The relevance of the research lies in the increasing need for businesses to combine technological innovation with cultural sensitivity to succeed in diverse markets.

The study employs a qualitative comparative approach based on secondary data from international corporations such as Google, Unilever, and Huawei. The analysis focuses on how these companies implement digital technologies in culturally diverse environments and how employees from different regions adapt to new communication, management, and collaboration models. Special attention is paid to cultural values such as individualism versus collectivism, hierarchy, and uncertainty avoidance, which influence how digital tools are perceived and adopted in various societies.

The results show that digital transformation enhances transparency, speed, and efficiency but simultaneously creates cultural tension. For example, the implementation of remote work technologies challenges traditional hierarchies in collectivist cultures, while data-driven management may conflict with cultures that value personal relationships and informal communication. Successful digital adaptation depends on companies' ability to integrate local cultural norms into global strategies. Cross-cultural training, participatory management, and localized digital solutions are identified as key success factors.

Moreover, the study reveals that digital transformation contributes to the formation of a new type of corporate culture – hybrid and borderless – where cultural identity is less tied to geography and more to shared digital behavior and values. However, such transformation also risks cultural homogenization and the loss of local identity if not managed responsibly.

In conclusion, digital transformation in global business is a dual process: technological and socio-cultural. Its success depends not only on technological capabilities but also on cultural awareness and adaptive leadership. Companies that invest in cultural intelligence, diversity management, and context-sensitive innovation demonstrate higher resilience and competitiveness in the global market. Future research should explore how emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and the metaverse reshape cross-cultural communication and redefine organizational culture in the digital age.

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SOCIO-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF DOING BUSINESS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Социально-культурные особенности ведения бизнеса в странах Ближнего Востока

The Middle East represents a business environment shaped by cultural traditions, social values, and the strong influence of religion. Although the region includes diverse

countries, several shared socio-cultural characteristics determine how people communicate, negotiate, and build partnerships. The goal of this research is to identify key socio-cultural factors affecting business practices in the Middle East and evaluate their impact on professional interactions

Personal relationships form the basis of successful cooperation. Trust, loyalty, and familiarity often outweigh formal agreements, and many partnerships begin only after a close personal connection is established. The concept of wasta – reliance on family networks, friendships, and trusted intermediaries – remains important. Foreign partners should expect extended social interactions before business discussions, as hospitality and informal conversation symbolize respect and help build rapport.

Communication in the region is typically indirect and highly contextual. People avoid open conflict, expressing disagreement in subtle, polite ways. Body language, tone, and nuance carry significant meaning. Emotional expressiveness is common and reflects genuine engagement rather than unprofessionalism.

Religion, particularly Islam, strongly influences business routines. Prayer times shape daily schedules, and during Ramadan the pace of work slows. Respect for religious customs – dietary rules, behavior in public spaces, and Islamic finance principles – is essential. Islamic finance, which prohibits interest and emphasizes shared responsibility, affects the structure of financial agreements and partnerships.

Business organizations are often hierarchical, frequently family-owned, with major decisions concentrated at the top. Approval from senior leaders can prolong the decision-making process, not due to inefficiency, but because authority is centralized. Patience and respect for hierarchy are therefore necessary.

Perceptions of time are flexible compared to Western standards. While punctuality is appreciated, schedules may shift, and meetings often extend beyond the planned time. The priority is relationship-building rather than strict adherence to an agenda.

Negotiations usually develop gradually, with an emphasis on long-term cooperation rather than immediate results. Bargaining is a standard practice and should be interpreted as part of a balanced agreement. Demonstrating patience, cultural sensitivity, and commitment generally leads to more productive outcomes.

Gender norms may influence business interactions, though the extent varies across the region. Gulf countries have seen significant growth in women's professional participation, while more traditional expectations persist elsewhere. Awareness of appropriate etiquette helps avoid misunderstandings.

Despite common features, the region is not uniform. Gulf states combine traditional values with global business standards, while others maintain more conservative practices. Recognizing these differences is crucial for effective market entry.

The results of the research show that successful business activity in the Middle East requires cultural awareness, respect for religious norms, and a relationship-oriented approach. Adaptability, patience, and genuine interest in personal connection significantly increase the likelihood of forming strong, long-term partnerships in the region