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CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF NATIONAL ECONOMIC SYSTEMS AS A BASIS FOR EVALUATING THE ATTRACTIVENESS WHILE ENTERING NEW MARKETS BY RETAIL CORPORATION

***Abstract.** The article compares the cultural environment of Ukraine, Romania, and the United States based on Hofstede model quantifies the threats and opportunities of the cultural environment based on the list of factors: a tendency to centralization, common management style, the importance of status, importance of relations in negotiations, labor mobility, conflict resolution, modesty, perception of inequality, tolerance to new ideas, the importance of strict rules in business, short-term benefits, confidence in one's views, attitude to pleasure, social norms. A comparative analysis of business etiquette of the studied countries on seven positions: greetings, personal space, gift exchange, business cards, building relationships, negotiation, and punctuality is presented in the article.*

***Keywords:** cultural environment, business etiquette, factor influence, market environment, dimensions of attractiveness*

Introduction. The development of the world economy in the context of high rates of globalization creates a high level of competition in various sectors of the economy, both through domestic and external producers. To successfully enter such a market, a company must assess the threats and opportunities of the micro- and macromarketing environment. Statistics show that 45% of the failures of new products in international markets are due to errors in analyzing the volume and nature of demand, which largely depends on the cultural environment. Accordingly, one of the most important and underestimated components of market attractiveness is the cultural environment.

Given the above, this study aims to assess the cultural environment of Ukraine and Romania for Walmart Inc. The tasks are:

1. Identification of cultural factors influencing the business processes in the retail

market of Ukraine and Romania according to the G. Hofstede model.

2. Quantitative assessment of threats and opportunities of the cultural environment in the Ukrainian and Romanian national economic systems.
3. Comparative analysis of business etiquette in the United States, Ukraine and Romania.

The concept of researching different types of markets, including internal and external, their cultural differences are deeply represented in the works of domestic and foreign scholars. Thus, A. Starostina proposed a theoretical and methodological approach to the integrated assessment of domestic and foreign markets [Starostina, 2012]. I. Fedorenko, E. Yeliseyeva researched the conceptual basis for assessing the attractiveness of the international markets [Fedorenko, Yeliseyeva, 2018]. O. Prygara and T. Tsygankova formed a methodical approach to analyzing the international business environment based on the attractiveness criteria [Prygara, 2006; Tsygankova, 1998].

F. Kotler and M. Porter identified conceptual approaches to market analysis and competitive forces impact [Kotler, 2018; Porter, 2000]. F. Jamaani, A. Ahmed studied the economic role of culture [Jamaani, 2022], G. Hofstede – cultural differences between countries [Hofstede, 2016a; Hofstede, 2016b], Laurent A. – cultural differences in management [Laurent, 1983], N. Adler – cross-cultural management [Adler, 2016], Y. Palekha – business ethics in international business [Palekha, 2006], etc.

Research results. Walmart Inc. is an American retail corporation that operates a network of hypermarkets, department stores, and grocery stores. Sam Walton founded the company in 1962. It also owns and operates Sam's Club retail warehouses. It has about 10,500 stores in 24 countries [Walmart, n.d.]. Walmart offers low prices and a wide range of products, which gives it an advantage over competitors and opportunities to enter new markets.

1. Assessment of cultural environment according to the G. Hofstede model

Cultural features of national economic systems play a unique role in planning international marketing research. The cultural background is the most stable barrier to economic globalization and affects business specifics in different countries [Starostina, 2012].

Countries can be evaluated in their perception of different values to develop marketing strategies for international business. One of the most famous models of values perception is the system proposed by Geert Hofstede. It evaluates countries according to the

following dimensions [Hofstede-Insights, n.d.]:

1. Power Distance Index (high versus low).
2. Individualism versus Collectivism.
3. Masculinity versus Femininity.
4. Uncertainty Avoidance Index (high versus low).
5. Long- versus Short-Term Orientation.
6. Indulgence versus Restraint.

According to Hofstede Insights, Ukraine, Romania, and the United States have the dimensions shown in Fig. 1.

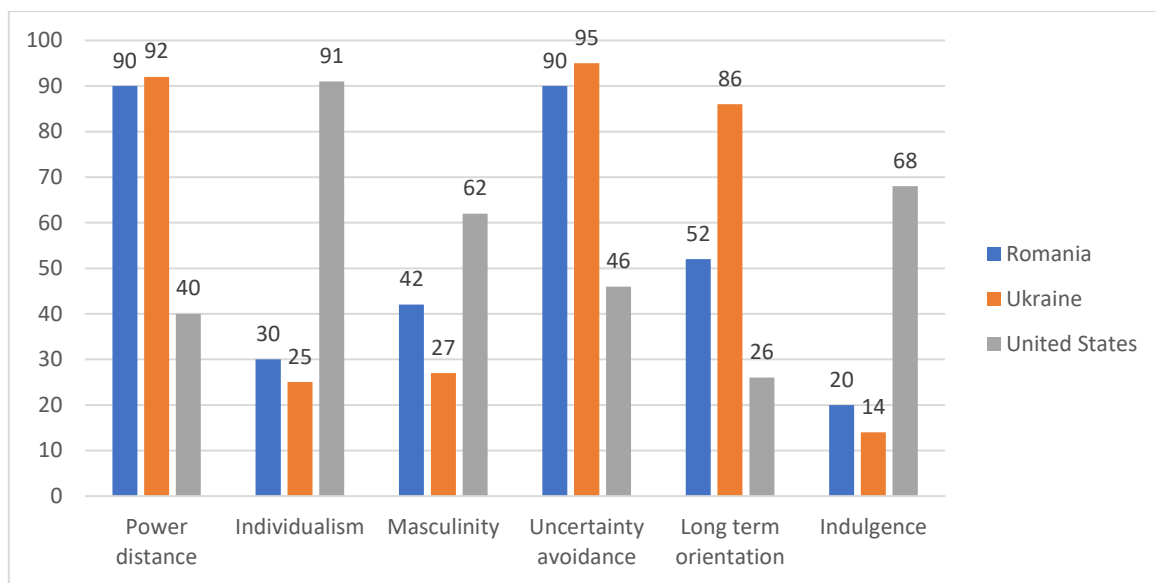


Figure 1. Quantitative assessment of value orientations of Ukraine, Romania, and the United States (according to the G. Hofstede method)

(formed by authors according to [Hofstede-Insights, n.d.])

To consider these dimensions in more detail, the authors formed comparative tables for Romania, Ukraine, and the United States. Data assess factors influence and determine the impact (threat or opportunity) based on similarity with the US cultural environment (respectively, the effect of factors in the US is not assessed and marked "-"). Quantitative assessment of the factor influence strength in the cultural environment of countries based on A. Starostina's approach using the expert evaluation on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 – the influence of the factor is almost invisible, and 10 – the effect of the element is very strong. For normalizing the evaluation of threats and opportunities on one basis, the quantitative assessment of the factor impact is determined from the standpoint that the threat has a negative value and the opportunity has a positive value. The evaluation of factors' influence for each dimension is aggregated into the total result. This approach made it possible to

consider the number and strength of threats and opportunities, and on this basis to compare the attractiveness of the cultural environment for the Walmart retail chain in the Romanian and Ukrainian markets.

Therefore, in the table. 1 described the influence of the "power distance" dimension in the studied countries.

Table 1

Comparative analysis of the "power distance" dimension influence in Romania, Ukraine, and the USA

(formed by the authors according to [Hofstede-Insights, n.d.; Leadership, n.d.; The unification, n.d.]

№	Factor influence	Expert assessment (1-10)	Threat/opportunity
1	Tendency to centralization		
Ukraine	Ukraine is currently in political decentralization, including decentralization in the corporate culture. However, the centralized decision-making process is still common among companies run by older people raised in the cultural environment of the USSR.	4	Possibility
Romania	Romanian culture is based on the ideas of Greater Romania. After the overthrow of the communist regime, the unionist movement became popular in the country, the idea of which is to return Moldova to Romania.	7	Threat
USA	The United States is an example of countries with pronounced decentralization. Politically, this can be seen as significant state autonomy in decision-making. The decentralized model is also dominant in the business culture, which generally copes better with daily challenges, but in times of crisis, the decision-making process can move to the center.	-	-
2	Common management style		
Ukraine	43% of office workers consider their bosses to support the authoritarian style, tough bosses who make decisions alone and focus on employee control. But only one in four managers recognizes themselves as an authoritarian leader. On the contrary, half of the leaders are confident in their democracy.	6	Possibility
Romania	Soft autocracy	6	Threat
USA	Democratic. It is expected that employees will be independent and will take the initiative.	-	-
3	Importance of status		
Ukraine	According to Hofstede's research, the behavior should reflect status roles in all areas of business interaction: whether visits, negotiations, or cooperation.	4	Threat
Romania		5	Threat
USA	In American companies, hierarchy is established for convenience, management is available, and managers rely on individual employees and teams for their experience.	-	-

Factor 1: Tendency to centralization. This factor affects the nature of decision-making in the group. When working with countries with a predominant trend towards

centralization, it is crucial to address the head office or senior management because they make most decisions.

Factor 2: Common management style. In countries with a predominantly authoritarian management style, it is essential to understand that decisions are made almost without regard to the subordinates' opinions.

Factor 3: Importance of status. In the United States, status is not an essential part of corporate culture, but in Ukraine and Romania, it is essential. Therefore, it is necessary to contact an employee who has a managerial position when doing business.

Thus, according to this group of factors, Ukraine has a better score (6) against (-18) in Romania.

The next dimension is "individualism" (Table 2).

Table 2

Comparative analysis of the "individualism" dimension influence in Romania, Ukraine and the USA

(formed by the authors according to [Hofstede-Insights, n.d.; Sadova, 2019])

№	Factor influence	Expert assessment (1-10)	Threat/opportunity
1	Importance of the relationship in negotiations		
Ukraine	Relationships are critical to getting information or successful negotiations. They need to be personal, genuine, and trusting before you can focus on tasks.	4	Threat
Romania		5	Threat
USA	Americans are good at joining different groups; however, it is often difficult, especially among men, to form deep friendships. Doing business or interacting with people they don't know well is quite a common situation for Americans. Therefore, Americans do not hesitate to contact their potential colleagues to obtain or seek information.	-	-
2	Labour mobility		
Ukraine	In Ukraine, there is a relatively high mobility of the labor force. It is primarily due to economic incentives because more than 40% of the population lives on the edge of poverty. However, the attitude to migration is characterized by the proverb "where you were born – there you are needed."	4	Possibility
Romania	In Romanian culture, social groups are characterized by intense internal relationships, where everyone is partly responsible for the members of their group. Such cohesion does not make incentives for widespread labour migration.	6	Threat
USA	The United States has a high degree of geographical labour mobility.	-	-

Factor 1: Importance of the relationship in negotiations. In Ukraine and Romania, partners must first establish trust through previous informal meetings when negotiating.

Factor 2: Labour mobility. In the United States, people are constantly changing their residence. Still, in Ukraine and Romania, people usually do not change their living place because of the better offer on the labour market. Accordingly, it would be best to look for employees already living in a specific area.

Thus, according to this group of factors, Ukraine has a better score (0) against (-11) in Romania.

The "masculinity" dimension is considered next (Table 3).

Table 3

Comparative analysis of the influence "masculinity" dimension in Romania, Ukraine and the USA

(formed by the authors according to [Hofstede-Insights, n.d.]

№	Factor influence	Expert assessment (1-10)	Threat/opportunity
1	Conflict resolution		
Ukraine	In these countries, leaders strive for consensus. Conflicts are resolved through compromises and negotiations.	7	Possibility
Romania		5	Possibility
USA	Conflicts are quite common because it is essential to be a winner in US culture. As a result, we see significant polarization and a lot of lawsuits.	-	-
2	Modesty		
Ukraine	Ukrainians in the workplace and meeting with a stranger underestimate their achievements or capabilities. They talk modestly about themselves. Scientists, researchers, or doctors have to live on a very modest standard of living. Dominant behaviour may be accepted by a superior but is not appreciated among peers.	6	Possibility
Romania	In Romania, the status of a person is not demonstrated.	5	Possibility
USA	Americans tend to freely demonstrate and talk about their "successes" and achievements in life. Achieving success is not a great motivator in American society, but the opportunity to show your success is essential.	-	-
3	Perception of inequality		
Ukraine	In Ukraine and Romania, significant inequality in the team can lead to specific conflicts.	7	Threat
Romania		6	Threat
USA	Usually, Americans "live to work" so that they can be rewarded and, as a result, achieve higher status based on how productive one can be. Many white-collar workers will move to more sophisticated areas after each significant promotion. It is believed that a certain degree of conflict will bring out the best people since the goal is to be a "winner".	-	-

Factor 1: Conflict resolution. If conflicts are resolved by consensus, you can achieve better conditions through negotiations.

Factor 2: Modesty. Cultures with a low masculinity level are characterized by underestimation of their achievements. Accordingly, negotiating in a more dominant position can achieve certain benefits.

Factor 3: Perception of inequality. When building cooperation with partners from Ukraine and Romania, it is better to talk about the team than to single out individuals when noting any positive or negative aspects.

Thus, according to this group of indicators, Ukraine has a better score (6) against (4) in Romania.

The next indicator is "uncertainty avoidance" (Table 4).

Table 4

Comparative analysis of the "uncertainty avoidance" dimension influence in Romania, Ukraine and the USA

(formed by the authors according to [Hofstede-Insights, n.d.]

№	Factor influence	Expert assessment (1-10)	Threat/opportunity
1	Tolerance for new ideas		
Ukraine	In Ukraine, tolerance for new ideas has been growing in recent years. So, a more liberal and open society is gradually emerging, although resistance to changes is still significant.	6	Possibility
Romania	Romanians support a strict code of conduct and are intolerant of atypical behaviour and ideas.	7	Threat
USA	There is a sufficient degree of acceptance of new ideas, innovative products, and a willingness to try something new or different, whether technology, business practice, or food. Americans tend to be more tolerant of anyone's ideas or opinions and allow freedom of expression.	-	-
2	Importance of strict rules in business		
Ukraine	Ukraine and Romania are countries whose citizens tend to avoid uncertainty, so there is an emotional need for rules in these cultures (even if the rules never seem to work).	7	Threat
Romania		4	Threat
USA	Americans do not require a lot of rules. At the same time, terrorism has created a lot of fear in American society, which is why the government is trying to increase control over the citizens' lives.	-	-

Factor 1: Tolerance for new ideas. The higher the tolerance in the culture, the easier it is to introduce new practices and innovative products. There should be a more standard appearance and behavior in business communication in intolerant countries.

Factor 2: Importance of strict rules in business. In countries avoiding uncertainty, it is necessary to develop regulations that restrict the liberty of the company. Such practices create certain confidence in actions, although they often significantly narrow the space for

overcoming force majeure circumstances.

Thus, according to this group of factors, Ukraine has a better score (-1) against (-11) in Romania.

The next dimension is "long-term orientation" (Table 5).

Table 5

Comparative analysis of the "long term orientation" dimension influence in Romania, Ukraine and the USA

(formed by the author according to [Hofstede-Insights, n.d.])

№	Factor influence	Expert assessment (1-10)	Threat/opportunity
1	Short-term benefits		
Ukraine	Previously, in Ukraine, people focused more on long-term benefits. However, due to the lack of stability, people are paying more attention to short-term benefits. It is proved by the high level of corruption when officials break the law to get rich quickly and the fact that many entrepreneurs in the country engage in fraud against their business partners for short-term gain.	8	Threat
Romania	Romania is an intermediate country in this respect. Therefore, its citizens evaluate the benefits in the short and long periods approximately the same.	4	Possibility
USA	American business evaluates its results on a short-term basis, and income statements are issued quarterly. It also encourages people to strive for quick results in the workplace.	-	-
2	Confidence in one's views		
Ukraine	In Ukraine, people believe that the truth depends on the situation, context, and time.	7	Possibility
Romania	Romania has an average value for this indicator. Citizens have their own beliefs, but they can vary.	3	Possibility
USA	Many Americans have strong ideas about "good" and "evil." This may include abortion, drug use, euthanasia, weapons, or civil rights.	-	-

Factor 1: Short-term benefits. Partners from countries with long-term orientation typically focus on long-term partnerships, so the longer the cooperation, the better conditions you can achieve for yourself.

Factor 2: Confidence in one's views. This factor characterizes how difficult it is to change the position of a business partner in the negotiation process.

Thus, according to this group of factors, Ukraine has a worse score (-1) against (7) in Romania.

The next dimension is "indulgence" (Table 6).

Table 6

Comparative analysis of the "indulgence" dimension influence in Romania, Ukraine, and the USA

(formed by the authors according to [Hofstede-Insights, n.d.])

№	Factor influence	Expert assessment (1-10)	Threat/opportunity
1	Attitude to pleasure		
Ukraine	These societies pay little emphasis on leisure and try to control the satisfaction of their desires.	5	Possibility
Romania		7	Possibility
USA	Society in the United States pays more attention to pleasure. People work hard to have a good rest later.	-	-
2	Social norms		
Ukraine	People believe that their actions are restrained by social norms and think it is wrong to indulge themselves.	4	Possibility
Romania		5	Possibility
USA	The impact of social norms varies significantly from state to state regarding their relationship to religion and traditions.	-	-

Factor 1: Attitude to pleasure. When interacting with foreign partners, this factor affects how business partners react, for example, to calls during off-hours, overtime work, etc. Societies that control the satisfaction of their desires can give up leisure for a while to work.

Factor 2: Social norms. The impact of this factor is measured by how traditions and social norms influence the choice of alternatives. This factor also has an effect on work outside working hours.

Thus, according to this group of factors, Ukraine has a worse score (9) against (12) in Romania.

Accordingly, the authors compiled a table with a final assessment of the cultural dimensions (Table 7).

Table 7

Final assessment of the cultural factors impact on doing business in Ukraine and Romania

(formed by the authors)

№	Dimension	Expert assessment	
		Ukraine	Romania
1	Power distance	6	-18
2	Individualism	0	-11
3	Masculinity	6	4
4	Uncertainty avoidance	-1	-11
5	Long term orientation	-1	7
6	Indulgence	9	12
Total		19	-17

Thus, the cultural environment of Ukraine is more attractive for the company.

2. Comparative analysis of business etiquette in Ukraine, Romania, and the United States

Business etiquette is a procedure for management and entrepreneurs, which contains a detailed and regulated code of conduct in various business situations, including hiring, business correspondence, and business communication [Bralatan et al., 2011].

We selected its components to analyze business etiquette in certain countries and compared them.

1. Greetings. In Romania, the greeting is formal and regular: a handshake, direct eye contact, and a greeting according to the time of day. Some elderly Romanians kiss a woman's hand when they meet. An international counterpart is not expected to kiss the hand of a Romanian woman [Features of Romanian, n.d.].

In Ukraine, the most common form of greeting is a firm handshake with the right hand. Female partners, especially if they know each other well, can greet each other with a kiss on the cheek. Men can greet women with a simple nod instead of a handshake [Country profile, n.d.].

In the United States, greetings are usually relatively informal. It is not intended to show a lack of respect but rather an expression of the American belief that everyone is equal. While this is expected in business situations, some Americans do not shake hands at social events. Instead, they can greet you with "Hello" or "How are you?". The only correct answers to the greeting "How are you?" are "Excellent" or "Very good, thank you." It is not a question of well-being; it's just politeness [Doing, n.d.].

2. Personal space. In Romania, formalities are followed. People have a strong need for personal space. Most do not trust strangers. Partners may be surprised at their restraint towards themselves and others, as in most cases, they are shy and quiet. As soon as personal relations are established, Romanians will open up slightly. Also, they are always polite. Romanians occasionally call by name those who do not belong to the family circle or close friends [Features of Romanian, n.d.].

In Ukraine, personal distance (during conversations at conferences, meetings, etc.) is 0.4-1.5 m [Ukraine – Language, n.d.].

In the United States, people need to keep their distance while talking. If an American feels that partners are standing too close, he may retreat without thinking about it. So it's essential to watch your colleagues for how comfortable they are [Doing, n.d.].

3. Gift exchange etiquette. Bring flowers, chocolate bars, or imported alcohol in Romania if you are invited to the house. Give an odd number of flowers. An even number of flowers is used for burial. Roses and carnations are good choices for a gift. A gift for children is always appreciated. Gifts should be unpacked upon receipt [Features of doing, n.d.].

In Ukraine, gifts are not very common in business. Close business partners can exchange gifts for Orthodox Christmas [Business, 2019].

There are not as many customs and taboos on gifts in the US as there are in many other cultures. Gifts from your country will always be appropriate. Good choices are local and regional arts and crafts, books, candies, wine, or spirits. If you are invited to someone's home for dinner or a party, bring flowers, a potted plant, a fruit basket, candy, wine, a book, or a small homemade gift.

However, many companies have policies that prohibit their employees from giving and receiving gifts. Most government workers are not allowed to accept gifts. Cash gifts are inappropriate [American, n.d.].

4. Business cards. In Romania, business cards should be exchanged without excessive formality. If the company was founded more than 50 years ago, it is better to put the founding date on the business card because the Romanians like stability. The business card must contain a translation into Romanian [Features of doing, n.d.].

There are no special rules for exchanging business cards in Ukraine. It is good to translate one side of the card into Ukrainian. When exchanging business cards with Ukrainian professionals, foreigners should pay attention to their positions. For example, "manager" is usually used to describe many positions, both middle and lower rank [Etiquette, n.d.].

Americans view the business card only as a source of information and tend to exchange cards accidentally. There is no established ritual of exchanging business cards [Closing, n.d.].

5. Building relationships. Romanians prefer business partners who do not brag about their achievements. Also, they are proud of their manners and expect others to behave similarly.

It is better to start negotiations in a formal business style and allow business partners to promote more personal relationships. While a potential partner is perceived as an outsider (a person who does not belong to a family circle or circle of friends), he will be treated as an official person.

When Romanians get to know their partners better, they will consider them insiders (a person with confidential information), allowing them to treat partners more loyally. It is a

process that cannot be forced [Features of doing, n.d.].

Ukrainians tend to be quite cautious about doing business with international partners and look for business partners they can trust and work with on long-term projects. It is essential to present yourself as a trustworthy person and get to know your Ukrainian colleague through small talks and business entertainment events [Etiquette, n.d.].

In the United States, business relationships are between companies, not people. Americans do business where they can get the best deal and the best service. It is not important to develop a personal relationship to establish a long and successful business relationship [Closing, n.d.].

6. Negotiation. In Romania, business is hierarchical. The top management makes decisions, and most decisions require several levels of approval. Sometimes it seems that no one wants to be responsible for the decision.

Business meetings are an essential part of cooperation and are planned for 2-3 days, preferably in a letter. As a rule, meetings are formal and conservative etiquette is followed. It is expected that a lot of time will be spent on getting to know each other before discussing business.

It is difficult to negotiate with Romanians, as they are troubled that foreigners may be in a better position. Also, Romanians tend to say what others want to hear. Confrontational behaviour or aggressive sales should be avoided because decisions can be easily changed. It is better to use an indirect negotiation style.

It is better not to change people who are negotiating until a decision is made because the process of building a relationship will begin from the beginning [What, n.d.].

In Ukraine, small talks before and at the end of the meeting are standard. It is essential to wait until the Ukrainian counterpart brings up the business topic before starting the negotiations. Negotiations tend to go on for a long time because Ukrainians can quickly begin to discuss issues not part of a jointly agreed agenda.

It is essential to be patient because negotiations are usually lengthy and cumbersome. Ukrainians would like to see data that confirm the reliability of a foreign company. On the other hand, they treat even primary data as confidential (number of staff, turnover, etc.). They may be reluctant to provide too much information about their own company until a certain level of trust is reached. Information may be challenging to obtain via calls, but it can be got in a meeting once a connection has been established.

Relations determine the way Ukrainians communicate with foreign colleagues. They are likely to remain cautious and indirect in the early stages of the relationship; however,

they prefer a straightforward approach in the later stages of negotiations. However, it is desirable to remain calm and polite during the first meetings and later [Cultural, n.d.].

In the United States, meetings are usually informal and severe but casual in content. Often the agenda will be developed before the meeting, so participants will be ready to discuss specific topics. An appointment is considered successful when it is short and essential. Partners are expected to participate in the meetings. A quiet person is seen as unprepared or as unimportant at a particular session.

Meetings often end with a summary and action plan for participants to implement. A meeting is considered successful only if something specific is decided.

Typically, there is one negotiator who has the authority to make decisions. Team negotiations are rare. Americans may enter into negotiations with unacceptable conditions or requirements. They usually take a starting position, which allows them to bargain. The goal of most negotiations in the United States is to reach a signed contract.

Negotiations may seem rushed, but "time is money" for Americans, and they may not think that building relationships with potential business partners is necessary [United, n.d.].

7. Punctuality. Romanians treat punctuality, so they are rarely late [Features of Romanian, n.d.].

Ukrainians have a more complementary view of time: however, international partners are expected to arrive at the meeting on time. Punctuality usually applies to subordinates, not all. The higher a person's rank, the less punctual he can be. Meetings are typically structured freely. There may be an agenda, but it serves as a guide for discussion and serves as a basis for other related business topics. Meetings can also start late and continue overtime [Snitynsky et al., 2009].

In the United States, being "on time" in business situations usually means being late up to about five minutes. A five-minute delay is acceptable with a brief apology. Being ten to fifteen minutes late requires a call to warn of the delay and apologize [American, n.d.].

Conclusions. The article compares the cultural environment of Ukraine, Romania, and the United States according to the G. Hofstede model, performed a quantitative assessment of threats and opportunities of the cultural environment on specific dimensions:

- 1) power distance;
- 2) individualism;
- 3) masculinity;
- 4) uncertainty avoidance;

- 5) long term orientation;
- 6) indulgence.

The results show that Ukraine has a better score on the first four out of six dimensions, indicating higher cultural attractiveness than Romania for Walmart.

The paper also analyzed business etiquette in Ukraine, Romania, and the United States by features: greetings, personal space, gift exchange etiquette, business cards, relationships, negotiation, and punctuality. It has been determined that etiquette in Ukraine and Romania is closer compared to business etiquette in the United States.

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