

SOCIO CULTURAL FACTORS SUMMARY

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This report focuses on three major parts of socio cultural factors in Brazil, being; the cultural characteristics, the social characteristics and the knowledge/education.

Cultural characteristics provide a description about aesthetical factors to get an overview about diversity and patterns of life in Brazil. The Hofstede indexes will give an insight about how values in Brazil are influenced by culture and which consequences this fact has. The socio economic phenomenon of entrepreneurship will be studied in the last chapter of Culture.

Social characteristics will give an overview over society classes, ethnicity, inequality, crime and health in Brazil. These factors will inevitably influence Brazilian society. Sports and leisure are very pleasant factors in Brazilian society, therefore there is a chapter committed to those.

Finally the educational System is analyzed. Fundamental, intermediate and higher education are evaluated, regarding its quality and characteristics. Brazilian knowledge about agriculture, hydro-energy and recycling are also studied in order to analyze its expertise and repercussions.

CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Aesthetics

Brazil has several regional variations, and in spite of being mostly unified by a single language, some regions are so different from each other that they could have become different countries altogether. Brazil is composed by multicultural mixture: Africans, Europeans and Native Americans formed the bulk of Brazilian culture. This fact influences arts, literature, music or gastronomy, creating a heterogeneous mix of habits and patterns in society. (Noble J., Chandler G., & Clark G., 2008) Bossa Nova, Carnival and samba are some of the most popular exponents of this heterogeneous and rich culture.

Hofstede

Hofstede indicators given an insight about how values in Brazil are influenced by culture, identifying five primary dimensions to assist in differentiating cultures: Power Distance - PDI, Individualism - IDV, Masculinity - MAS, Uncertainty Avoidance – UAI and Long-Term Orientation. These five Hofstede Dimensions can also be found to correlate with other countries and cultural paradigms, like for example, the Netherlands. (International, 2010)

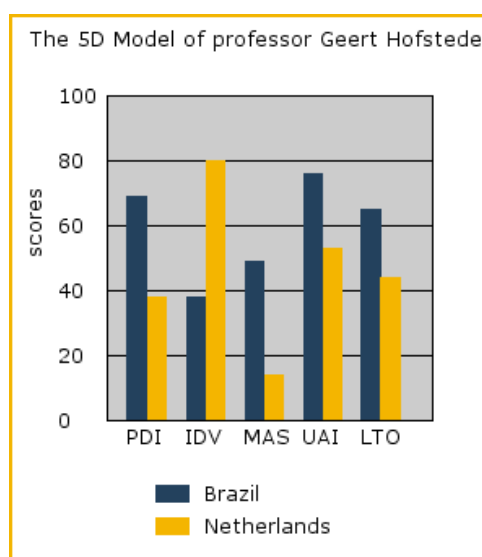


Figure 1 Hofstede dimensions of Brazil versus the Netherlands. (International, 2010)

Brazil is mainly characterized by its high Uncertainty Avoidance index (UAI= 76) which indicates Brazilian society's low level of tolerance for uncertainty. Strict rules, laws, policies and regulations are adopted and implemented, in order to minimize this level of uncertainty (International, 2010). The ultimate goal of the population is to control everything in order to eliminate or avoid the unexpected. As a result of this high Uncertainty avoidance characteristic, Brazilian society does not readily accept change and is very risk adverse. (Meuleman & Roeland, 2009)

The Long-Term Orientation Index is 65. Brazilians are expected to be patient and tolerant of problems in the short term since their focus will be more on the future consequences of their actions today. As a result change tends to happen more slowly in these societies and business relations may take longer to develop especially for outsiders. (Williams & Zinkin, 2006)

The Long-Term factor is especially interesting for sustainability aspects. Long-term decision making on sustainability issues reflect on their specific perspectives and action strategies, regarding trade-offs which have to be made. Long term decision making for sustainable development is not only a responsibility of governments. They also have a special responsibility for the organization of the societal discourse regarding the future and they should stimulate consensus on at least the agenda for long-term decision making. Brazilian government is usually willing to take long-term decisions, mostly because of the fact of participation by civil society and private sector is very active in the country. (Meuleman & Roeland, 2009)

Besides, the biggest difference between Brazil and the Netherlands is the individualism. (International, 2010) The Netherlands are really individualistic compared to the more collectivistic Brazilian society. The masculinity shows the more feministic characteristics of the Netherlands which can be seen as one of the countries with the same values and roles for women and men.

Entrepreneurship

The entrepreneurial behavior of Brazilians is also evaluated. Brazil is a leader in entrepreneurship, with an estimated one in eight adults being "entrepreneurs". Brazil has an activity of 12,8% of the population which undertakes entrepreneurial activities, where only 5% of the Dutch people undertake an entrepreneurial activity. The world average is 10,6% so the Brazilians are above average where the Dutch are far below this average. (Bosma, Niels; Acs, Zoltan J.; Autio, Erko; Coduras, Alicia; Levie, Jonathan, 2009) The Brazilians take these business initiatives due to business opportunities or related to the lack of options in the labor market. This differs from the Dutch situation because there are far more options at the labor market. (International Entrepreneurship)

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Society Classes

The modern Brazilian society cannot be reduced to a stereotype Latin American society; a wealthy landed elite versus masses of poor peasant and workers. In the twentieth century the system of social classes evolved from this Latin American stereotype system to a Brazilian system which consists of four social classes; the high class, the formally middle class, the informally middle class and the lower class.

The high class people have more property and prestige. The middle class is divided into formally employed people, a technical work force based on knowledge and skills, and the informally employed people, self-employed businessmen who accounted nearly half of the economically active population. (Coutsoukis, 2004) The lower class lives below the income National poverty line and includes 21,5% of the country's population. (United Nations Development Programme, 2008) In the Netherlands the GDP (PPP) per capita is divided more equal over society than in Brazil, the differences between rich and poor are smaller.

Ethnicity

In the early sixteenth century, at the time of the first European contact, the original Amerindian population of Brazil range from 2 to 5 million. Portuguese were the first European immigrants who went to Brazil. During the colonial period, the Portuguese colonists imported hundreds of thousands of slaves from Africa for labor on the sugar of coffee plantations. When slavery became less feasible after 1850 Italian immigrants began replacing the slaves on coffee plantations, while primarily

German immigrants established in parts of the south. Brazil's racial mix was made more diverse with the arrival of Japanese and Middle Eastern immigrants in the early twentieth century. (Coutsoukis, 2004)

All the racial and ethnic groups arrived in Brazil intermingled and intermarried. Many individuals are therefore, difficult to classify in racial terms. Discrimination is usually not explicit, but there is a very strong correlation between light color and higher income, education and social status. Just a few blacks reach positions of wealth, prestige and power, except in the arts and sports.

Inequality

Brazilian society had originally the Mediterranean double moral standard for men and women. Men were expected to demonstrate their masculinity, while proper women were supposed to remain virgins until marriage and to be faithful to their husbands. At the beginning of the twentieth century in Brazil women already were allowed open access to schools and employment, but they were not on equal foot with men in family affairs. Men were automatically heads of households and married women were legally subordinate to their husbands. Only in 1988 women became entirely equal to men for all legal purposes.

Professions that traditionally were dominated by men, such as law, medicine, dentistry and engineering are becoming more balanced, if there are not already more women students than men. Nevertheless, there are still relatively few women in positions of power. They only have limited significance in high levels of federal government. The Gender empowerment measure (GEM) is 0,504 for Brazil, saying women have low political participation, economic participation and power over economic resources. The GEM of the Netherlands is 0,882, with a 5th place on the world ranking. (United Nations Development Programme, 2009)

Crime

Brazil poses high rates of violent crimes, such as murders and robberies. The homicide rate in Brazil is very high with 25,2 homicide per 100,000 inhabitants. (Wikipedia, 2010) Most of these life-threatening crimes can be traced back to the drugs trade of cocaine and to alcoholism. Brazil also poses carjacking, express kidnapping, trafficking, domestic abuse, slavery and internet hacking.

A big problem is the human rights violations during capture and custody of suspects. But on the other hand, criminal charges have been described as extremely lax, allowing violation criminals an early return to society. The justice system is slow, mainly because of loopholes that allow for numerous appeals. It is said that a majority of crimes are not solved. (Wikipedia, 2010)

Health

According to the Human Development Report Brazil is a high developed country. The human development index is a summary measure of human development which measures the average achievements in a country in three basic dimensions of human development; life expectancy, knowledge and GDP. For Brazil the HDI is 0,800, which makes Brazil only just a high developed country.

The infant mortality rate (IMR) is a key indicator for the health situation of a country, because births are not affected by the population's age structure. For Brazil the infant mortality rate dropped from 95 in 1970 to 31 in 2005. (United Nations Development Programme, 2008) But still the IMR of Brazil is about 5 times higher than that of the Netherlands, which indicates that Brazilian health is at a lower level than that in the Netherlands. This can also be seen in the life expectancy at birth, number of physicians per 100.000 people, improved sanitation usage and improved water source usage.

	Human development index (HDI) value	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Physicians (per 100,000 people)	Population using improved sanitation (%)	Population using an improved water source (%)	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)
Netherlands	0,953	79,2	315	100	100	4
Brazil	0,800	71,7	115	75	90	31

Table 1; Different Health indicators (United Nations Development Programma, 2008)

Sports/Leisure

The Brazilian people are very involved in sports. Most of the people regularly follow and participate in veracious kinds of sports. The most popular sport of Brazil is football. This sport is in the blood of the people and can be considered a cultural phenomenon. The climatic conditions of Brazil are perfect for playing and practicing football. Brazil is the only country to have been participated in all the Football World Cups and even won the tournament five times (1958, 1962, 1970, 1994 and 2002). The World Cup draws Brazilians together, with people skipping work to view the national team play.

Besides football volleyball is becoming popular in Brazil. In 1992, during the Olympic Games in Barcelona, the golden generation conquered the gold medal. Ever since the interest has only grown. It has been said that the strength of Brazilian volleyball was in fact built around the culture associated with people playing beach volleyball all day at the famous beaches such as those in Rio de Janeiro. (Virtual-Brazil.com)

Other popular sports in Brazil are footvolley and Capoeira. Footvolley is a combination of football and volleyball played on the beaches. Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian art form that combines elements of martial arts, music and dance. It has its origins in the seventeenth century and is an uniquely Brazilian folk dance with improvised fighting movements to claims that is a battle-ready fighting form directly descended from ancient African techniques. The sport does not focus on injuring the opponent. Rather, it emphasizes skills. (Wikipedia, 2010)

Brazil had 5 million visitors in 2008, of which 82,000 from the Netherlands. Therefore Brazil is 49th on the world ranking, direct revenues reached US\$ 5.78 billion. Domestic tourism is still a fundamental market segment for the industry with 51 million inhabitants traveled throughout the country, direct revenues reached USD 21.8 billion. (Wikipedia, 2010) Natural areas are the most popular tourism product, such as sun and beach, in combination with ecotourism, leisure and recreation. But also adventure travel, historic and cultural tourism are very popular.

EDUCATION / KNOWLEDGE

Education

The principles for education in Brazil are established in the 1988 Brazilian Constitution, when was decided that education is a right for all. To make this happen education is made free of charge. The education system consists of 3 different categories; fundament, intermediate and higher education. Preschool or infant education is added to this hierarchical structure for the purpose of providing assistance to children below 7 years of age.

Fundamental school, in Brazilians language Ensino fundamental, is compulsory to 7 to 14 years old. Intermediate schooling, Ensino Médio, spreads over at least three annual grades. When the course includes professional training comparable to the Dutch MBO, it may last for four or five years. The public fundamental and intermediate schools are mostly of low quality. Private schools have better quality but only the rich people can pay this.

Higher education in Brazil, Ensino Superior, is organized in two levels: graduate and undergraduate. Undergraduate is for updating, specializing and further studies courses. Graduate is for master and doctorate courses. Different from intermediate education, public higher education is of relative high quality and is still free of charge. But public universities have limited places and entry is determined by highly competitive exams, thereby excluding those who have not had a high quality secondary education or attended an expensive preparatory course (McCowan, 2007). Private higher education is allowed, but the standard of this kind of education is very low.

The consequence from the difference between private pre-university schooling and public pre-university schooling is that there is a strong connection between poor attendances, repetition, dropping out of school, the provided quality of education, equality of access to knowledge and to socially accumulated knowledge and the living conditions of the population. So these effects mutually reinforce one another (Marcelo & Gabriel, 2009).

The quality of the education of a country is measured by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). They present the quality of education by the education index, which is measured by the adult literacy rate and the combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrollment ratio. For Brazil the education index is 0,891 and for the Netherlands 0,985. (United Nations Development Program, 2009)

The quality fundamental and intermediate education in Brazil has gradually got worse, or at best remained stable, according to the Basic Education Evaluation system (SAEB). With the growth of the economy of the last years it is surprising, that the quality of education is getting worse. (Marcelo & Gabriel, 2009)

The public higher education is in comparison to other nations in South America of high quality, but in comparison with the Netherlands it isn't. To measure the quality of higher education, the Times Higher Education Supplement ranking is commonly used.

Institution (the Netherlands)	World Rank	Institution (Brazil)	World Rank
University of Amsterdam	49	University of Sao Paulo	196
Delft University of Technology	83	University of Campinas	248
University of Twente	200	Federal University of Rio de Janeiro	334

Table 2; Times Higher Education Supplement ranking 2009 (TSL Education Ltd, 2009)

A nice fact of the Brazilian education is the equality between genders. Compared to other countries, Brazil is a country where women have a slight advantage in the education system, according to the most quantitative indicators (Marcelo & Gabriel, 2009).

Knowledge

Brazil is leading in the export of oranges, sugarcane and coffee. But it's also exporting other important export products like soy beans, rice, tobacco, bananas and cotton. Therefore Brazil is well known for the agriculture. In 1999 over 17,3 percent of the active working population was working in the agriculture (Advameg, Inc., 2010). Nowadays agriculture is still important for the economy of Brazil.

Next to agriculture Brazil has a lot of knowledge about hydro energy and recycling. Brazil's electricity consists for over 80% of hydro power and in the future there are plans for over 30 dams in the Amazon. Besides that Brazil is the biggest aluminum recyclers in the world. This is one part where Brazilians are a nation of sustainability.

Conclusion

The differences in socio cultural aspects between the Netherlands and Brazil are obvious and thoroughly discussed. But how do these socio cultural aspects influence the sustainability of the countries? Brazil is less developed as the sections above show, for instance health and education are substantially different from the Netherlands. Therefore we think that sustainability could be less developed and under the attention. In the Netherlands, which is ranked as a one of the most sophisticated, wealthy and developed countries, there is a big buzz word 'green' representing the big trend of sustainability. To give a cultural example of the difference in mindset: when for instance in the Netherlands you drive a big SUV like a hummer than people think your rude, asocial and polluting while in Brazil this is much more seen as a status symbol.

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