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MANAGERS DECISIONAL PROFILES:

A SURVEY WITH BRAZILIAN, FRENCH AND AMERICAN EMBA STUDENTS

"Paper under revision by a foreign professor in order to be submitted to an IS journal"

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the main results from an exploratory study whose goal was to identify the individual perception on the decision-making process, ascertaining how the variable national culture influences such perception. The methodology used was a survey (having the individual as unit of analysis). A comparative study was conducted among Brazil, France and USA. Data were collected through a set of 5 instruments of quantitative and qualitative nature, with a non-probabilistic sample of 285 people (approximately 100 individuals in each one of the 3 countries). The present work highlights the results achieved in the exploration of the variable national culture versus decisional perception, emphasizing the method and the process of analysis concerning qualitative data. As main result, different decisional profiles were outlined according to national culture, comparing the different perceptions (Brazilians, French and Americans).

(*) Research carried out from 1995 to 2002. Professors João Luiz Becker (PPGA/EA/UFRGS, Porto Alegre/RS, Brazil), Jean Moscarola (Gereg, Université de Savoie, Annecy, France), Milton Jenkins (ISRC, University of Baltimore, MD, USA), and the then master's degree students Amarolinda Costa Zanela and Marie Anne Macadar (both at PPGA/EA/UFRGS back then, and now at Unisinos) collaborated with the staff that conducted this survey. Different fellowship holders in the technical support and scientific initiation areas of our staff (PPGA/EA/UFRGS) cooperated in the activities, in different projects supported by CNPq, Capes and Fapergs. Miriam Oliveira (at the time at PPGA/EA/UFRGS, today at PUC) cooperated in the data collection in the USA. The cooperation of all these individuals made this project possible.

1 - Introduction

This project is part of the ongoing research work on information and decision support systems that has been developed since 1993 by the PPGA/EA/UFRGS (Information and Decision Support Systems Research Group of the Management Graduate Program, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil). The end of the twentieth century has been characterized by the redefinition of lines in the world map, and the emergence of a new global order has profoundly transformed the political and economic relationships among the countries. The beginning of the twenty-first century will be characterized by the intensification of markets globalization, competition, and also cooperation. The Decision-making Process field (Alter, 1996) has, in this connection, aroused much interest in the academic and entrepreneurial communities, and the economic as well as cultural, social and political globalization can be seen in the ever-close proximity between, for instance, the European Economic Community (EEC) and Mercosul (economical “link” of some countries in South America). The same can be observed between NAFTA and Mercosul (Thurow, 1996). The challenge for greater competitiveness has led to *rethinking* international entrepreneurial relationships. Joint-ventures and binational and multinational companies are becoming ever more frequent, a fact that demonstrates the intensification of international interaction at the organizational level. Such development has brought increasing complexity to the decision-making process.

Currently, the resources of Information Technology have made the interaction, cooperation and negotiation among people and organizations possible in almost the whole world. However, the knowledge on the technological tools that allow such operations is not enough, as it's necessary to know the human, behavioral and cultural aspects involved in these interaction processes (Ein-Dor et al, 1993; Graham et al, 1994). Thus, bringing to the field of information systems the concern with the pursuit of knowledge on behavioral issues has become a necessary challenge, as necessary as the pursuit of interdisciplinarity, which enables understanding the diverse aspects involving the use of Information Technology and Information Systems.

There is a growing need for making decisions in less time; that is, the decision maker must rapidly assess this complex picture and its consequences. There may be short-term or long-term consequences at social, economic, or political levels. It is also necessary to understand the necessities and logic of decisions, which may vary according to a number of aspects; such as culture, values, and individuals involved. The different countries, with which they relate, may also have an influence on decisions. Against this background – failing to mention, though, the serious political, religious, or other conflicts among nations and their consequent negotiations – it is easy to see the importance of performing studies in this area. How does the decision maker perceive such a process? How does the decision maker's reasoning develop during the decision-making process? What does the decision maker actually think and value during the decision-making process?

Ein-Dor et al. (1993, p.42) found little literature and reflection on the effects of national culture on decisions involving information systems (IS): available literature seems to be incipient according to their research. The National Culture should be given consideration in such studies, so as to facilitate successful technological transfers and construction of global ISs. According to these authors, “the main objective of future research studies should be to determine the nature of interaction between cultural variables and local variables of IS for different national environments”.

Within this topics, it's been found that the forms of communication and negotiation, as well as perceptions, ways of behaving, attitudes and decision-making styles, range according to the cultural basis considered. This paper refers to a survey whose goal was to identify the individual perception on the decision-making process, ascertaining how the variables national culture and decisional experience influence this perception.

The purpose of this work is to expose the results found through the aforementioned survey, emphasizing those directly related to the exploration of the influence of national culture on the decisional perception. Similarly, the method and process of analysis of the qualitative data are highlighted, demonstrating some of its main aspects. The purpose is to contribute to all those who face the challenge of working on "unstructured" data, since we treated qualitative data from different languages and cultures.

A study of this nature also has its practical importance: for example, as two companies from different countries enter into negotiations, the negotiator that is acquainted with such a reference will be favored because of his understanding (and perhaps prediction) of the other negotiator's reasoning, certainly taking advantage of the interaction or, at least, facilitating interaction and comprehension.

This paper is organized as follows: firstly, the main theoretical basis adopted is exposed (section 2), as well the survey methodology (section 3). Next, we proceed on to the presentation of the methodology and the specific process of analysis of the qualitative data, also showing the results obtained from this analysis (section 4). The main results achieved by the survey are shown in section 5 by means of the different decisional profiles outlined, comparing Brazilians, French and Americans, along with some final recommendations.

2 – Theoretical basis

To study the decision-making process, we took as basis for comparison Simon's (1947) decision-making process model, based on his "*theory of bounded rationality*". A number of authors deal with the decision-making process; however, we used Simon's model as a reference for judging that he describes in an accessible and didactic fashion the main phases of the decision-making process. For further information on this topic also see: Anastassopoulos et al. (1991); Cohen, March and Olsen (1972); Elster (1988,1989); Jarrosson (1994); March and Olsen (1976); and Mintzberg et al.(1976).

By analyzing organizations, Simon et al. (1987) claim that "the activities carried out in organizations, at their various hierarchical levels, are essentially Decision Making and Problem Solving activities". Decision is the least visible part of the organizations policy; nevertheless, it is their main engine, since it is through decisions that the individuals' ideas, feelings, and ambitions turn into actions. In studying organizations, managers and executives, their information systems, etc., we cannot fail to understand the Decision-making process.

Even if many researchers are working on decision theories, **Simon's model** (1947, 1997) still is supposed to illustrate very well the decision-making process: his approach is based on the decision maker's limited rationality, which means he fully accepts decisions only tolerable (and does not intend to maximize the utility or even cost minimization). In fact, his model considers the way people decide in situations of complexity, incomplete information, inadequate knowledge, etc. He highlights some important steps (and their characteristics), like identify the problem and its scope; find and collect the relative information; set some objectives; design some practicable alternatives to consider, and evaluate each one, and then make a decision, which will determine some actions and need the adoption of some controls in a way to be sure of the consequences and also to be able to follow and even review the process and to improve the decisions. By the way, this is a 'didactical' American management well-known reference, which we consider in this study. Simon (1997) recently revised his notes about decision-making.

The influences on the decision-maker during the decision-making process should be addressed as well. Of the many behavioral factors that influence the decision-maker, we can emphasize the Individual **Experience** and Characteristics inherent in the individuals (Davis & Olson, 1987) and the origin of National **Culture**. “Culture is a set of characteristics common to a particular group of people” (Erez & Earley, 1993).

As for national culture, we chose as basic reference the work by Geer Hofstede, a Dutch author who is largely referred to in international literature on this topic. Hofstede carried out studies during a long period with divisions of the IBM in roughly 64 countries on the differences of values as part of a national culture. Other authors also addressed this topic: Triandis (1982); Erez and Earley (1993); Baligh (1994); Ein-Dor et al. (1993); Glenn (1981); Graham, Mintu and Rodgers (1994); also see Hofstede (1980; 1994).

There are several dimensions concerning the National Culture, such as those studied by Hofstede (1991). “Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”. There will be analyzed and explored during this project. Among these are the following: hierarchical or power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and short-term or long-term orientation. Hierarchical or power distance: “it is the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally”. In small power distance the decentralization is popular; in the large power distance, the centralization is popular! Uncertainty avoidance: “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations”; in the weak uncertainty avoidance what is different is curious; in the strong uncertainty avoidance what is different is dangerous. Individualism versus collectivism: the “I” versus the “we”. Masculinity, where the roles are clearly distinct, versus femininity, where we have “overlapping roles”. Short-term, where the values are more static, past and present) or long-term orientation, where the values are more dynamic, toward the future).

Hofstede also indicates that we can analyze the culture considering several “layers” of mental programming within each person as almost everyone belongs to a number of different groups and categories of people at the same time, like: country, gender, profession, generation or age, educational level, linguistic affiliation, regional, ethnic, or religious affiliation, and two more aspect, social class level and organizational level, that we prefer not to use because it’s sensitive to ask people about.

The overall **objective** of this study is to identify the potential decision-makers perception of the decision-making process in different countries or regions in cooperation, verifying whether such variables as the origin of National Culture and individual background influence the decision making model. In an attempt to find evidence of possible discrepancies, and establishing a reference picture for international purposes and use, for public or private negotiators and scholars of the field. Based on the literature analyzed hitherto, we have identified three initial issues or questions on which to base our investigation. They are:

“THE INFLUENCE OF MANAGEMENT THEORIES”: in all groups to be addressed (regardless of their national culture or their decisional background), is it possible to identify (even implicitly) common factors, steps, guidelines or insights concerning the way people perceive the decision making process, especially if we take the SIMON’s ‘limited rationality’ model of decision making as a reference?

“THE VARIATION OF NATIONAL CULTURE”: can the cultural differences account for deviation of the considered or outlined decision model? Will this variation influence the perception they have of the decision-making process?

“VARIATION RELATED TO THE DECISION MAKER’S INDIVIDUAL BACKGROUND”: is the effect of cultural differentiation further enhanced by individual background as represented by situations of responsibility in decision and others?

These issues were addressed in other papers we have had published along the time of investigation (Freitas et al., 1998; Zanela, 1999; Zanela et al., 1998; Macadar, 1998; Macadar et al., 1997). We focused the data analysis on this paper trying to point out the main results, mainly in building some managers decisional profiles (instead of addressing each of the issues above).

3. Research method

The adopted cross-cultural survey is of a cross-sectional, exploratory nature (Mishler, 1991; Grawitz, 1993; Fowler Jr., 1993; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996; Hoppen et al., 1997). The sampling unit is the individual. Considering that all individuals are decision-makers, for the study goals the target population chosen was those decision-makers involved in business, commercial or administrative (practical and educational) activities. In this group are included: managers, company executives and executive MBA students. The method adopted for choosing the sample was the non-probabilistic for convenience. The sample was selected by the criterion of accessibility, considering that the responders to whom the survey was applied could be contacted rather easily, given the educational activities of the project researchers. Thus, it must stressed that their representativeness in relation to the population could not be completely ascertained. The sample is comprised by two types of responders: academic – group made up by undergraduate, master’s degree and doctorate students of Management courses; and managers/executives – group consisting of individuals that work in organizations as decision-makers (all with grad studies).

Different methods and techniques are being used in this research work with respect to tools for the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. Protocols were designed to collect and analyze data, and also crossing of results will still allow a better conclusion. Originality lies in the exploratory work on the decision-makers perceptions. Three different types of tools are being applied to these groups: open-ended questions about decision-making process, a case study, and closed questions concerning decision and cultural aspects and also demographical data.

In the **first** tool, open-ended questions should be answered, according to a Protocol of Words Association and another of Sentence Composition. The participants will be acquainted with a certain context and required to issue perceptions inherent in the decision-making process: verbs (action), adjectives (qualities), a decision report. The **second** tool seeks to complement the data collection undertaken with the previous tool. It comprises a ‘case’ (10-15 lines text) that involves the respondent in a given decision situation to which he should propose a written solution. Thus, the protocols already used will receive additional information that will lead to a greater understanding of the problem. In such analyses, we make use of content and lexical analysis techniques (Krippendorff, 1980; Grawitz, 1993; Lebart and Salem, 1994; Bardin, 1977). The **third** tool concerns closed questions, making use of a Protocol of Attitude and Opinion Scales about Decision and Culture and another one with socio-cultural and some demographical measures.

These tools are Protocols for Data Collection in order to standardize their application. The protocols comprise interrelated question sets that will allow us to obtain the decision-makers perceptions of certain aspects. All tools were submitted to standardization, double translation and back-translation (Portuguese, French, and English).

Such data will enable us to draw conclusions about the issues raised. Crossing of the data collected (mainly using Correspondence Analysis - Carroll, Green & Schaffer, 1986, 1987; Hoffman & Franke, 1986 - and Main components analysis, Moscarola, 1991) by means of such tools and keywords obtained with the first and the second tool, the country or region, and the decision-managerial background will permit an in-depth analysis of results. The answers obtained in sessions of about 50 minutes will be analyzed through Sphinx Software, proper for quantitative and qualitative analyses (Moscarola, 1993, 1994; Freitas & Moscarola, 2000; Freitas & Janissek, 2000), as well as simple and multiple crossings between variables. Crossings will be as many as possible. The structure formed by the three tools and their protocols permits the orientation of the researcher, from abstraction of concepts and perception to concretization obtained directly from the decision makers reports. Since such tools are concerned with different concepts (national culture, individual background and decision model), the importance and potential contribution of results from this study is highlighted, and the legitimacy of the results is also afforded by the cooperation with researchers from countries like Brazil, France and USA.

4. Qualitative data analysis and main results

For a better understanding of the results, the methodology for analysis of the qualitative data is detailed, especially regarding the data from instruments 1 (word association) and 2 (composition of sentences), since other questions and qualitative instruments were treated according to the same methodology. The results are shown along with a description of the process of analysis, which helps unveil how rich the use of qualitative data is.

4.1 Final sample overview

As for the composition of this study' sample, this was made up by 285 responders from Brazil, France and USA, distributed as follows: 103 responders in Brazil, 102 in France, and 80 in the USA. The data were collected in the following cities: In Brazil: Aracaju, Porto Alegre, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo; and a random subsample from cities in Rio Grande do Sul's interior (different regions of the state). In France: Annecy and Grenoble. In the USA: Baltimore (Maryland), Washington D.C., and Tuscaloosa (Alabama).

As for the socio-demographic profile of the sample, table 1 attempts to show the main characteristics investigated (educational level, age, gender, etc.) and how these appears in the sample, also presenting the significant differences between the Brazilian, French and American groups.

Characteristics	Socio-demographic profile of the sample	Significant differences between countries
educational level	Grad studies (96%)	
Age	Mean age 30 years	the Brazilians show the highest mean age (33 years); the Americans the lowest one (28 years)
Gender	Most are males (64%); 35% being females	
Time at job	11 years on average	The Brazilians have the longest mean time at job (14 years); the Americans have the shortest one (9 years).
Management experience time	6 years on average	France has the highest mean management experience time (8 years); the USA has the lowest one (4 years).

Table 1: Socio-demographic profile of the sample

4.2 Analyzing decision-related words

For the analysis of the qualitative data, the first challenge to face is the suitable codification of information. According to Hoslti (apud Richardson et al., 1985), “codification is the process by which raw data are systematically transformed and sorted in units that allow an exact description of the relevant characteristics of the content”.

For categorizing the words (verbs, adjectives, nouns) related to decision (research instrument 1), a lexical analysis was conducted, which, according to Bardin (1977), can be defined as the classification and thorough accounting of frequencies of a vocabulary. Lexical analysis is a type of analysis that can be carried out within the context of an analysis of content: the words, according to their meaning, are sorted in categories in order to subsequently calculate the incidence of each one of these categories.

The words were analyzed by a committee formed by three members of the research staff, two of them having lived in the USA (one of them for 4 years, the other one for 1 year), while one of them lived in France for 4 years. The staff members analyzed the data individually. Using words printed on stickers, each one, separately, sorted the words perceived as common, creating categories for each one of the word groups (verbs, adjectives, nouns) related to decision-making. The investigators received sheets for word categorization in the following format:

CATEGORY:		
BRAZIL	FRANCE	USA

In the space below the name of each country, the words belonging to a certain category were fixed, considering the language and vocabulary of each country. Look at the example:

CATEGORY: Decision-making as EASY (adjective)		
BRAZIL	FRANCE	USA
Fácil Simples Clara	Claire Facile Serein	Easy Simple Solvable

After each investigator had made their classifications separately, the staff held a meeting and discussed about every word group, and categories were formed within each group. Several categories were common under the point of view of each investigator. In the event of disagreement, that is, different categories, these were discussed, with every staff member arguing and arriving at the final categories by consensus. It must be mentioned that each category was based on the most mentioned words.

As for the time devoted to analyses, the individual analysis of each one of the 3 word groups (verbs, adjectives and nouns) took 5 hours on average. For the collective analysis (to arrive at a consensus over each one of the 3 groups), 2 meetings were held for about 4 hours each. The analysis comprised a total of approximately 23 working hours for each investigator, 8 hours of these spent on collective work.

Each classification by word group (verbs, adjectives, nouns) was performed separately, that is, there was no attempt to forcibly use the same categories for each group, although each of the 3 groups had common categories among one another, given the nature of the words described by the responders. For the creation of every category in each word group, it was attempted to observe a few basic rules that Bardin (1977) points out as key to the elaboration of categories. The categories must be:

- Homogeneous: don't mix things up. Each category pertains to an exclusive central idea.
- Exhaustive: check out the whole text. Practically all words were classified, even though some terms couldn't be classified.
- Exclusive: one same element in the content cannot be classified in two different categories. Consequently, each word belongs to one category only.
- Objective: different coders must arrive at equal results. Each staff member performed an individual analysis. The disagreements were debated until arriving at a common perception, attempting to reduce the subjectivity in the analysis.
- Suitable or pertinent: the rules must be adapted to the content and goal.

From the definition of categories, dictionaries for each word group (verbs, adjectives and nouns) were organized. With this, using a statistic software (Freitas and Moscarola, 2000), a closed multiple variable was created of which the answer is the presence of categories for each word group in the answers of each responder. Thus, the final result stems from a careful analysis encompassing the different views from 3 investigators and the discussion, reflection and consensus about a set of categories and dictionaries that allowed analyzing the qualitative data of this instrument (Freitas and Janissek, 2000).

The words associated spontaneously to decision-making were analyzed from the perspective of two investigative questions. The first one attempted to verify if it was possible to identify the occurrence of a model of decision-making process through the words. For comparison, Simon's (1947) basic model was used, which reports the following phases of the decision-making process:

- a) intelligence or investigation phase, in which occurs the exploration of the setting and the data are processed for clues that may identify problems and opportunities; the variables related to the situation are collected and exposed;
- b) design or conception phase, in which occurs the creation, development and analysis of potential courses of action; the decision-maker establishes the problem, develops and analyzes available alternatives;
- c) choice phase, in which occurs the selection of an alternative or course of action;
- d) feedback –between the phases that constitute the model, the decision-maker can return to a previous phase, aiming at better elaborating, listing and evaluating alternatives in the pursuit of a solution that better meets their goals and criteria.

Thus, it was attempted to verify if it was possible to associate words to this model at each one of its phases, firstly putting the criterion nationality aside. Tables 2, 3 and 4 show the categories of most mentioned words in verbs, adjectives and nouns.

Verb_dec_R	Freq.	%
#Decide/choose	174	61%
#Reflect/think	131	46%
#Collectivism/interact	114	40%
#Act	102	36%
#Compare	76	27%
#Power/responsibility	74	26%
#Search	69	24%
#Risk/innovate	66	23%
TOTAL OBS.	285	

Table 2: verbs related to decision-making

Adjet_dec_R	Freq.	%
#Reflected	116	41%
#Important/decisive	112	39%
#Good/right	81	28%
#Actual/practical	71	25%
#Feelings	67	24%
#Reliable	66	23%
#Effective/efficient	65	23%
#Quick	61	21%
TOTAL OBS.	285	

Table 3: decision-making adjectives

Subst_dec_R	Freq.	%
#Setting/proces	108	38%
#Goals/results	102	36%
#Collectivism/interaction/players	92	32%
#Reflection/intellect	83	29%
#Problems/alternatives	75	26%
#Decision/choice	69	24%
#Feelings	59	21%
#Economy	58	20%
#Trust	57	20%
TOTAL OBS.	285	

Table 4: decision-making nouns

Here is a synthesis of the ideas that stem from the most mentioned words in general (without segmentation by nationality), these are:

<i>Decision-related actions</i>	<i>Decision qualities</i>	<i>Decision characteristics</i>
Deciding is: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to choose (first and foremost); 2. to reflect, think about; 3. to interact, negotiate, communicate, and 4. to take action 	A decision is: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. thought out, intelligent ; 2. important, decisive, irrevocable ; 3. good, right ; 4. sound, actual, practical and exciting, marvelous, interesting, encouraging... 5. reliable, effective/efficient, and 6. quick. 	Characteristics and objects related to a decision: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. firstly, the setting/processes and goals and results ; 2. the players involved in the decision-making process and the collective (negotiation, interaction) ; 3. reflection, intellect ; 4. problems, alternatives and the choice per se.

Table 5: perceptions on decision-making in the words associated to it

Analyzing the set of replies of the words in relation to the Simon's model, it can be concluded that the model cannot be observed in its totality, and only some of its phases can be unveiled, these being:

- the choice phase, indicated by the verbs choose/decide and by the nouns related to the idea of decision/choice ;
- the design phase, indicated by the verbs reflect/think, and by the adjectives that define the decision mainly as thought out and also by the nouns related to the idea of reflection/intellect.

The other phases can't be associated to the more frequently enlisted words. Similarly, other elements not indicated by the reference model emerged:

The importance given to the collective, to the people, and players involved in the decision-making process (indicated by the verbs related to the collective and interaction, and the nouns that refer to the setting that surrounds the decision-maker, to the players involved in the decision making process, and to collectivism, interaction);

- The importance given to action, indicated by the verbs that refer to do/act, and the adjectives that describe the decision as sound/actual/practical and quick.

These «new» elements are believed to be perhaps related to a stage described by Sprague and Carlson (1982), Mintzberg, Raisinghani and Théorêt (1976), and Silver (1993). This phase would involve «post-decision» activities, also called action/implementation: to communicate and implement a decision, put the decision into effect, explain the decision to people, achieve consensus, achieve commitment from the others to the chosen alternative, at last, collective activities that involve the post-decision period.

Once the words were analyzed according to the Simon's model, we proceeded on to ascertain how the variable national culture influences the perception on decision-making. Thus, it was identified that there are differences in the association of words according to the individual's nationality. Attempting to summarize the results, table 6 shows the categories of words (verbs, adjectives and nouns) most mentioned by each responder group (Brazilians, French and Americans).

Central ideas	DISAGREEING CATEGORIES	BRAZIL	FRANCE	USA
Decision is choice, decision per se	Decision related to choosing/deciding (VER)	58%	76%	45%
	Decision describe as important/decisive(ADJ)	27%	48%	44%
	Decision related to choice/decision (NOUN)	16%	39%	16%
Decision is risk/innovation	decision related to risk/innovation (VER)	30%	23%	15%
	decision related to risk/innovation/progress (ADJ)	35%	02%	19%
Decision related to the setting in which the decision-maker is inserted	decision related to research/search (VER)	40%	10%	23%
	decision related to setting/process (NOUN)	44%	26%	45%
	decision related to "economy" (NOUN)	26%	06%	31%
	decision related to information (NOUN)	21%	07%	18%
Decision is power and responsibility	decision related to power/responsibility (VER)	31%	29%	15%
	decision related to power/responsibility/competence (NOUN)	15%	26%	14%
Decision is reflection/intellect	decision related to reflection/intellect (ADJ)	31%	52%	39%
	decision related to reflection/intellect (NOUN)	26%	36%	24%
Decision is feeling	decision related to feelings (VER)	22%	09%	15%
	decision related to feelings (ADJ)	35%	10%	26%
	decision related to feelings (NOUN)	26%	23%	11%
Decision is collectivism/interaction	decision related to collectivism/interaction (ADJ)	17%	26%	06%
Decision is good, right/effective/efficient	decision described as good/right (ADJ)	45%	17%	23%
	decision described as effective/efficient (ADJ)	32%	17%	19%
Decision is difficult	decision described as difficult (ADJ)	07%	21%	21%
Decision is action and practicality	decision described as sound/actual/practical (ADJ)	39%	19%	15%
	decision described as quick (ADJ)	29%	20%	14%
	decision described as action (NOUN)	27%	21%	05%

LEGEND:

- The category is more mentioned by the responders of this country.
- The category is neutral for the responders of this country.
- The category is less mentioned by the responders of this country.

Table 6: Conclusions from the analysis of the words related to decision x nationality

The Brazilians are the ones that most define decision as something dynamic, practical, little complex. They're the ones that least relate the idea of reflection to decision, not defining it as something difficult. Literature attributes these characteristics to Brazilians. Hickson and Pugh (1995) define Brazilians as managers that desire rapid and decisive actions in business affairs. Similarly, the Brazilians demonstrate to be the ones that most associate decision to feelings, attributing a more subjective aspect to decision-making.

The French are, among the 3 groups, the ones that most attribute characteristics that we could call “political” to the decision-making process, and demonstrate to be the most reflective amongst the 3 groups. They demonstrate to be concerned with the choice, the decision per se, with reflection/intellect. They’re the ones that most speak of power and responsibility and the ones that most qualify the decision as collective, indicating “political” aspects. They’re the ones that least associate decision with the setting in which the decision maker is inserted, with processes or aspects related to “economy”. They describe (though not so often) the decision as hard, demonstrating, at last, to attribute more complexity to it than the Brazilians. The French attitude finds justifications in literature. Hickson and Pugh (1995, p. 65) say that among the French there’s “... suspicion of power, a trend to politicize the organization, for constantly regarding everyone as a manipulative individual seeking a position.” Likewise, the French are characterized by appreciating intellectual debate (Hofstede, 1991; Hickson and Pugh, 1995), not by coincidence this group being the one that most related decision-making to reflection/intellect.

The Americans present replies less conclusive than the Brazilians and the French, not revealing any category that they most associate to decision, in comparison with the other groups. However, they demonstrate, just like the Brazilians, to attribute importance to the setting in which the decision-maker is inserted: research, search, information, processes, “economy”. Nonetheless, they demonstrate to be the ones that least attribute to a decision a political character (power/responsibility) and indicate not to strongly associate it to the idea of action, as opposed to the Brazilians, and are the ones that least describe it as quick or sound/actual/practical. Therefore, the Americans are shown to be more “neutral” in comparison to the Brazilians and the French.

Seeking the occurrence of other decision-making process models adopted according to nationality, it can be concluded that according to culture, other models are not indicated, except for the fact that the French demonstrate to value the political dimension related to the decision-making process, revealing a trend that points towards the political decision-making process (Anastassopoulos et al., 1991; Einsenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992). It’s suggested, therefore, that a more thorough investigation be conducted into this evidence.

4.3 Analyzing the report of a decision made

With instrument 2, the one of composition of sentences, the question in which the responder makes an account of a decision made (both personal and professional) is analyzed. The reports were analyzed under two aspects: in the first one, it was attempted to identify the presence (or not) of the main stages of the decision-making process according to Simon (described in the previous section); the second aspect considered was the types of decisions (personal, career, business, etc.) reported according to nationality. To do so, an analysis of content was performed for the reports of every responder (Bardin, 1977). To identify each one of the phases of the Simon’s model, the reports were analyzed as follows: two members of the research staff analyzed each reply (report) separately in a “form” with the following format:

Report: <i>I’ve made the decision of acting regionally, as regards sales promotions, with the products that have problems in the southern region. Specific actions for specific problems.</i>				
<input type="checkbox"/> INTELLIGENCE	<input type="checkbox"/> DESIGN	CHOICE	<input type="checkbox"/> REVISION	<input type="checkbox"/> FEEDBACK

The analysts read each account in question and marked the stages of the decision-making process ascertained in the reply. Once every researcher performed their analysis separately, the analyses were gathered and each reply was checked, looking at disagreements and judging carefully each phase of the process (whether there was occurrence of the phases in the reply or not), and a final result was achieved. It must be stressed that the degree of agreement between the 2 researchers was of 89%.

Results: Simon's model (1947) applied to the reports of decisions made

Here are the results achieved from the analysis of accounts, without considering initially the responders' nationality (table 7).

Modelo Simon	Freq.	%
Choice	238	84%
Design	157	55%
Intelligence	116	41%
Review	35	12%
Feedback	8	3%
TOTAL OBS.	285	

Table 7: Simon's model in the decisions made

Thus, the Simons' model was identified in the decisions reported by the responders in its 3 main phases : choice, design and intelligence (albeit with lower incidence). The revision and feedback phases of the process aren't often identified.

However, by considering this same variable according to nationality, the phases of the reference model aren't indicated with the same intensity. Table 8 shows the verification frequency of each phase in the Brazilian, French and American groups:

Simon's model	Intelligence	Design	Choice	Review	Feedback	TOTAL
Country						
Brazil	44% (45)	49% (50)	84% (87)	19% (20)	4% (4)	100% (206)
France	32% (33)	51% (52)	81% (83)	7% (7)	2% (2)	100% (177)
USA	48% (38)	69% (55)	85% (68)	10% (8)	3% (2)	100% (171)
TOTAL	41% (116)	55% (157)	84% (238)	12% (35)	3% (8)	100% (554)

Table 8: Simon's model x nationality

The French are the ones that least indicate the occurrence of the intelligence phase in the process, in comparison with the Brazilians and Americans (with $p=8.81\%$). The Americans are the ones that most indicate the design stage in their accounts ($p=1.42\%$), and regardless of the responders' nationality, the phase that is most evident in the accounts is that of choice. The Brazilians, by their turn, are the ones that most indicated the revision phase in their decisions ($p=1.8\%$), even though this phase isn't strongly identified.

An American model? Finally, analyzing the frequency of occurrences of each phase, it can be concluded that, considering each result separately, though the intelligence, design and choice phases are present in general, the Americans are the group where the Simon's model stages – excepting the revision one – tend to be indicated with higher frequency. See table 9.

Simon's model_3p	1	2	3	TOTAL
Country				
Brazil	22% (23)	41% (42)	24% (25)	100% (90)
France	27% (28)	33% (34)	24% (24)	100% (86)
USA	15% (12)	28% (22)	44% (35)	100% (69)
TOTAL	22% (63)	34% (98)	29% (84)	100% (245)

Table 9: Frequency of occurrence of the Simon's model phases x nationality

Table 9 shows, in percentages and citations, how many responders in each country indicated 1, 2 or 3 phases of the Simon's model, these being: intelligence, design and choice (the most frequent, in general). Thus, it's clearly noticed that the Americans are the ones that most indicate the main stages of the model: 44% of them indicated the 3 phases, in comparison to 24% of the Brazilians and French, these 2 groups indicating more often 2 of the 3 phases of the model. This result isn't surprising, as the creator of the model himself belongs to the American management school. The Analysis of Correspondence (AC) (3) shown below illustrates the stance of the 3 countries regarding the phases indicated, opposing the Americans to the Brazilians and French.

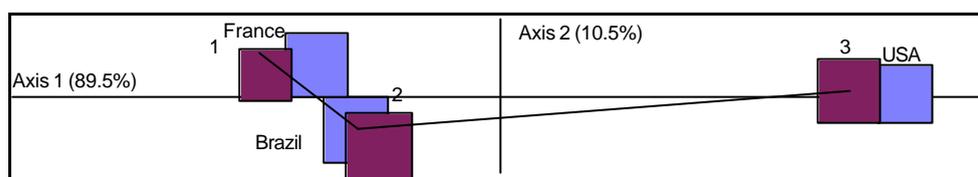


Figure 1: CA of the frequency of occurrence of the Simon's model phases (1947).

Different decisions: the nature of the reported decisions – Another analysis performed on the account of a past decision addresses the nature of the decisions made (personal, professional, etc.). Without taking into account the nationality, the types of decision reported are : career decisions (promotions, relocations, improvement, etc.) – 41% ; in second place come personal decisions (related to family, shopping, etc.) – 2% ; and business decisions (company decisions, decisions related to subordinates, etc.) – 22%. However, cross-checking these results according to the country, differences are observed (see Table 10).

Country	Brazil	France	USA	TOTAL
Report - content				
Career decision	45% (46)	25% (26)	57% (46)	41% (118)
Personal decision	22% (23)	33% (34)	23% (18)	26% (75)
Business decision	30% (31)	25% (25)	9% (7)	22% (63)
No decision reported	3% (3)	5% (5)	4% (3)	4% (11)
TOTAL	100% (103)	100% (90)	100% (74)	100% (267)

Table 10 : Content of a report on a decision made x nationality

The Americans (57%) are the ones that most mention career decisions ($p=0.01\%$); the French are the ones that least talk about this kind of decision (25%). The Brazilians, by their turn, are the ones that most report business decisions ($p=0.31\%$); while the French (though without significant differences in comparison to the other groups) are the ones that most report personal decisions.

The fact that the Americans stand out for mentioning career-related issues is justified by the features attributed to them in literature. Hofstede (1991, p. 93) correlates this concern with career by the Americans with the fact that the USA is a country that praises male values: “Men are expected in male societies to aim at rising in their career; studies show a marked unanimity regarding this among male American students”. Hickson and Pugh (1995, p. 64) say that (referring to Americans): “... *in an individualistic and assertive society they hire and fire, and they themselves are hired and fired. Job mobility isn't restrained by consideration of the social class as is in Europe – and, undoubtedly, in the rest of the world.*”

Therefore, it is concluded that, even on reporting decision-making spontaneously, without any proposed framework, cultural characteristics are found to manifest themselves in the replies given by the responders from each of the 3 groups. This is tantamount to stating that, when thinking about decision-making in general, each group thinks of decisions of distinct nature under the influence of cultural factors, unveiling aspects that could hardly surface by using quantitative data only.

Aiming at guaranteeing quality and greater validity in the analysis of the data of this nature, it was attempted, for each treatment of open questions, to rely on the analysis by at least two researchers from the research staff, with the purpose of reducing the subjectivity of the analysis, even though it must be taken into account that subjectivity can't be eliminated altogether. Similarly, the research staff counted on members that lived for a long period of time amid the French and American cultures. Nonetheless, the ideal would be to count on an analysis staff with researchers from those cultures. However, the demand in terms of time and dedication for the analysis of qualitative data must be considered, which makes the composition of a multicultural staff difficult.

Subsequently, the final conclusions of the study are introduced, gathering qualitative and quantitative data.

5. Summary of the main results achieved and recommendations

Looking at the main results pertaining to the influence of national culture on the perception of the decision-making process, it was attempted to survey the profiles of each one of the 3 groups, considering both common perceptions and divergent ones. The different profiles were outlined using both qualitative and quantitative data. Thus, we believe to have provided a reference to researchers and those that may be concerned with knowing a little more about the characteristics of managers in each of the countries in question.

Firstly (Table 11), some characteristics from the evaluations of the 5 dimensions of national culture according to Hofstede (1991) are demonstrated: aversion to uncertainty, distance from power, individualism x collectivism, masculinity x femininity, and short or long-term orientation. Even though a large part of the stances in the 3 groups show similarities, some differences can be observed, which allows painting a picture of the perceptions under the light of the proposed questions.

It must be underscored that difficulties were encountered when verifying the compliance of the results with Hofstede's (1991) classifications regarding the stance of the 3 countries in every dimension under study. However, the analysis and comparison of the answers allow us to build a referential picture with respect to the dimensions of national culture ascertained in the considered sample. We recommend, for further studies, a deeper evaluation of the manifestations of national culture dimensions on decision-making by means of the development of broad constructs in order to evaluate each one of the 5 dimensions.

BRAZILIANS	FRENCH	AMERICANS
Seek safe alternatives, instead of risky ones when making a decision.	Seek safe alternatives instead of risky ones when making a decision. Relatively, they're the ones that least seek safe alternatives.	Seek safe alternatives, instead of risky ones, when making a decision.
Tend to rarely feel tense or nervous while deciding.	Tend to rarely feel tense or nervous while deciding.	Tend to often feel tense/nervous while deciding.
Are the ones that most agree that the rules of a company can be violated if it's for the benefit of the company.	Are divided between violating rules or not.	Agree that the rules of a company can be violated as long as it is for the company's own benefit.
Find important for a manager to have accurate answers to most of the questions raised by the subordinates.	Find important for a manager to have accurate answers to most of the questions raised by the subordinates.	Find important for a manager to have accurate answers to most of the questions raised by the subordinates. Relatively, they're the ones that least tend to attribute importance to this presupposition.
Seldom fear to show their disagreement with superiors in decision-making situations.	Seldom fear to show their disagreement with superiors in decision-making situations. They also tend to regard the style of their hierarchical superior as democratic, often consulting the team while making a decision.	Seldom fear to show their disagreement with superiors in decision-making situations. However, relatively, are the ones that most fear to show disagreement. They tend to evaluate their hierarchical superior as democratic.
Are the most collectivistic among the 3 groups.	All answers considered, they tend to be collectivistic.	All answers considered, they tend to be collectivistic. Comparatively, are the most individualistic and most family-oriented, often consulting with the family while making decisions.
Are the ones that most define their personal style as democratic. Are also the ones that most often consider the staff's opinion while making a decision.	Define their personal style as democratic. Are relatively the ones that least describe themselves this way.	Define their personal style as democratic. Often Consider the staff's opinion while making a decision.
The values they most admire* are, in the first place, honesty; in second place, work/ambition; in third place, love/feelings, being among the 3 countries the ones that most give importance to intellect/education.	The values they most admire* are love/feelings (first place); work/ambition, and honesty/good character.	The values they most admire* are love/feelings, being the ones that most mention these values. In second place, honesty/good character, and, in third, work/ambition.
While making decisions, they aim at the long term; in comparison to the other countries, they're the most concerned with the short term.	Among the 3 countries, they're the most concerned with the long term while making decisions.	While making decisions, they aim at the long term.

(* Faced with the specific question: "IF you had children at the age of getting married and could choose your son or daughter-in-law, what personal characteristics would you value the most?")

Table 11: Decision-making profiles according to Hofstede's dimensions of national culture (1991)

As for the decision-making style of the responders, some common traits were found among the 3 groups, as well as some differences, especially taking into account qualitative data (table 12).

BRAZILIANS	FRENCH	AMERICANS
Make decisions rationally, objectively and based on figures. On the other hand, qualitatively associate decision to feelings.	Make decisions rationally and objectively.	Make decisions rationally and objectively, often based on figures.
Make decisions quickly.	Are the ones that make decisions most quickly.	Make decisions quickly.
Often contemplate the alternatives carefully before deciding, and often know beforehand the consequences from the decisions.	Often contemplate the alternatives carefully before deciding (relatively, are the ones that least do it), being the ones that least say to be aware of the consequences from decisions.	Often contemplate the alternatives carefully before deciding, and often know beforehand the consequences from decisions.
After having analyzed several alternatives, look back seeking to identify others before making a choice. However, they seldom change their minds after having made a decision.	Tend to not change their mind even before making a choice, let alone thereafter.	After having analyzed several alternatives, they change their mind, seeking to identify others before making a choice. Seldom change their mind after having decided. Relatively, they're the ones that most tend to change their mind after a decision.
<p>Considering the words associated to decision: Decision is related to the idea of action; it's described as quick, sound, actual, practical, indicating a character related to action and a practical sense. It's also described as good/right and effective/efficient. When thinking of a decision, they also associate it with risk, innovation, progress. They relate it to information, research, setting, processes, and aspects linked with economy, as well as factors related to the setting in which the decision-maker is inserted. They present a dynamic style with respect to decision-making.</p>	<p>Considering the words associated to decision: Decision is directly related to the idea of choice and decision itself. They're also the ones that most associate decision to reflection/intellect. They're the ones that most mention power and responsibility and most describe a decision as collective. They're the ones that least associate decision to the setting in which the decision-maker is inserted, and processes or aspects related to economy. They're the ones that most attribute characteristics that could be labeled "political" to the decision-making process, and demonstrate to be the most reflective among the 3 groups.</p>	<p>Considering the words associated to decision: Concerning the ideas that they associate with decision, these are: information, research, setting, processes and aspects related to economy, and factors related to the environment in which the decision-maker is inserted. Decision is little related to the idea of action. They're also the ones that least describe it as quick, sound, actual, practical. They're the ones that least associate decision with power/responsibility, also being the ones that least describe a decision as collective. They were found to be the most "neutral" with respect to the perception of the decision-making process, indicating there's no action, characteristic or quality they'd particularly ascribe to a decision.</p>

Table 12: Decisional styles – qualitative and quantitative data

Analyzing the results in relation to objectivity/subjectivity of a decision in the quantitative data, for instance, the responders in general (regardless of their nationality) were shown to be rational and objective, often relying on figures in order to make a decision. However, by means of the analysis of the qualitative data the Brazilians were found to be the ones that most relate decision-making to feelings, revealing a greater trend towards subjectivity.

Another opposition between qualitative and quantitative data is revealed in the analysis of how fast decisions are made. In the quantitative data, the responders in general demonstrated to be faster than slow on making a decision, the French appearing as the ones that most tend to make decisions quickly. However, through the qualitative data, the Brazilians were shown to be the ones that most associate decision to the idea of action, innovation, practicality, and rapidity. They reveal, additionally, a more dynamic style in comparison to the French and Americans.

The French, by their turn, reveal in qualitative questions a more political view on the decision-making process and a more reflective style, while the Americans have a more neutral attitude, revealing, however, to attribute importance to the setting, and are the ones that least indicate “political” aspects, unlike the French, or a dynamic view of the process, like the Brazilians do.

These aspects illustrate the complexity of the use of quantitative and qualitative data as well as the possibility of drawing meaningful conclusions by gathering both, enabling us to grasp potential “contradictions” or supplementations in data of distinct nature. For further studies, we must underscore the need of instruments that encompass both modes of data collection and analysis with the purpose of generating knowledge and know-how with surveys of quantitative and qualitative nature.

As for ascertaining whether the Simon’s decision process model occurs or not, the model phases identified are those of choice, design, and, with less intensity, intelligence. The revision and feedback stages often are not identified. Nevertheless, considering the responders’ nationality, even though the phases of intelligence, design and choice are present, these aren’t indicated with the same intensity (Table 13) : the Americans, for instance, are the group in which the model phases (except for the revision one) are indicated with greater frequency.

BRAZILIANS	FRENCH	AMERICANS
Concerning the Simon’s model, the Brazilians indicated the intelligence, design and choice phases. Relatively, they’re the ones that most indicate the occurrence of the revision phase, though this is found with low incidence.	Concerning the Simon’s model, the French indicated the design and choice phases, but are the ones that least indicate the intelligence phase.	Concerning the Simon’s model, the Americans are the group in which the phases of the model (excepting the revision phase) are indicated with greater frequency. They’re also the ones that most indicated the design stage.
While reporting any decision, they think initially about career-related decisions. However, they’re relatively the ones that most mention business decisions.	While reporting any decision, they initially think about personal decisions. Relatively, they’re the ones that most mention decisions of this kind.	While reporting any decision, they think initially about career-related decisions, and are the ones that most mention decisions of this kind.

Table 13: Simon’s model and nature of reported decisions

It was also found that the responders indicated through the qualitative data (though with different intensities according to their nationality) other elements related to the decisional process that aren't highlighted in the reference model, such as : importance given to the collective (negotiation, interaction, communication), action (taking action, doing, quick, sound decisions, etc.), and power/responsibility. Decision is also related to the idea of risk/innovation and progress.

As main results, in addition to those found by data analysis, we highlight the development of a peculiar methodology for analysis of qualitative data, underpinned on the work by the research staff. From the work methodology also resulted a dictionary of Portuguese, French and English words that the 3 groups associated to decision-making, in addition to a protocol of analysis of our own. The words were organized and sorted, and may serve other investigators and those concerned with the topic, or even be useful for the analysis of other texts. Finally, we suggested a reduction in the research instruments. The new instruments can be used by all of those interested in studying the decision-making process. Similarly, the research database can be reused for the study of other subject matters. The account of past decisions, for instance, can be considered from different perspectives of investigation, including areas such as Organizational Sociology and Psychology, since it consists of a data source that illustrates the decision-making styles (and, consequently, the thinking style) of executives from 3 different countries.

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