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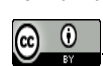
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Case Study

Why Walmart Fails in Germany? An Analysis in the Perspective of Organizational Behaviour

Sahibzada Hamza

*School of Accounting and Business Management,
FTMS Global Malaysia*

E-mail: sahibzadahamza6@gmail.com

Dr. Ismail Nizam

*School of Postgraduate Studies,
FTMS Global Malaysia*

E-mail: nizam@ftms.edu.my

Abstract

This case study is a critical analysis of the failure of Wal-Mart stores in Germany under the context of organizational behavior. For achieving the purpose, relevant theoretical approaches of Organizational Behavior will be engaged and used as an analysis tool for evaluating the real factors of significant failure of Wal-Mart stores in the lively economy of Germany. Lastly, drawing a concrete conclusion highlighting the mainstream failure issues and adaptable improving steps based on the above conducted analysis. Mismanagement of Cultural Diversity and Adaptation of inappropriate leadership style are the factors identified for this gigantic failure. The Organizational Culture model of Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, Lewin Change Management Model and Transformational leadership should be engaged by the Wal-Mart management in Germany to avoid that defeat as it would deeply addresses the issue of managing culture diversity and assisting managers in defining policies to successfully overcome the problems of different national cultures and would assist in leading people to work in teams besides having different cultures.

Key Terms: *Walmart, Germany, Failure, Organizational Behaviour, Cultural Diversity, Leadership*

1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to critically analyze the failure of Wal-Mart stores in Germany under the context of organizational behavior. For achieving the purpose, relevant theoretical approaches of Organizational Behavior will be engaged and used as an analysis tool for evaluating the real factors of significant failure of Walmart stores in the lively economy of Germany. Lastly, drawing a concrete conclusion highlighting the mainstream failure issues and adaptable improving steps based on the above conducted analysis.

2. Literature Review

The American retail giant that enters in the most matured European market (Germany) in 1997 have to revert within 9 years of time in 2006 with one of the most discussible failure of the century (Jui, 2011). As per the Poor financial performance, Wal-Mart never officially announced the experienced losses during its venture in Germany (Zimmerman and Nelson, 2006). Therefore, some analysts have implicated that the possible losses for the Walmart venture in Germany were around US \$ 200 to 300 million per annum (Vulture, 2016). Even though, no official numbers has been published, but the revert of the retail giant who is not habitual to failures has spoken louder than numbers that Wal-Mart fails in Germany and cultural factor plays significant role in this gigantic reversion (Knorr and Arndt, 2003).

Secondly, Failing in customer retention was another pooling reason for the Walmart failure in Germany (Macaray, 2011). There were notable mistakes made by the Walmart management in Germany addressing the different culture, visionary and explicates of the local customer market (Jui, 2011). Through closer inspection, it was been noticed that the retailer failure in Germany was heavily accounted for its poor internationalization strategy which completely ignores the national culture differences of the American and German customers (Knorr and Arndt, 2003). So the worst consequences could easily be gauged from the constant declining sales of Wal-Mart in Germany shown in Fig 1 below;



Figure 1: Walmart's International Sales (Source: Zimmerman and Nelson, 2006)

Lastly, the poor employee management practices leads to high employee turnover and severe de motivational impact on the remaining employees which has never allowed the Wal-Mart to firm its ground in this giant European market (Christopherson, 2007). Since, the unmodified set of employee management strategies practiced in USA was been brought down exactly to German arena without considering the need of addressing the German working behavior (Boulton, 2007). This approach eventually stressed the employees and urged to quit or remain left de motivated that ultimately hindered the smooth operations of the company and leads to continuous experience of poor performance (Shurrab, 2014).

The analysis of Walmart failure in Germany will be conducted using the following Conceptual Framework;

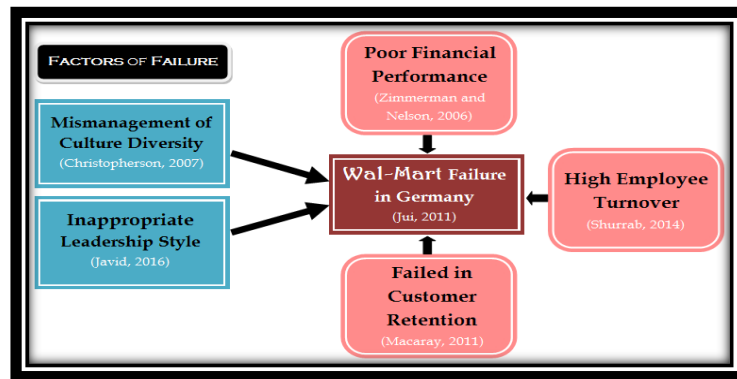


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Mismanagement of National Culture Diversity

According to Hofstede (2011) national culture has always been influencing the mainstream business activities ranging from capital structure to group performances. The awareness of national cultural can be a mainstream driver of greater success in international business ventures and on the other side lack of it can simply lead to their failures (Leung, Buchan, Erez and Gibson, 2005). Hofstede's model is based on a study conducted on IBM employees in over 50 countries where he identified five dimensions or the "problem areas" which reflects the differences amongst the national cultures. The developed dimensions are; Power distance, Uncertainty avoidance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity and long-term orientation (Hofstede, 1997). The definition of Hofstede's dimension is shown in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: Five Dimensions of Hofstede Model of National Culture Difference

Dimension	Definition	Cited by
Power Distance	Power difference evaluated how social inequality is perceived and admired in different cultures.	Podrug, Pavicic and Bratic (2006).
Individualism	Individualism is referred to the preference of people to belong to loosely knit society where importance is place on self-reliance and autonomy.	Hofstede (2011).
Masculinity/Femininity	Masculinity represents cultures with diversified gender functions where men tend to be more focused on success and competition while women focus more on tender values	Ghemawat and Reiche (2011).
Uncertainty avoidance	Uncertainty can be defined as the level to which the practitioners of a culture feel threatened or uncertain in unfamiliar situations.	Leung, Buchan, Erez and Gibson (2005).
Long term orientation	This dimension refers to the extent to which people own a dynamic, future oriented approach rather than being more concern on the present and future.	Hofstede (1997).

While looking into the US – German dilemma, the national culture differences is measured in the scoreboard Table 2 below through engaging the five dimension gauges of Hofstede (1997). Hence, the statistics in scoreboard are gathered from Hofstede IBA survey index available (as shown in Appendix) to illustrate the national culture difference between the operating two boarders of Wal-Mart.

Table 2: Scoreboard of USA and Germany in terms of Hofstede model of National Culture Difference

Dimension	USA Score -Rank	Germany Score -Rank	Cited by
Power Distance	40 - 38	35 - 42	Hofstede (2001).
Individualism	91 - 1	67 - 15	Hofstede (2001).
Masculinity/Femininity	62 - 9	66 - 15	Hofstede (2001).
Uncertainty avoidance	46 - 43	65 -29	Hofstede (2001).
Long term orientation	29 - 27	31 -22	Hofstede (2001).

As per seeing to the figures in Table 2 above, it was found that amongst the five dimensions of Hofstede's three (Power distance, Individualism and Uncertainty avoidance) found to be significantly influential and discussible in the case of the Wal-Mart successive failure story in US and Germany.

3.1.1 Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is rated as a crucial dimension in visualizing the national culture difference between USA and Germany (Bialas, 2009). While in context of the Wal-Mart Scenario as seeing to employee perspective, Some of the American employee management practices couldn't fit perfectly in the German context for example each employee has to attend the morning exercise, it shouldn't be harmful but the uniqueness about that workout session was that they were asked to chant WALMART! During exercise session which might be seen as a practice of enhance loyalty and boost morale in America, but in Germany it was been took as annoyance (Christopherson, 2007).

Secondly, the ethical code of Wal-Mart also pools in creating frustration amongst the German employee gentry likely spying on your co-workers and reporting any misconduct might be appreciated in US while in Germany this is not the case (Shurrah, 2014). Moreover, the check-out and check-in desk cashiers in Wal-Mart were ordered to always smile the customers which make the cashiers uncomfortable as smiling to strangers was an uncommon practice in German culture (Nazir, Shah and Zaman, 2014). These reported practices were unfamiliar to the practitioners of the German culture which makes them stressed while working in Wal-Mart as the German people are highly rated for uncertainty avoidance compared to US mindset as shown in the table 2.2 above (Boulton, 2007). Hence, this are some reported practices which makes Wal-Mart not an ideal place to work in and have led Wal-Mart to face a high turn-over of employees and this never allows the retail giant to hold the market ground firmly in the highly potential European market (Jui, 2011).

Since seeing to the hand of Customer perspective, similar facts were been reported as the Wal-Mart approach of being retail outlet wasn't been appreciated by the German customers as they found it a vice versa to their practicing culture practiced by the local retail giants in the Market (Govindarajan and Gupta, 2002). Likewise, the merchandising of the stores was erroneous as it places all the costly premium products on the eye catching shelves while all the discounted products were been placed either at the bottom or the top of the shelves which was a reason of irritation for the German customers (Landler and Barbaro, 2006). Secondly, the habits of the average German customers wasn't been identified and studied efficiently as the

German buyers are considered efficient and are not habitual of spending loads of time in shopping. While, Wal-Mart were designed in a such a way which makes the customers urged to spend more time in the outlets which might be a good strategy of increasing sales but which results in annoyance to the German buyers (Javid, 2015). Lastly, the unpopularity of the brand in the German market due to its unfriendly approach towards the environment, the reason lies in the concern of the German people regarding the “Greenness” of Germany that’s why the plastic packaging and the plastic bags of Wal-Mart aroused more annoyance than enjoying the shopping environment of the Mega US store (Macaray, 2011). These are some notable lapses in terms of analyzing the practiced culture in the local market and specifying customer’s demands that leads to poor customer retention and underprivileged financial performance of this Massive retail giant in the German Market (Jui, 2011).

3.1.2 Power distance

Larger Power Distances expected to create more inequalities which make the less powerful people more dependent on the powerful people and in practice less powerful people become polarized amongst dependency and counter dependency (Mooij and Hofstede, 2010). Hence in case of Germany people tends to work in clusters to achieve targets but the American strategy of power distance through authorial decision making approach makes the employees stressed while working at the Wal-Mart stores in Germany (Clark, 2006). Furthermore, an organization with larger power difference mirrors the present inequality between higher-ups and the subordinates which eventually results in lack of coordination amongst the organizational hierarchy (Wu, 2006). Likewise, the employee of Wal-Mart suffers by forcing to practice set guidelines by the higher-ups which completely ignores the likes and dislikes of the working subordinate (Knorr and Arndt, 2003).

Lastly, Wide salary differences amongst the higher ups and lower ups are another attribute of the organization with larger power differences (Bialas, 2009). Same was been reflected in Wal-Mart Germany where the workforce didn’t found Wal-Mart an appealing employer to work with due to very low pay compared to the Britain Market (Jui, 2011) . Hence, these are the reasoning elements in terms of Power distance which make Wal-Mart suffer from issues like High Employee Turnover and de motivation of employees (Christopherson, 2007).

3.1.3 Individualism

As per looking into Table 2, the German gentry of people tend to work with collectivity in terms of achieving targets and goals. Hence, the environment of Wal-Mart Germany doesn’t supports team building environment due to numerous hindering factors (Gerhard and Hahn, 2005). Firstly, the workers in Wal-Mart were forced to use English as the official language in the store that results in the communication gap within the hierarchy and even with customers which eventually prevent the forming of teams in the stores (Schmidt, 2014).

Furthermore, The feedback of the subordinates was been completely ignored from the upper management in terms of suggestion for betterment of the organization which ultimately results in severe de motivational effect on the employees and high employment turnover in Wal-Mart Germany (Landler and Barbaro, 2006).

Lastly, Individualism approach within a workplace most likely cannot take the entire workforce together some late adapters wouldn’t be taken care of and left behind which will eventually don’t make the perfect use of the available workforce (Wu, 2006). Similarly, seen in the case of Wal-Mart Germany where no attention were been paid to the unfamiliarity of the workforce with set the American working culture and ultimately this couldn’t make the actual outcome the available workforce (Macaray, 2011). Hence, these are notable individualist approach which leads to low performance for this internationally money making retail giant in the German Market (Zimmerman and Nelson, 2006).

3.2 Inappropriate Leadership Approach

Germano (2010) founds a straight cause and effect of Leadership on organizations and its success. Autocratic approach is one of the renounce leadership styles in the shelf of leadership practices. Peterkin (1996) has criticized Autocratic Leadership because of its characteristics that states to be more stiffed and rigid to be followed in an organization with critical cultural issues. In addition, the continuous engagement of autocratic leadership style can make organization face high turnover of valuable employees due to the absence of their contribution in decision making and organizational issues (Khan, Khan, Qureshi, Ismail, Rauf, Latif and Tahir, 2015).

While seeing in the context of Wal-Mart Germany, According to Javid (2015) American management of Wal-Mart in Germany was not based on participative style as per the reported facts the management of the Wal-Mart in Germany did not regard its subordinates through changing the internal environment of the Wal-Mart in accordance with the interests with the national and social culture of Germany for example the employee management practices like the morning exercise sessions chanting WALMART was been seen as annoyance for German workers. Further, forcing employees for doing unusual practices that opposes the German culture like desk cashiers were asked for giving smiling goodbyes to the customers, that was believed as an unusual practice for the German people (Nazir, Shah and Zaman, 2014). Hence, these are some reported incidents which overall effects the performance of the employees as they were been forced to work against the practiced working culture of Germany (Knorr and Arndt, 2003).

Secondly, Wal-Mart didn't want to be supportive with the wellbeing of the working employees like the wages for the Wal-Mart worker's wasn't been compatible with the working hours as the structured of benefits and sanctions was predetermined and strictly followed which itself is an characteristic of autocratic leadership (Schaefer, 2006). Hence Ver.di, the largest union in the world filed a court case against Wal-Mart Germany for not revealing the end year figures which can be used for negotiating wages. Therefore, this non-negotiable attitude on wages has clearly reflected in high employee turnover and this never allows the Retailing giant to hold firm grounds in the German market (Jui, 2011).

Lastly, Wal-mart in Germany was so classical and self-centric in their leadership approach that they were rigid in applying their traditional strategies of Wal-Mart in their German venture without seeing to any advices and perceived values of the employees (Hayden, Lee, McMahon and Pereira, 2002). As per been reported in numerous incidents Wal-Mart's American Managers pressured German executives to implement American style of management practices in the workplace like the subordinates were forbidden for instance from dating colleagues within the working place, workers were also told not to flirt with each other's (Schaefer, 2006). However, it did not work and eventually results in loads of internal and external negative outcomes (Javid, 2015). Furthermore, employees were also been threaten by management to close certain stores if the staff resist to work for working long hours that their contracts predict and do not allow the video surveillance of their doing work (Landler and Barbaro, 2006). Therefore these are some reported facts which have led the employees to poor performance and eventually has forced the retail giant to revert from the Germany (Clark, 2006).

4. Conclusion

Walmart the retailing giant has managed successful cross border entries which include Chile, Brazil, Canada, China and India. However, during its massive extension period Walmart experiences a number of defeats, Germany was a notable one amongst them (Macaray, 2011). Rich Theoretical framework was been engaged for analyzing the failure factors of Wal-Mart in Germany. Mismanagement of Cultural Diversity and Adaptation of inappropriate leadership style are the factors identified for this gigantic failure. The Organizational Culture model of Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, Lewin Change Management Model and Transformational leadership should be engaged by the Wal-Mart management in Germany to avoid that defeat as

it would deeply addresses the issue of managing culture diversity and assisting managers in defining policies to successfully overcome the problems of different national cultures and would assist in leading people to work in teams besides having different cultures (West and Turner, 2016; Mourfield, 2014 and Judge and Piccolo, 2004).

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