

## **Organizational communication and distance of power in the tourist companies of Bahías de Huatulco**

LÓPEZ-HERNÁNDEZ, Sonia\*†, LÓPEZ-MARTÍNEZ, María Teresa and ESQUIVEL-RÍOS, Rocío

*Universidad Del Mar – Huatulco. Km 250, México 200, Garita, Oaxaca*

Received July 11, 2017; Accepted November 23, 2017

---

### **Abstract**

The present work exposes the distance of intrinsic and manifest power in the communication and the language among the members of the hotel organizations of Bahías de Huatulco. For this study, the construct of the organizational culture of Geert Hofstede was used, which proposes the creation and measurement of five platforms, distance of power, collectivism vs. Individualism, masculinity-femininity, long-term orientation and avoidance of uncertainty, highlighting for this research the first of the platforms mentioned. As a result of the investigation, they propose to design new organizational structures and improve the internal communication channels of organizations in order to favor the development of the activities of all members of the company.

### **Communication, Language, Power Distance, Organizational Culture**

---

**Citation:** LÓPEZ-HERNÁNDEZ, Sonia, LÓPEZ-MARTÍNEZ, María Teresa and ESQUIVEL-RÍOS, Rocío. Organizational communication and distance of power in the tourist companies of Bahías de Huatulco. RINOE Journal-Microeconomics. 2017.1-1:1-9

---

---

\* Correspondence to Author (email: sonilh74@yahoo.com)

† Researcher contributing first author.

## Introduction

Hotel companies in Bahías de Huatulco represent a complex sector in which the business culture of the chains, usually foreign, and local cultures coexist. In this environment communication and power become an object of strategic analysis to improve the work environment and the effectiveness of the work by area. Therefore, it is important to know the distance that exists between superiors and subordinates. The distance of power is the degree to which the less powerful members of a group or organization accept, and expect power to be distributed in a hierarchical manner.

This represents inequality (more vs. less) but defined from below (subordinates) up (higher). That is to say, as the subordinates see the decision makers or bosses, how power is distributed among them and in the same way how this action is legitimized. Geert Hofstede determines the distance of power as a characteristic element of the organizational culture of companies and the reflection of an entire society.

Thus, to identify the power of communication and language in the five-star hotel companies of CIP Huatulco, a survey was developed whose data, revised from statistical programs, allowed the results to be evaluated quantitatively. The innovator of the work is the particularity of the companies in which they worked, which are part of foreign chains with a business vision and culture outside the place where they are located, and shows a complex reality to be considered in the tourism area. and business in an era of globalization. Likewise, the results can be useful to improve the work climate and the efficiency by area of this sector.

## Methodology

For the study of the distance of power, this research is considered of transeccional-exploratory nature because there is a set of variables for a single situation. Sampieri (2006) mentions that the purpose of exploratory transeccional designs is to begin to know a variable or a set of variables, a community, a context, an event, a situation. The information was obtained from a survey. Likewise, the bibliographic and documentary analysis and consultation was carried out. In the case of organizational communication, direct observation, application of surveys and structured interviews were carried out. In general terms, it is an exploratory and descriptive work that included the entire universe or subjects of study for what is a non-probabilistic, case study sample (Hernández Sampieri, Roberto, Carlos Fernández Collado and Pilar Baptista Lucio, 2003).

The questionnaire consists of two clearly defined parts. In the first, after asking the person who completes it to define his position in the company (command or not), information regarding the hotel chain is collected; the second part is devoted to collecting the point of view of the interviewee regarding the perception of power. The third block of the questionnaire is intended to understand the importance that chains give to communication strategies, leadership and job satisfaction.

In order to analyze each item the following graphs contain the data corresponding to the valid percentage and accumulated percentage, understanding that the frequency according to Moya (2004, page 39) is the number of original values that fall within a class. Likewise, the percentage corresponds to the number or quantity represented by the proportionality of a part with respect to a total that is considered divided into one hundred units (Levin and Richard, 2004, page 720).

Also, the average was considered, as mentioned by Gutiérrez and Vladimirovna (2014), it represents an average value of all the observations, therefore each of the data equally influences the result of this and when there are aberrant data that is they move away considerably from the rest of the other values, the average value does not reflect the reality. Finally, deviation was observed, which is the most common measure of variability of use. The deviation is the average amount in which one of the individual scores varies with the average of the set of scores (Quintanar, 1999, p. 171).

### Problem

According to Hofstede's definition of the distance of power category, we talk about the distribution of power and its acceptance. Hitt (2006) mentions that the distance of power is the extent to which people accept that there are differences of power and authority among people. It is important to mention that this does not refer to the different hierarchical levels, but rather to the acceptance of the differences between hierarchical levels, among which communication is a fundamental element.

Under that tenor, the following research question was developed: How is power in communication and language manifested in hotel companies in which foreign business cultures and local staff coexist? This question refers to the identification of differences between the hierarchical levels to identify the distance of power and also to observe the role of communication to legitimize the distance.

### Hypothesis

If the power within the hotel companies of Bahías de Huatulco is distributed equitably, then the distance is diminished and the organizational communication is effective.

### Objectives

#### General

Identify the distance of existing power in the tourist companies of the CIP Bahías de Huatulco, as well as the importance of communication and language to exercise said power.

#### Specifics

- Identify the characteristics of organizational communication.
- Characterize the distance of power

#### Theoretical framework

Hofstede (1984) mentions that the distance of power has several characteristics that mark this inequality, such as: "the psychological and mental characteristics that are a basic factor of human existence, some examples of them are shown below":

- Social status and prestige.
- The wealth.
- The power.
- The laws and the rules and the privileges of the same

Mulder (1976, p.83) defines power as: "the potential to determine or direct (to a certain extent) the behavior of another person or other persons more than the other way round", which translates as "the potential to determine or direct (in a certain sense) the behavior of other people more than what they can do."

In the same text explains that the distance of power is understood as the degree of power inequality between the individual of less and the more powerful, belonging to the same system.

In this way, reflects Hofstede, the level of inequality that a society has is approved by both followers and leaders. Of course, power and inequality are fundamental facts in any society, and anyone with international experience will be aware that. "All societies are unequal, but some more than others" which translates as "all societies are unequal, but some more than others" (Hofstede, 1984, p.67).

The previous definition, made by the author himself, served as the basis for developing the category corresponding to the distance of power; to this end, it states that this is between a boss and a subordinate, and that distance is the difference between how much the boss can determine the behavior of the subordinate and how much the subordinate can determine the behavior of the boss.

The distance of power is then the way in which the leaders of the organizations distribute that power among their subordinates, it is expected that it be distributed in an equitable manner. In a social context, the appearance of distance of power has its origin in the value system of the members of a society; it is the people who accept that there is inequality (Grande (2004)). In this way, in societies with a high distance of power they value their status and superiors and inferiors are socially separated, on the contrary, when the distance is short, members of societies feel close to each other.

On the other hand, Robbins (2005) mentions that the distance of power varies in terms of physical and intellectual capacities, which, in turn, create differences in wealth and power. With intellectual abilities refers to the academic titles that employees may have. In that sense, it is understood that for those societies with wide distances the academic titles of the bosses can generate fear and respect in subordinates, while in companies with short distance, this has no greater relevance.

Now, a way of observing the relationships between individuals is the same communication that "allows homogenous behavior among the human beings that interact in the different groupings of the community and influences the successes or failures of the groups and individuals that they are composed" (Bello, 2017, page 13) In particular in organizations for "the study and management of different information flows, at different levels and segments of publics (internal or external), with the aim of promoting efficiency and business efficiency" (Bello, 2017, page 13) organizational communication is used.

Regarding the hotel sector, "the development of multinational management companies begins a process of interculturality that involves national and foreign workers under new ways of doing" (Bello, 2017, page 14), which implies the adjustment of paradigms foreign corporations to the socio-cultural reality that receives the investment.

In this sense, assessing the distance of power in a context of intercultural communication is very interesting because the process of internationalization has important strategic and organizational implications for the company, which leads to learning to work with a foreign partner and "be aware of cultural differences and how they can affect the relationship of not being treated properly, learn to create a climate of mutual trust that facilitates joint decision-making and resolving conflicts arising from interests that are not always coincident and sometimes at odds." (OEME, 2008, page 88) and this information in the hotel sector is a must (Bonilla P, Ma. de Jesus., Clara Muñoz Colomina., Carmen Avilés Palacios, Catalina Vacas Guerrero, 2005, pág. 38)

The approach to this problem in this case was developed from the Humanist Theory, in which the authors start from a complete vision of human nature and its impact on the performance and achievements of the company (Fernández Collado, 2006), in This paradigm highlights aspects such as leadership, motivation, relationships and informal communication, change and the development of human resources. It is important to mention that only some of them will be used for this study.

Speaking of communication it is important to identify the different types of organizational communication that are held within the companies.

Communication is an important factor in any company. This is defined by Robbins S. (2005) as the transfer and understanding of meanings. Emphasizing the transfer of meanings, with this, means that if information or ideas have not been transmitted there is no communication.

The communication process is a well-studied topic, since it has a close relationship with other elements of the organizations, in this particular case with the distance of power, hence the importance of including it in this document. In order to identify the direct relationship with the distance of power, some forms of organizational communication must be known.

Organizational communication in addition to having the above elements is classified according to various characteristics. Formal communication: is the communication that follows the official chain of command or that someone requires to perform a job (Robbins, 2005). This means that formal communication is one that is governed by the communication channels established in the organization chart of the company.

Informal communication: communication that is not defined by the structural hierarchy of the organization (Robbins, 2005) unlike the previous one, this communication does not follow the patterns that the organization chart establishes. As the name says, it is informal, it is the communication that occurs between workers of a company regardless of the position or the hierarchy of them.

Likewise, the communication must take an address, so that the destination and the origin of the information can be identified. Downward vertical communication, is one that is from top to bottom. Having the organization chart of the company, the information is generated in the upper part of it and it is transmitted downwards in cascade form, until reaching the lowest level of the organization chart.

On the other hand, vertical communication is ascending, which is the one that rises from the last hierarchical step, to the first. Therefore, the information is generated by the operational positions, such may be the case of monthly reports or the clients' own complaints. Lateral communication is that which occurs between departments that are in the same hierarchical level, usually this communication is between departments that share information to discuss the same point or the same project.

Finally, there is cross communication, this type of communication is used between posts of different hierarchical levels, in some way it serves to shorten the distance between the positions with high hierarchy and those that have a lower hierarchy. It also supports the rapid resolution of conflicts. But it is important to mention that it is not correct to omit hierarchies.

## **Discussion of results**

In the particular case of measuring the distance of power in the hotel companies, the following indicators were identified:

concept	varibale	indicators	subindicators
Power distance	More powerful members	Undelivered power	Centralization Authoritarianism
	Less powerful members	Power distributed hierarchically	Delegation of responsibility Empowerment

**Table 1** Variables of power distance

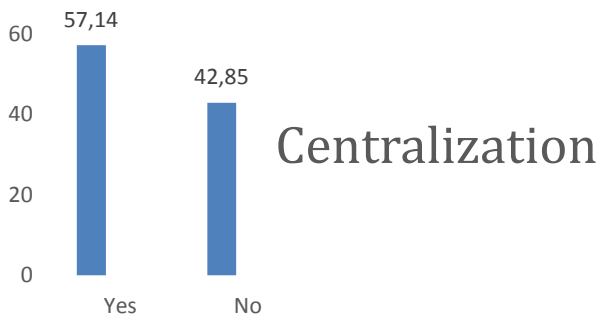
Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the centralization item, understanding the centralization as the concentration of power and decision making in a single person or a single post, the following was found:

	Valid Score	Accumulate
<b>Yes</b>	57.14	57.0
<b>No</b>	42.85	43.0

**Table 2** Centralization

Source: own elaboration



**Graph 1** Centralization

Source: Own elaboration

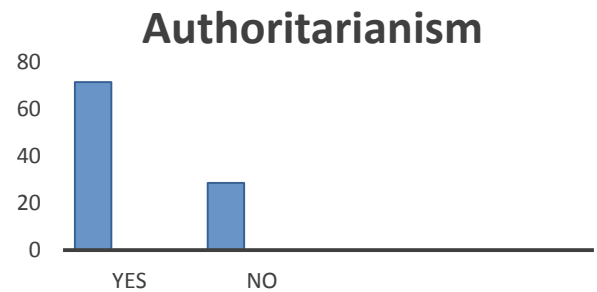
Seen in another way, we have the previous graph, which shows that the subjects surveyed mostly believe that the companies for which they provide their services do have a centralized organization. So it is understood that decision-making and information is concentrated at the top of the organization and it will fall in cascade to the last hierarchical level, losing a large percentage of it in its path. Ceasing to be 100% effective.

Authoritarianism implies if the decision making is unilateral and above all tax. It can be understood as the freedom that collaborators have to participate and give opinions to decision makers. For this indicator, it was observed that:

	Valid Score	Accumulate
<b>Yes</b>	71.42	71.0
<b>No</b>	28.57	29.0

**Table 3** Authoritarianism

Source: own elaboration



**Graph 2** Authoritarianism

Source: Own elaboration

That is to say, the answers obtained show that the perception of the collaborators is affirmative on the part of 71.42%, which indicates that in fact there are authoritarian heads, that is to say that there is no possibility of being proactive within the organization, so that It is considered a company that shows characteristics of having a wide distance of power. However, there are still some missing features to be evaluated. Regarding the delegation of responsibilities, reference is made to the freedom of employees to be able to carry out their activities and make decisions in a responsible and autonomous manner. In this case the results are:

	Valid Score	Accumulate
<b>Yes</b>	50.0	50.0
<b>No</b>	50.0	50.0

**Table 3** Delegation of responsibilities

Source: Own elaboration

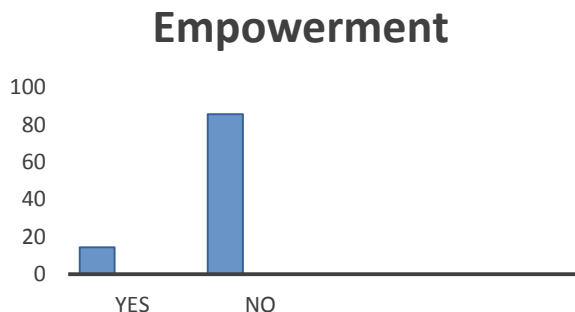


**Graph 3** Delegation of responsibilities  
Source: Own elaboration

This refers to having divided visions, that is, 50% seems to have this freedom in decision-making and at the same time to execute actions in a responsible manner, while the other half sees it in a negative way. At the same time, empowerment is part of decentralization in decision-making and autonomy on the part of employees to solve problems without consulting the immediate boss, streamlining processes or making decisions. And it was observed that:

	Valid Score	Accumulate
Yes	14.3	14
No	85.7	86

**Table 4** Empowerment  
Source: Own elaboration



**Graph 4** Empowerment  
Source: Own elaboration

The answers obtained in this part of the interview yielded information that denies that empowerment of the collaborators. What makes reference to follow the orders of superiors without opportunity to make changes in those orders.

The above corresponds to the direct measurement of the distance of power. To measure the effectiveness of communication, variables such as: job satisfaction and leadership were considered. In the same way a survey was applied and finally these variables were related, these items or categories are the result of the workers' perception.

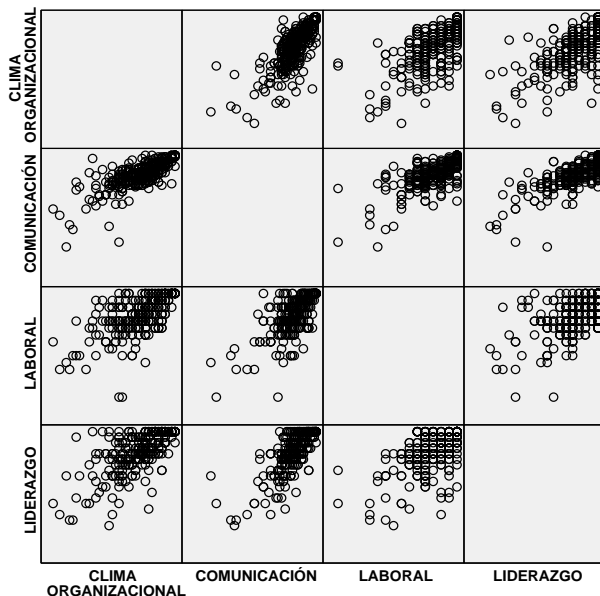
		CO	C	SL	L
communication	Pearson Correlation	.749	1	.682(**)	.763(***)
	Sig. (bilateral)	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	.294	294	294	294

**Table 5** Total correlation  
Source: Own elaboration

To measure the association between the items of the perception of all the subjects surveyed without classifying the position and hotel of work, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used on the scale from 0 to 1. Based on the correlation P where .763 and .749 infers that the correlation is positive and strong between the items "leadership" and "communication", as well as "organizational climate" and "communication" respectively. Therefore, there is a correlation between these.

In terms of impact, it is prudent to mention that "organizational climate" is a specific dimension of the study, which well demonstrated positive associations with respect to the other dimensions of analysis, which means that the "organizational climate" in the hotels surveyed makes an intimate relationship with respect to communication. In other words

This means, in interpretive terms, that it is possible that the greater communication among employees in hotel companies the employees perceive the better organizational climate.



**Figure 1** Matrix waste analysis dimensions  
Source: Own elaboration

The previous graph shows the correlation that exists between each of the variables studied, so it can be read that organizational communication is closely linked to the organizational climate, understanding the latter as the result of the interaction between the characteristics of the organization and the from the workers. From this perspective it is perceived as the set of social interactions in the work that allow the workers to have an understanding of the meaning of the context of the work.

Schneider and Reichers, cited by Uribe 2014. This correlation is easy to understand if one thinks that communication is immersed in the organizational climate, since the fluidity of it will favor the context of the organization. In the case of leadership, we also have a close relationship, since it is a characteristic of leaders to have good communication, as well as to know how to listen.

Then, the communication goes hand in hand with the decision makers or leaders of the company, which have direct influence on the organizational climate of the company, therefore, that the distance of power and communication inside the hotel companies of Bahías de Huatulco have a close correlation, understanding that communication is a link to mark the distance.

## Conclusions

After analyzing each one of the previous graphs, it can be determined for the tourist companies of Bahías de Huatulco a wide power distance that is to say the agents or decision makers are people that are rarely available for the collaborators. Authoritarianism and centralization are a fundamental part of these organizations, so empowerment is a tool of the administration. The above is in accordance with the results obtained by Hofstede himself in his research, since for Mexico he determined that there was a long distance of power, not only talking about organizations but as a society

It is recommended that companies redesign their organizational structures, building slender and flexible structures. It is necessary that within the changes made by organizations establish thin organizational structures, capable of streamlining internal processes and containing defined tasks Among the external benefits, it can be mentioned that tourists can have a more personalized attention and, in case of presenting a problem, it can be solved with greater speed. Among the internal benefits is the improvement of the working environment, since the authority of the subordinates is closer, the labor relations will be narrower, reflecting a better service.



It is important to consider that these new structures must work under specific administrative trends that provide more order and powers to companies. Among the administrative tools to be used, the following are listed:

1. Empowerment, It is an administrative tool that allows employees to have limited power to solve problems quickly, thus avoiding excessive bureaucracy that may arise and thus reflecting a quality service to tourists.
2. 5S, this tool, in addition to offering order and cleanliness to the work areas, reflects organization and control towards tourists. Generating with it a trust and loyalty to its customers that may be reflected in the rate of return they present.
3. All the above must work under an efficient organizational communication scheme that makes the loss of information is minimal and thus will further strengthen the identity and commitment to the organization.

## References

Bello. (Enero-abril de 2017). Las barreras culturales en la administración multinacional turística de Cuba. *Estudios del Desarrollo Social: Cuba y América Latina*, Vol. 5(No. 1), 12-26.

Bonilla P, Ma. de Jesús., Clara Muñoz Colomina., Carmen Avilés Palacios, Catalina Vacas Guerrero. (2005). Análisis de las estrategias adoptadas y difundidas. *Cuadernos de Gestión* , 5, 37-52.

Fernández Collado, C. (2006). *La comunicación en las organizaciones*. México: Trillas.

Grande, I. (2004). *Marketing crosscultural*. España: ESIC.

Gutiérrez, E., & Vladimirovna, O. (2014). *Probabilidad y Estadística*. México: Patria.

Hernández Sampieri, Roberto, Carlos Fernández Collado y Pilar Baptista Lucio. (2003). *Metodología de la Investigación*. México: McGrawHill.

Hitt, M. (2012). *Administración* . México: Pearson.

Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences. International Differences in work related cuales*. Estados Unidos: SAGE.

Levin, R., & Rubin, D. (2004). *Estadística para administracion y economía* . México: Prentice Hall.

Moya, M. (2004). *Probabilidad y estadística*. México: Pearson.

Mulder, M. (1976). Reduction of power differences in practice. In G. Hofstede & K Kassem *European contributions to organización theory*. Asse: Van Gorcum .

OEME, O. d. (2008). *La expansión de la multinacional española: estrategias y cambios organizativos*. Barcelona, España: Observatorio de la Multinacional Española.

Quintanar, E. (1999). *Métodos de investigación*. México: Prentice Hall.

Robbins, S. (2005). *Fundamentos de Comportamiento Organizacional*. México: Pearson.

Uribe, F. (2014). *Clima y ambiente organizacional: trabajo, salud y factores psicosociales*. México: El Manual Moderno S. A de C. V.

Xifra, J. y. (2009). *Casos de relaciones públicas y comunicación corporativa*. Madrid: Pearson