' ability to ascribe value to their future work goals and to foresee that present planning will result in those goals and therefore decrease their motivation to perform planning behaviors.

Nevertheless, the findings did not reveal any of the predicted associations between either *present-hedonistic TP* or *past-negative TP* and either German or Indian managers' planning behaviors. It is possible that there were almost no associations between present TP and past-negative TP and managers' planning behaviors because potential effects might have been undermined by external stimuli based on the following findings and assumptions. One possibility is that external stimuli indirectly determined the impact of TP on planning behaviors through exerting an impact on managers' TP. In general, individuals are capable to shift their temporal focus within their TP-profile (Shipp et al., 2009). Moreover, external stimuli such as individuals' role demands and in particular their work goals have an impact on individuals' momentary allocation of attention (Gardner et al., 1989). It is feasible that at work managers'

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TP-profile is dominated by a future TP due to an impact of the strongly future-oriented market economy (Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004). Consequently, also managers who usually have a strong present or past TP may be more likely to shift their attention towards the future when they are at work and less likely to shift their attention towards the present or the past. Due to a predominant future TP possible effects of managers' present-hedonistic, -fatalistic, and past-negative TP might have been undermined. Another possibility is that external stimuli exerted a direct impact on managers' planning behaviors and further determined the time frame of those planning behaviors. In some environments and for some goals individuals need to focus more on long-term trends whereas in other environments and for other goals a short-term window might be more optimal (Britton & Tesser, 1991). Consequently, external factors of managers' business environment may not only determine if managers perform planning behaviors at all but also influence whether they perform short- or long-range planning.

Possible Reasons for the Small Differences between German and Indian Managers

Although German and Indian business cultures perceive and handle time in very different ways (e.g., Gesteland & Gesteland, 2010; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997) the present study revealed only a few differences between German and Indian managers. One reason for the relative absence of cultural distinctions and the number of similarities between German and Indian planning managers concerning their TP and the impact of TP on planning behaviors could be the increase in global connectivity. First of all, due to globalization many organizations move towards becoming increasingly global businesses and this movement towards globalization of businesses requires a particular mindset especially on the part of managers – a 'global mind set' (p. 30, Srinivas, 1995). Further, individuals tend to "blend" their cultural values with work environment influences and also individuals' behaviors are determined by their work environments (Ralston, Gustafson, Cheung, & Terpstra, 1993). It is probable that also the German and Indian managers who have participated in this study worked for companies with international activities hence their mind sets, their cultural values as well as their behaviors might have been blended by foreign work environments. Due to cross-cultural collaborations managers may have further learned to adapt their cultural particularities to foreign business environments and it is feasible that an increase in intercultural awareness and competences tends to cut across cultural boundaries.

Another possibility for the similarities between German and Indian managers revealed in the present study is that German and Indian managers undergo very similar trainings as the majority of Indian management institutions rely on Western management concepts (Srinivas, 1995). Therefore, German and Indian managers' TP and their planning behaviors may be shaped by management trainings that share very common features. Moreover, the strong future TP and its strong effects on the planning behaviors of German and Indian managers that were exposed by this study support that globalization has imposed the strongly future-oriented market of industrial nations of economy on emerging nations such as India (Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004). Altogether, as managers' mind sets and behaviors may be becoming more uniform it is reasonable that the present study revealed only a few significant differences between German and Indian managers with regards to their TP as well as the impact of TP on their planning behaviors.

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