



**University of Bamberg**

Faculty of Social Sciences, Economics, and Business Administration

**Cultural Dynamics in Global Account Management:  
Exploring India-Germany GAM Relationships  
Through Mixed Methods Research**

*This inaugural dissertation submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the University's requirements for the degree of  
"doctor rerum politicarum"*

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## Abstract

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This dissertation explores the cultural factors that impact Global Account Management (GAM), with an emphasis on the business relationship between India and Germany. It consists of three primary studies, each of which makes a distinct contribution to the understanding of GAM and cultural interaction.

The first study establishes an essential framework by undertaking a review of 71 academic sources, resulting in the development of a comprehensive conceptual model of GAM within a cultural setting. The second study employs a qualitative methodology through a case study approach, involving interviews with 23 global account managers based in Germany who oversee Indian global accounts. The findings demonstrate that cultural factors, including language, communication styles, time perception, conflict resolution methods, organizational structure, decision-making procedures, trust, and relationship, have an impact on managing Indian global accounts. Adopting Trompenaars' cultural dimensions, the study develops a cultural performance framework by integrating these principles with insights from academic literature and thematic analysis. The third study employs the Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis method to examine 64 survey responses from India and 66 survey responses from Germany. This study demonstrates that optimal global account performance is not solely determined by a single factor but rather a combinations of various factors. Findings show context-specific factors, such as “product quality and pricing, cultural fit, and strategic alignment for Germany”, and “relationship, product quality and pricing, as well as internal and external support for India,” are relevant.

This dissertation is significant for its unique integration of mixed methodologies to examine the Indo-German business relationships in the lens of GAM. Theoretically, it expands existing knowledge in key account management, GAM, national culture, and organizational culture, by addressing areas that require further investigation. The findings hold great significance for individuals and organizations that are already or intend to be engaged in GAM within the Indian and German context. They provide strategic insights and practical frameworks for successfully navigating cultural change in managing global accounts.

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## List of abbreviations

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<b>3D</b>	:	Three Dimensional
<b>AG</b>	:	Aktiengesellschaft (in German); Public Limited Company
<b>AI</b>	:	Artificial Intelligence
<b>ARA</b>	:	Actors, Resources, Activities
<b>AWS</b>	:	Amazon Web Services
<b>B2B</b>	:	Business-to-Business
<b>CA</b>	:	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>CAGE</b>	:	Cultural, Administrative, Geographic, Economic
<b>CEO</b>	:	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CLV</b>	:	Customer Lifetime Value
<b>CMO</b>	:	Chief Marketing Officer
<b>COO</b>	:	Chief Operating Officer
<b>CPM</b>	:	Customer Portfolio Matrix
<b>CRM</b>	:	Customer Relationship Management
<b>CVF</b>	:	Competing Values Framework
<b>DMU</b>	:	Decision Making Unit
<b>EJM</b>	:	European Journal of Marketing
<b>ERP</b>	:	Enterprise Resource Planning
<b>EUR</b>	:	Euro
<b>FsQCA</b>	:	Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis
<b>GA</b>	:	Global Account (s)
<b>GAM</b>	:	Global Account Management
<b>GDP</b>	:	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GLOBE</b>	:	Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness
<b>HP</b>	:	Hewlett Packard
<b>IBM</b>	:	International Business Machines
<b>ICT</b>	:	Information and Communication Technology
<b>IMM</b>	:	Industrial Marketing Management
<b>IMP</b>	:	Industrial Marketing and Purchasing Group
<b>Indo-German</b>	:	India-Germany
<b>IT</b>	:	Information Technology

<b>JBIM</b>	:	Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing
<b>JBR</b>	:	Journal of Business Research
<b>JPSSM</b>	:	Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management
<b>KA</b>	:	Key Account
<b>KAM</b>	:	Key Account Management
<b>KPI</b>	:	Key Performance Indicators
<b>M/F/D</b>	:	Male/Female/Diverse
<b>MBL</b>	:	Market-based Organizational Learning
<b>MBOL</b>	:	Market-based Organizational Learning
<b>MNC</b>	:	Multinational Corporation
<b>MT</b>	:	Monochronic Time
<b>NAM</b>	:	National Account Management
<b>NAMA</b>	:	National Account Management Association
<b>NPS</b>	:	Net Promoter Scores
<b>OCAI</b>	:	Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument
<b>OCP</b>	:	Organizational Culture Profile
<b>OODA</b>	:	Observe, Orient, Decide, Act
<b>P&amp;G</b>	:	Procter & Gamble
<b>PLS-SEM</b>	:	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
<b>PT</b>	:	Polychronic Time
<b>R&amp;D</b>	:	Research and Development
<b>RBT</b>	:	Resource-Based Theory
<b>RM</b>	:	Relationship Marketing
<b>SAM</b>	:	Strategic Account Management
<b>SAP</b>	:	Systems, Applications & Products in Data Processing
<b>SDL</b>	:	Service-Dominant Logic
<b>TA</b>	:	Template Analysis
<b>TCE</b>	:	Transaction Cost Economics
<b>US</b>	:	United States
<b>USD</b>	:	United States Dollar
<b>Vs.</b>	:	Versus

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# 1 Introduction

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The Introduction section is intended to set the stage by providing essential background information and highlighting the topic's significance from both theoretical and practical perspectives. It provides a concise description of the aim, objectives, and structure of the dissertation in general with a particular emphasis on the notion of GAM and its significance.

## 1.1 Background and relevance of the dissertation

GAM has gained significant importance in business-to-business (B2B) marketing since the 1990s, evidenced by its widespread adoption in both academic research and industry practices. It serves as a strategic approach to manage relationships with key global customers effectively, ensuring consistent offerings of products or services across various geographical regions (Birkinshaw, Toulan, and Arnold 2001). Scholars such as Yip and Madsen (1996), Montgomery and Yip (2000), and Wilson and Milman (2003) have emphasized the importance in coordinating global customer interactions. The literature on GAM highlights several benefits for supplier organizations of implementing a GAM program, including improved relationships, increased revenue, higher margins, a competitive edge, and deeper customer connections (Deszczyński 2019; Shi et al. 2005; Thoma 2012; Wilson and Weilbaker 2004).

However, as GAM transcends borders, cultural differences between suppliers and buyers become increasingly apparent. Culture plays a crucial role in generating value and enhancing GAM's effectiveness (Hui Shi, Zou, and Cavusgil 2004). Studies by Hennessey (2004) and Davies & Ryals (2009) suggest that successful GAM depends heavily on a culture that prioritizes customer needs and fosters cross-functional collaboration. However, the link between national and organizational cultures within GAM is acknowledged but not fully investigated in country-specific contexts (Ellis and Iwasaki 2018; Wendt 2015).

The Indo-German business relationship presents an ideal case to investigate the cultural kinetics within GAM. Their ties date back to the 16th century, marked by the pioneering trade partnership between German merchant Jakob Fugger and India (González Enciso 2021; Khashimwo 2015). Today, Germany stands as one of India's most important European trading partners and a key foreign investor (Karine Lisbonne-de Vergeron 2021; Khatoon 2013). As per the German Mission in India report, Between 2000 and 2020, German investments in India surpassed USD 12 billion, while Indian companies invested over EUR 6.5 billion in Germany,

primarily in sectors like IT, automotive, pharmaceuticals, and biotechnology (Federal Foreign Office 2024). This strong partnership is further exemplified by the presence of over 200 Indian companies operating in Germany (Wagner, Lemke, and Scholz 2022). Notably, both nations share common values of open society, pluralism, and democracy, positioning them as influential players in the global marketplace (Fraedrich et al. 2000; Khashimwo 2015).

This dissertation contributes to the fields of international business and cross-cultural management by delving into GAM within the Indo-German context. It builds upon the seminal works of scholars such as Schein (2010) on organizational culture and Yip and Madsen (1996) on GAM strategies. By exploring the cultural nuances between India and Germany, it offers distinct theoretical perspectives on cross-cultural relationship management. Additionally, this research provides invaluable insights for business leaders and practitioners involved in Indo-German collaborations. It offers practical guidance on incorporating cultural factors into GAM initiatives, crucial as cultural differences increasingly impact global business alliances (Sirmon and Lane 2004). It enables global businesses to develop culturally aligned GAM strategies, and thus strengthen their cross-cultural capabilities. Finally, this research endeavor serves as a practical guidebook for navigating the Indian and German markets, where cultural considerations are paramount.

### **1.2 Aim, objectives, and research questions**

This dissertation aims to examine the cultural differences between India and Germany to enhance the GAM performance through both qualitative and quantitative research methods within cultural complexities. To achieve this, the study establishes the following objectives:

**Objective 1:** Conduct an extensive literature review on Key Account Management (KAM), GAM, national culture, and organizational culture to build a foundational understanding of the subject and identify research gaps.

**Objective 2:** Develop a comprehensive conceptual model based on the literature review insights, incorporating GAM components and cultural dimensions, which acts as the basis for this dissertation.

**Objective 3:** Perform a qualitative case study to identify unique cultural factors that influence on GAM in India, recognize cultural distinctions between India and Germany, and develop a framework for assessing cultural performance in Indian business environments.

**Objective 4:** Conduct a quantitative analysis using the Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (FsQCA) method to uncover specific GAM factor configurations that drive optimal Global Account (GA) performance in the Indian and German contexts. Examine if these configurations align with country-specific cultural interpretations.

To meet the study's objectives and look deeper into the cultural influences affecting GAM, the following research questions are formulated:

**Research Question 1:** How do national and organizational cultural characteristics interact to influence the alignment of key components within a GAM framework?

**Research Question 2:** In what ways do cultural differences between India and Germany impact the implementation and success of GAM strategies in cross-border business relationships?

**Research Question 3:** How do distinct Indian and German business practices shape stakeholder relationships and decision-making in GAM, and what causal pathways lead to optimal performance in these diverse cultural settings?

By fulfilling these research questions and objectives, the dissertation seeks to contribute to the fields of B2B marketing and intercultural management. The subsequent section will detail the dissertation's structure methodically and chronologically.

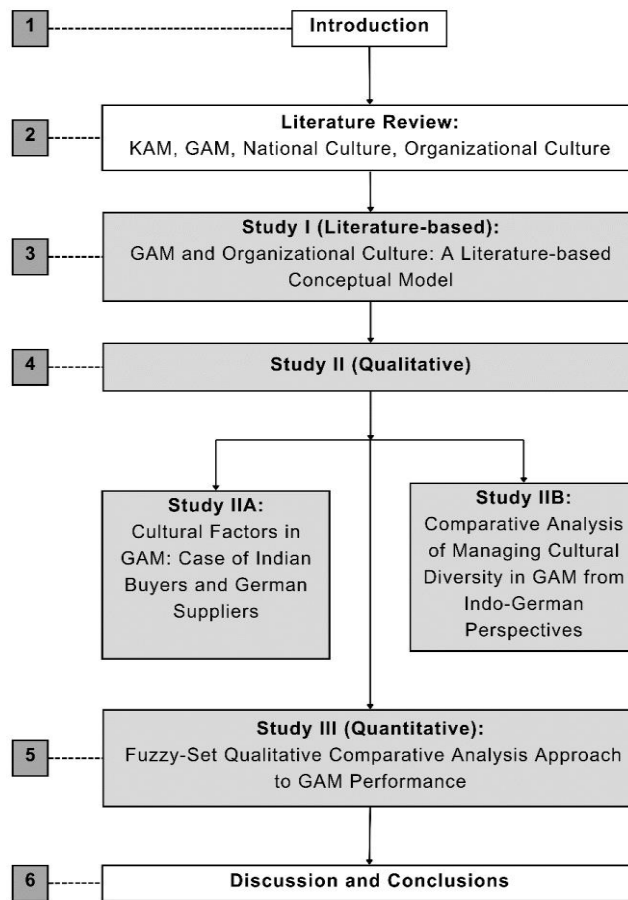
### **1.3 Structure of the dissertation**

As depicted in Figure I, the structure begins with an introduction. This chapter provides background information on GAM and culture, emphasizing the research's relevance and establishing the overarching aim and well-defined objectives. By establishing this context, the introduction positions the study within the broader academic discourse on GAM and intercultural management.

Following the introduction, the dissertation transitions into a thorough analysis of the existing literature. This critical examination serves as the research's backbone, exploring major themes including KAM, GAM, national culture, and organizational culture. The objective of this literature review is twofold: firstly, to situate the research within the established academic discourse surrounding these themes, and secondly, to identify important gaps in existing literature.

**Figure I:** Structure of the dissertation

Source: Created by author.



As depicted in Figure I, the core of the dissertation lies in three meticulously designed studies:

**Study I:** This initial study constructs a literature-based conceptual model. This model incorporates the key outcomes gathered from literature review and offers a robust theoretical foundation for the whole dissertation.

**Study II:** This two-part study investigates the cultural interactions within the Indo-German business relationship and sub divided into study IIA and study IIB.

- IIA: This segment focuses on examining the unique cultural interactions between Indian buyers and German suppliers. Through broad analysis, it inspects how cultural factors shape and influence GAM practices within this specific context.
- IIB: This segment carefully evaluates the cultural distinctions between Indian and German business practices. By thoroughly analyzing these differences, it aims to

construct a qualitative model that facilitates cultural performance assessment within the Indian business environment.

**Study III:** This final study draws upon the FsQCA approach. It systematically utilizes this methodology to identify the causal configurations of GAM conditions that lead to optimal GA performance within both the Indian and German contexts.

These three pivotal studies serve as the core pillars of the dissertation, each offering distinct and valuable insights while cumulatively expanding our overall understanding of GAM in cross-cultural settings. Each study maintains a consistent structure, presenting a concise abstract, relevant extant research, the detailed methodologies employed, the insightful results obtained, and the significant implications for both theory and practice arising from the findings.

The dissertation culminates in a discussion and conclusion section. This concluding section serves as the capstone of the research, integrating the key findings acquired from each study. It critically evaluates how the research findings align with the dissertation's initial aims and objectives, offering a thorough assessment of their theoretical and practical implications. Additionally, this section suggests potential directions for future research endeavors within this domain. This structured dissertation approach ensures a coherent and logical development of content, promoting a consistent build-up of knowledge and eventually facilitating a deepened understanding of the research findings. An analysis of the literature review will be presented in the following chapter.

## 2 Literature Review

---

This chapter provides a critical review of the literature within the domains of KAM, GAM, national culture, and organizational culture. The primary aim is to achieve a broad understanding of these themes. The evaluation begins by outlining current definitions and terminologies related to the four fundamental topics. It proceeds with an examination of existing literature, including principal theories and concepts. Additionally, it identifies the limitations of existing studies and underscores the necessity for further investigation.

### 2.1 Key account management

The unprecedented levels of global competition and technological advancement in industrial markets encouraged a number of businesses to form strategic alliances with buyers and suppliers in order to secure a competitive advantage and strengthen their operational processes (McDonald, Millman, and Rogers 1997; Millman and Wilson 1995). The evaluation and selection of suppliers have become an essential responsibility for buyers, and Relationship Marketing (RM) has gained widespread acceptance as a technique for managing closer relationships with a relatively small number of suppliers who can offer equivalent long-term and consistent support (Davies and Ryals 2009; Millman and Wilson 1996). As a strategic response to these expanded customer demands, KAM has become a widely studied topic in B2B marketing literature and practices (Guesalaga and Johnston 2010; Zupancic 2008).

#### 2.1.1 Terminology and definition

KAM is depicted in literature by a variety of terms, depending on authors and context, such as national account management (Lambe and Spekman 1997; Stevenson 1981; Weilbaker and Weeks 1997), major account management (Barrett 1986; Turner 1990), and strategic account management (McGinnis and McCarty 1998; Piercy and Lane 2006; Storbacka 2012). However, it should be noted that these terms are synonymous and that there are no significant differences between them (Sengupta, Krapfel, and Pusateri 1997).

Stevenson (1981) uses the term national account in his article in *Industrial Marketing Management*. Barrett (1986) titled his article “why major accounts work,” while Shapiro and Moriarty (1980) devote a portion of their article to explaining and justifying the use of national account management, which they consider to be the most prevalent. However, in an article published by the Marketing Science Institute, Shapiro and Moriarty (1982) reintroduce the term

national account by “major account” and characterize it as a buyer who not only purchases in large quantities but also has complex business requirements. In a special issue on “national account management” published by the Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, several authors, including Sengupta, Krapfel, and Pusateri (1997), Pardo (1997), and Sharma (1997), contribute articles employing the term Key Account (KA) rather than national account. Moreover, Pardo (1999) identifies national account as a North American tradition and KA as a European tradition for the nomenclature of contributions. In conclusion, Sengupta, Krapfel, and Pusateri (2000) contend that KAM encompasses all other terms, and Homburg, Workman, and Jensen (2002) and Wendt (2015) identify that KAM is the most commonly used term in recent literature.

KAM as a concept emerged in the 1960s, gained popularity in the 1990s, and is now widely acknowledged as a B2B marketing subdiscipline. The definition of KAM has evolved over time in response to market turbulence. Stevenson and Page (1979, p. 94) provide the first conceptual definition of KAM as follows: “national account marketing means that special marketing procedures are followed in selling, servicing, and monitoring certain key customers considered important to the goal attainment selling company. The importance of the account may lie in the volume of goods purchased, the dollar value of the purchases, the share of market control, prestige of the account, or any number of other factors thought to be critical to the goal attainment of the selling firm.” Barrett (1986, p. 64) provides the simplified definition that is frequently cited in a variety of publications: KAM is a practice of “targeting the largest and most important customers by providing them with special treatment in the areas of marketing, sales and service administration.” Millman and Wilson (1995) integrate strategic alliance attributes and define KAM as a part of the strategic alliance facilitated by the supplier with strategically important key customers. In a similar manner, McDonald, Millman, and Rogers (1997) acknowledge that the selling company strategy is to build a portfolio of loyal customer base by providing them with a customized product or service package on a continuous basis. Ivens and Pardo (2007, p. 472) incorporate the RM principle into KAM and define KAM as “a concept through which companies introduce the principle of RM into their customer policy and become closer to the customer.” Subsequently, Zupancic (2008) defines KAM as the systematic selection, evaluation, and management of the company’s most valuable current and future customers, as well as the establishment and maintenance of any supporting infrastructure. In addition, Guesalaga and Johnston (2010) emphasize value creation and suggest that KAM can be viewed as a strategic approach for sales organizations to optimize their advisory value-

creation competencies. Davies and Ryals (2014, p. 1183) concur with Millman and Wilson (1995) and define KAM as “a systematic supplier process for managing strategically important B2B relationships.” Combining multiple elements of KAM definitions from the literature results in the following integrated definition:

“KAM as a customer-centric business unit with the overarching objective of establishing a long-term, strategic, and collaborative relationship with customers in order to gain more significant business opportunities and thereby to generate considerably higher revenue and profitability.”

Following discussion of the definition of GAM, in the next section, the evolution and literature review of this topic will be examined. Also, an insight into its periodically transforming KAM principles will be provided.

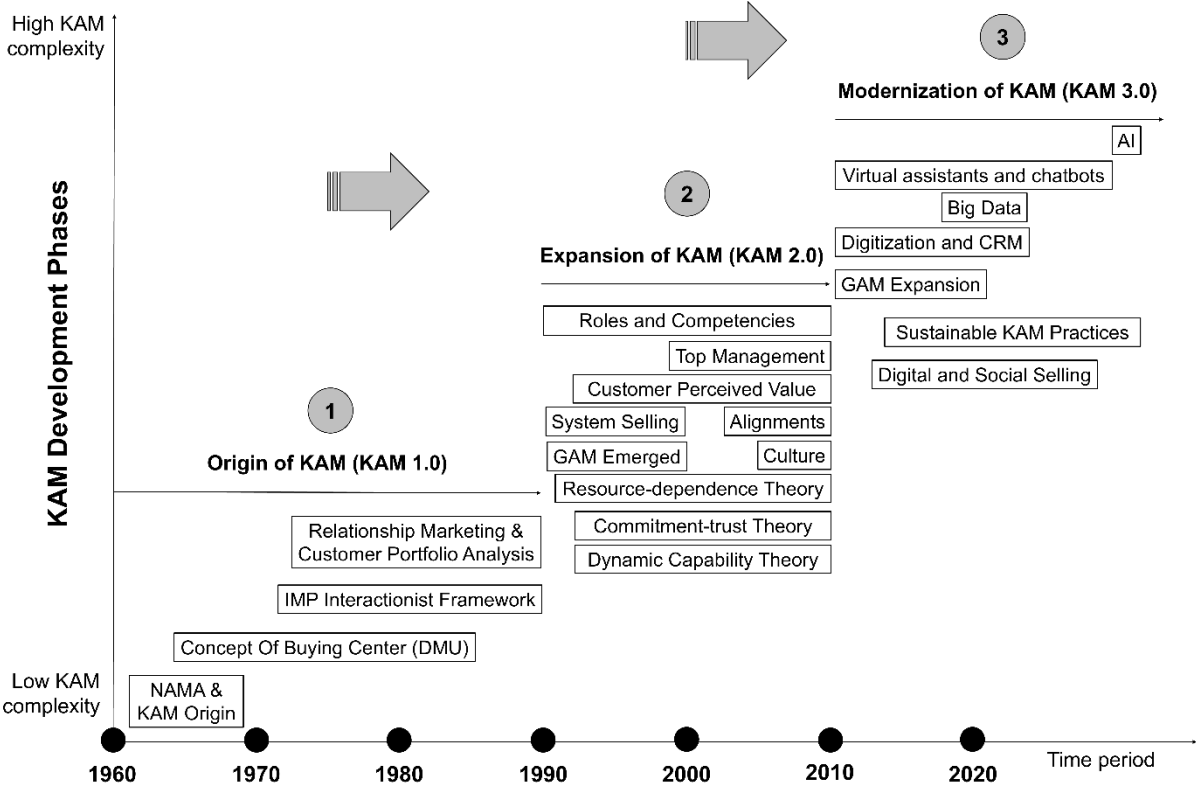
### **2.1.2 A literature review and evolution of KAM from 1960 – 2023**

KAM, which was first mentioned in literature in the 1960s, has undergone substantial development in both literature and in practice. The number of KAM-related articles published from 1972 – 2023 can be used to evaluate the scope of global KAM research. In the early years of KAM research, only two to three papers were published each year. In contrast, since the late 2010s, more than ten KAM-related articles have been published annually. The bibliometric analysis of KAM literature reveals that 373 KAM-related articles appeared in 68 journals between 1979 and 2016 (Kumar, Sharma, and Salo 2019). *Industrial Marketing Management (IMM)*, *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management (JPSSM)*, *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing (JBIM)*, *Journal of Business Research (JBR)*, and *European Journal of Marketing (EJM)* have published the majority of KAM articles and remain among the most frequently cited journals in KAM literature (Kumar, Sharma, and Salo 2019; Sandesh, Sreejesh, and Paul 2023). According to Lautenschläger (2020), there are six major contributors to the KAM literature based on the number of publications: Catherine Pardo from the Emlyon Business School in France, Bjoern Ivens from the University of Bamberg in Germany, Nektarios Tzempelikos from the Anglia Ruskin University in England, Spiros Gounaris from the University of Strathclyde in Scotland, and Iain Davies from the University of Bath in England. Leveraging a solid foundation established by these researchers, KAM research is continuously expanding, evolving, diverging in new directions, and becoming an increasingly complex phenomenon.

Analysis of the KAM literature from 1960 – 2023 reveals three phases of the evolution of KAM: the origin of KAM, the expansion of KAM, and the modernization of KAM. The following analysis is accompanied by Appendix A containing a literature overview summary.

**Figure II:** The evolution of KAM

Source: Created by author.



**Phase 1: The origin of KAM (around 1960 until 1990)**

The early conceptualization of KAM programs can be traced all the way back to 1964, when the National Account Management Association (NAMA) was established as a roundtable for sales representatives interested in learning on how to manage large, multifaceted accounts (Pardo, Ivens, and Niersbach 2020). According to Weilbaker and Weeks (1997), numerous conditions in the business environment compelled suppliers to modify their sales strategy for a small number of large customers. These large customers accounted for a significant proportion of a supplier’s sales; consequently, they increased the pressure on the supplier to improve services and reduce prices (Lambe and Spekman 1997). Due to the increasing pressure to improve services and reduce costs, some suppliers have started assigning a “one salesperson” to their large customers in order to better communicate with them and meet their needs (Abratt

and Kelly 2002). In this manner, suppliers have developed the practice of KAM as a means of dealing with their most valuable customers and maintaining long-term relationships with them for continued business.

However, how exactly did KAM develop as a research domain? According to McDonald, Millman, and Rogers (1997), the origin of KAM in the literature is the result of three pioneering breakthroughs. The concept of the Buying Center known as “Decision Making Units (DMU)” marked the first significant relationship-based breakthrough (Webster and Wind 1972). Numerous structures and theories derived from DMU were beneficial to adopting power distribution within buying companies and encouraged managers to adopt soft methodologies. In the early 1980s, The Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Group presented the “interactionist” framework, which was the second major breakthrough (Håkansson 1982). According to Håkansson (1982), relationships are viewed as both a resource and an investment, with the purpose of enhancing economic and technological effectiveness and minimizing risk. The third major breakthrough is RM, with customer portfolio analysis and efforts to distinguish customers depending on profitability (Campbell and Cunningham 1983). In the context of marketing, it is acknowledged that identifying and monitoring key accounts is an integral part of the economic aspect of buyer-seller relationships and continues to serve as the foundation for research on KAM discussed in Phase 2 (McDonald 2000; McDonald, Millman, and Rogers 1997).

### **Phase 2: The expansion of KAM (around 1990 until 2010)**

The expansion of KAM remains the most significant phase in KAM research, not only because various theories, frameworks, and principles are established throughout this phase, but also because KAM has transcended the boundaries, and the concept of GAM is evolved.

Yip and Madsen (1996) described the notion of GAM and established a framework to assist managers in recognizing when and why to use it and how to successfully implement it using a qualitative research approach. Millman (1996) integrated GAM and systems selling perspectives, and Montgomery, Yip, and Villalonga (1999) developed a model that investigates the degree to which multinational corporations use GAM, its influencing factors, and its impact on overall GAM performance. The empirical research of Arnold, Belz, and Senn (2001) is concentrated on leveraging knowledge in GAM, while Wilson and Millman (2003) argued that managerial behavior, particularly the roles of GA managers, is as important as any other

function in GAM. Georges and Eggert (2003) looked into customer-perceived value and developed a conceptual framework for value creation in a KAM setting using a mixed method approach. In addition, Gosselin and Bauwen (2006) introduced a new conceptual framework on the relationships between external customer alignment and shareholder value with the use of qualitative research methods. Professor Catherine Pardo co-authored two significant articles on KAM relationships published in IMM in 2007. They analyzed 91 KA relationships and 206 ordinary buyer–supplier interactions and found that suppliers put significantly more effort into value-creating behaviors in “key account relationships” compared to ordinary relationships, without altering their value-claiming behaviors in these dyads (Ivens and Pardo 2007). In the second article, Guenzi, Pardo, and Georges (2007) demonstrate that the perception of adopting a relational selling strategy is associated with certain KA manager behaviors, including customer-focused selling, adaptive selling, and team selling.

During this time period, a number of significant and noteworthy theories are contributed and applied to the KAM literature, which served as the basis for subsequent KAM research: the social exchange theory (Georges and Eggert 2003), the commitment-trust theory (Morgan and Hunt 1994), the dynamic capability theory (Shi et al. 2005), the resource-dependence theory (Ivens and Pardo 2008), and the organization theory (Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002). These theories not only helped practitioners make better decisions by providing a set of guidelines and best practices, but they also enabled researchers to express their ideas meaningfully by developing a common language and vocabulary. The expansion of KAM research and the emergence of new challenges in KAM practices lead to the modernization of KAM, which is discussed in the following section.

### **Phase 3:** The modernization of KAM (around 2010 until present)

In the recent years, KAM is significantly impacted by the rapid development of digitalization and customer relationship management technologies (Kumar et al. 2019; Lautenschläger 2020). This reflects in the volume of businesses that have utilized digital tools and data to manage their sales and KAs. Compared to the industry average, these companies witnessed 2.3 times higher revenue growth, three to five times higher return on sales, and around 8% increase in shareholder value (Colter et al. 2001).

As supplying companies seek to improve customer relationships and drive financial performance, the use of technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as an

increasingly essential part of KAM. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems enable organizations to centrally store, analyze, and manage customer data, resulting in not only a deeper understanding of key accounts but also enhanced customer engagement, and interaction monitoring (Mandina 2014; Salojärvi and Sainio 2015). CRM systems can be integrated with AI algorithms to provide additional insights and recommendations for KAM strategies, such as the identification of new business opportunities and the prediction of key account behavior (Libai et al. 2020). The use of big data analytics is another area in which technology and AI are having a significant impact on KAM. According to Pajunen (2013), big data analytics enable organizations to process and analyze large amounts of customer data in order to gain insights into customer behavior and preferences, resulting in more effective relationship management and enhanced business performance.

In addition, digital communication tools, such as instant messaging, video conferencing, and social media, also contribute to KAM by facilitating more effective communication and collaboration with key customers (Lacoste 2016; Marino and Lo Presti 2019). Furthermore, virtual assistants and chatbots can automate routine tasks and provide prompt responses to customer inquiries, allowing KAM professionals to devote more time to complex and strategic activities (Hoyer et al. 2020; Youn and Jin 2021). The integration of technology into KAM has significantly enhanced key account performance and relationships.

Increased digital exchange requires more responsibility. The major issue is that a poorly implemented digital solution has the opposite effect of a well-planned integration. Frustration throughout the customer's experience lowers customer satisfaction (Amar, Raabe, and Roggenhofer 2019). A well-planned customer journey is needed to implement and optimize a digital system with successful infrastructure. In terms of human capacities, KA managers should be trained to maximize the IT system's potential. Smart implementation and ongoing monitoring of the omnichannel KAM strategy, which combines digital and conventional elements, can safeguard and expand the KAM organization through digital customer interactions.

### **2.1.3 Intrinsic principles of relationship marketing in KAM**

RM has risen to the forefront of marketing strategy during the past three decades. Berry (1983, p. 25) provides an early definition of RM as "attracting, maintaining, and - in multi-service organizations - strengthening client connections." In a similar spirit, Morgan and Hunt (1994)

define RM as all marketing activities aimed at establishing, developing, and maintaining successful exchanges with customers. By adopting a more strategic perspective on continuity and true customer engagement, Sheth and Parvatiyar (2001, p. 9) define RM as “the ongoing process of engaging in cooperative and collaborative activities and programs with immediate and end-user customers to create or enhance mutual economic value, at reduced cost.” In conclusion, RM aims to foster a mutually beneficial relationship between the buyer and the supplier through a customer-centric approach that emphasizes building strong and long-lasting relationships, leading to customer loyalty, repetitive purchases, and customer satisfaction (Agariya and Singh 2011; Harker 1999; Palmatier 2008).

The extant literature reveals trust, communication, and mutual benefits are key elements of RM. Trust fosters a sense of security and confidence in customer relationships. Effective communication allows organizations to understand their customers’ needs and respond accordingly. Mutual benefits provide common objectives between the customer and the supplier and can lead to a sense of shared value (Christopher, Payne, and Ballantyne 2002; Grönroos 2004; Morgan and Hunt 1994). Unresolved disagreement has the most important effect on the quality of customer relationships. Current research reveals conclusively that conflict between buyers and sellers can quickly cause negative effects, weakening trust, commitment, and, eventually, a relationship that has been cultivated over years of investment (Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002; Kumar, Sharma, and Salo 2019; Morgan and Hunt 1994). To minimize and eliminate conflict, selling companies should match their corporate operations with their RM strategy. The corporate culture can play an important role of conflict resolution and provide formal mechanisms for resolving customer complaints (Palmatier 2008). Winklhofer, Pressey, and Tzokas (2006) have conducted empirical research proving that a friendly corporate culture is a prerequisite for a successful RM orientation.

In the past, suppliers determined their KAs based on their sales volume. Under the RM paradigm, however, suppliers have incorporated relational criteria for identifying their KAs, such as relationship quality, intimacy or bonding, and relationship duration (A. M. Noor and Othman Yeop Abdullah 2013; McDonald, Millman, and Rogers 1997). In order to maximize the efficiency of RM practices, companies must continuously evaluate the outcomes (Palmatier 2008). Customer satisfaction surveys, customer loyalty metrics, and customer lifetime value analysis are identified as a few matrices that can provide valuable insights into the success of RM initiatives (Evans and Laskin 1994; McMullan and Gilmore 2003; Mosaddegh et al. 2021;

Sheth and Parvatiyar 2001). Furthermore, RM is heavily reliant on ethical considerations, such as privacy and data security, transparency, and impartiality (Campbell 1997; Martin and Murphy 2017). Organizations should have clear policies for collecting and using customer data. They should be transparent about their marketing practices and intentions, and treat all customers fairly and equitably (Nguyen, Jaber, and Simkin 2022).

Furthermore, globalization, the growth of international alliances, and, most critically, technological advancement have transformed the perspective of RM. Lambert (2010) investigated the interest and substantial investments in Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software that enables businesses to be more responsive to their consumers. According to Kumar and Reinartz (2012), a fundamental part of CRM is identifying discrete customer categories and then adopting distinctive interaction strategies to match their individual needs. CRM plays a vital role in KAM by offering a centralized platform for storing and organizing information on important accounts, as well as by automating the many procedures required in managing relationships with these accounts (Mandina 2014; Salojärvi and Sainio 2015).

Despite its numerous advantages, RM has some limitations that businesses must be aware of. Developing and maintaining successful relationships with customers demands a substantial investment of time, effort, and perceived costs (Palmer 1996). Second, the involvement of customers is crucial to the success of RM initiatives (Varki and Wong 2003). Third, although RM can be effective at developing customer loyalty, it may not be sufficient in highly competitive marketplaces where customers are more concerned about pricing and convenience (Blois 1996). Consequently, businesses should evaluate the costs and benefits of RM and select a strategy that aligns with their overall business objectives.

### **2.1.4 Limitations and opportunities for further research**

Despite diverse contributions in KAM literature, several limitations offer compelling opportunities for further exploration.

One limitation lies in the primarily descriptive nature of current KAM literature. While understanding how suppliers leverage KAM for competitive advantage is valuable, the field lacks robust theoretical frameworks for deeper analysis. Richards and Jones (2009) emphasize that developing robust frameworks is crucial for guiding future empirical investigations and enriching our understanding of KAM's nuances.

Another limitation concerns the limited exploration of cross-cultural competencies. Existing research acknowledges the importance of these capabilities for KA managers but does not delve into how they influence the entire value chain in diverse settings. Hence, further investigation is needed to understand the impact of cultural differences on KAM actors and how they can effectively steer these nuances to exceed expectations (Jean et al. 2015; Lautenschläger 2020).

Moreover, while studies analyze KAM's internal and external network approach, its potential for facilitating value co-creation in complex, multi-stakeholder ecosystems remain under-researched. As highlighted by Kumar et al. (2019), deeper investigation of KAM's inter- and intra-organizational networks is necessary to unlock its potential benefits in this context.

In addition, the current research environment largely favors qualitative studies, overlooking the potential of mixed method techniques to investigate an array of KAM issues and their influence on organizational outcomes. (Veasey 2019). Therefore, further empirical studies utilizing mixed methods are crucial for delving deeper into these nuances (Sandesh, Sreejesh, and Paul 2023).

Finally, a dominant focus on North America and Europe within KAM research creates a significant knowledge gap regarding its practice in developing economies like India. As Ellis and Iwasaki (2018) point out, over 93% of published KAM research since 1979 is concentrated in these regions, leaving only 5% focused on Asia. It is crucial to conduct research in various geographical contexts in order to have a greater grasp of the global applicability of KAM.

To summarize, although KAM has a substantial scholarly background, these limitations present opportunities for further investigations. Developing robust theoretical frameworks, investigating the influence of cultural factors, and examining the potential of network and configurational approaches hold immense promise for deepening our understanding of KAM and its impact on organizational success. Addressing these gaps will not only contribute to existing knowledge, but also lead to improved KAM practices for organizations worldwide.

## **2.2 Global account management**

In the 1990s, a dramatic power shift occurred in favor of global customers, giving them substantial influence over their global suppliers (Ellis and Iwasaki 2018; Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002). These demanding customers began to expect internationally uniform products and services regardless of location, and they started purchasing from a small number of preferred suppliers, with whom they maintain close relationships (Millman 1996; Yip and

Bink 2007). In order to target these key customers, many suppliers have shifted their resources from regional and function-based operations to global ones. As a result, GAM was introduced by global supplying companies and is considered “the new frontier in relationship marketing” (Yip and Madsen 1996). In the year 1993, Hewlett Packard (HP) implemented a GAM program to provide direct customer support for their 26 key global customers, resulting in changes to the company’s structure, management processes, people, and culture (Yip and Bink 2007). The program involves optimizing the worldwide sales organization structure, empowering GA managers, acquiring distribution channels and opportunities, measuring global performance indicators, and selecting the most suitable GAs (Yip and Madsen 1996). The implementation of the GAM program had positive outcomes on HP’s businesses, including greater customer satisfaction and revenue, as well as strengthened relationships with GAs (Montgomery, Yip, and Villalonga 1999; Yip 2018).

The following section addresses GAM definition, terminology, and significance in managing complex relationships with GAs.

### **2.2.1 Terminology, definition, and comparison of KAM vs. GAM**

Although GAM is a growing academic discipline, it has been referred to by a variety of terms in the literature. They include International KAM (Jean et al. 2015; Zupancic and Müllner 2008), Global Customer Management (Capon and Senn 2010; Montgomery and Yip 2000), and Global Customer Relationship Management (Kumar, Sunder, and Ramaseshan 2011; Ramaseshan et al. 2006). Considering the aforementioned alternatives, GAM remains the most used terminology in both academic and practice literature, most likely due to its broad applicability and inclusivity.

GAM has been defined in a variety of ways by researchers over time. Millman and Wilson (1996) define GAM as a strategic approach to serving multinational customers where suppliers integrate their global operations. Harvey, Myers, and Novicevic (2002) define GAM as an interdependent relationships between the buyer and the supplier, with various degrees of formal and informal links crossing national borders. In addition, they emphasize the importance of managing internal functional and cross-functional relationships inside the supplying organization. These definitions draw attention to the need for an integral approach for serving multinational customers and managing cross-national relationships. The most frequently cited definition of GAM is by Montgomery, Yip, and Villalonga (1999, pp. 5–6), which is as follows:

“GAM is an organizational form and process in multinational companies by which the worldwide activities serving a given multinational customer are coordinated centrally by one person or team within the supplying company.”

Managing key accounts in a national and global setting is becoming an increasingly important component of company strategy; but how does GAM distinguish itself from KAM?

GAM entails managing cross-border activities that require functional and subsidiary cooperation, whereas KAM focuses on managing a company’s most valuable clients inside a particular geographic region (Jean et al. 2015; Shi et al. 2010). Due to the scope and significance of these relationships, GAM coordination needs the involvement of senior executives from both the supplier and customer organizations, including CEOs and COOs, resulting in a greater degree of “vertical complexity” and challenges than national account coordination (Shi 2005). In addition, GAM coordination is “horizontally complex” as it may require resources from various business functions and country subsidiaries of the supplier in order to provide GAs with integrated solutions such as product, pricing, promotion, distribution, and supply chain management (Gao and Shi 2011). The key distinction is therefore the scope and complexity of customer relationships. Nevertheless, the principles and methods of KAM, such as understanding customer needs and establishing strong relationships remain applicable to GAM. The two approaches are frequently interchanged in academic literature and share numerous similarities.

### **2.2.2 Hypothetical example of GAM implementation**

In order to give a clear explanation of GAM in B2B companies, this section will use the hypothetical company Global Inc. as an example. We will go over the specific components of the GAM program, identify the key actors involved, outline the necessary resources, define the objectives, and review the operational mechanisms.

Global Inc. is a hypothetical company that implements the GAM program to effectively manage and nurture relationships with important GAs. The central team of the GAM program comprises GA managers, local account managers, support staff, and executives, who work together to ensure seamless service provision across multiple regions (Lindner and Senn 2015). This team is supported by crucial resources including advanced IT systems for data management, communication tools, training programs, and a dedicated budget for customer engagement and problem-solving initiatives (Shi and Gao 2016). The primary goals of the GAM program at

Global Inc. are around increasing customer satisfaction, establishing sustainable business relationships, and boosting profitability by providing customized services and solutions to key global customers. The operational mechanisms consist of scheduled meetings, evaluations of performance, and sessions dedicated to strategy. These mechanisms ensure that the team promptly addresses customer needs, stays updated on market trends, and effectively works together with internal departments to deliver consistent and tailored solutions across all regions (Czaplewski, Gonzalez-Padron, and Gruen 2015). The success of the GAM program is assessed by key performance indicators such as customer retention rates, revenue growth from GAs, customer satisfaction scores, and its efficiency in resolving customer complaints. These indicators enable Global Inc. to consistently improve and optimize its GAM strategy, aligning it with the company's overall business goals.

Overall, the GAM program implemented by Global Inc. serves as a crucial endeavor to strengthen its relationships with its most valued customers. Global Inc.'s competitive position and long-term profitability, as well as customer loyalty, depend on a focused and collaborative workforce, the efficient use of essential resources, and the alignment of services with customer demands.

### **2.2.3 Multifaceted and diverse nature of GAM literature**

This segment assesses the wide range of GAM research, highlighting various theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and critical breakthroughs that have made significant contributions to contemporary business knowledge. As companies expand their reach and face growing competitive pressures, the critical role of GAM programs takes center stage. However, the debate surrounding its effectiveness in areas like organizational structure, coordination, governance, and relationship management persists.

Researchers have employed a multifaceted lens to analyze and identify potential GAM frameworks. Common themes emerge, emphasizing the crucial role of trust, communication, and shared objectives for successful partnerships. The contingency model proposed by Parvatiyar and Gruen (1999) highlights the manner in which globalization, supplier's GA selection, products and services, and governance mechanisms impact the overall effectiveness of GAM. On the other hand, Arnold, Belz, and Senn (2001) draw on information processing and resource dependency theories to suggest that transparent GAM structures enhance information processing capabilities and negotiating leverage with GAs.

Incorporating various perspectives, including globalization elements, contingency theory, relational contracts, and dynamic capabilities, scholars like Deszczyński (2019), Hui Shi et al. (2004), Parvatiyar and Gruen (1999), and Wilson and Weilbaker (2004) have proposed models and frameworks for GAM implementation. These frameworks often link industry globalization drivers, customer demand for GAM programs, and supplier responses to overall GAM performance.

Table I showcases a selection of studies from the diverse landscape of GAM literature, demonstrating the breadth of this topic. Additional studies are referenced in Appendix 8.1.

**Table I:** Selected GAM studies

Source: Created by the author, based on original research and analysis.

Author (s)	Research Focus	Research Method	Key Findings
Sinkovics, R. R., Kim, D., & Lew, Y. K. (2015)	GAM capabilities	Mixed approach, 15 qualitative interviews, Survey with 246 Taiwanese electronics suppliers	The results indicate that market scanning and trust are crucial to the development of GAM capabilities, which can improve market performance. Cultural distance and technological development moderate the effect of market scanning on GAM.
Shi, L. H., White, J. C., Zou, S., & Cavusgil, S. T. (2010)	GAM drivers and outcomes	Quantitative, Survey with 203 GA managers	Globalization and global strategic priorities drive four GAM strategies: inter-country coordination, inter-organizational coordination, standardization of marketing efforts, and global integration. Inter-country and inter-organizational cooperation have a substantial impact on GAM performance, but global customer demand moderates the effects of standardization and global integration of marketing efforts. The GAM performance has an impact on relationship continuity.
Wilson, K., & Weilbaker, D. (2004)	Conceptual model for GAM	Exploratory literature research	GAM conceptual model that integrates various GAM components.
Wilson, K., & Millman, T. (2003)	GA Manager roles	Exploratory literature research	This paper proposed a contextual model of political-entrepreneurial behavior that integrates prior research on the political entrepreneur, GA manager boundary-

			spanning behavior, and the relationship development model.
Birkinshaw, J., Toulan, O., & Arnold, D. (2001).	Information processing and resource dependency perspective of GAM	Quantitative, 106 GAs of 16 multinational companies (MNC)	Findings suggest that GAM frameworks increase MNCs' information processing capability and bargaining power, with an interaction impact for high customer dependence.
Montgomery, D. B., Yip, G. S., & Villalonga, B. (1999)	GAM: demand and usage	Quantitative, Survey with 191 senior executives	Results show that companies will employ GAM programs more as customers want them. Supplier adoption lags demand. GA managers are common and uniform prices are not required. The faster US corporations respond to client requests, the better their supplier performance.
Millman, T. F. (1996)	GAM and System Selling	Exploratory literature research	Selling companies use GAM systems to keep important customers and compete globally. This affects organization structure, coordination, control, and relationship management. GAM, especially in "systems selling" businesses, is understudied and underappreciated.

Further research maps out the nuanced roles of GA managers, with a focus on their political-entrepreneurial and boundary-spanning behaviors (Holt 2003; McDonald 2000; Wilson and Millman 2003). Additionally, studies by Toulan et al. (2006) and Xu et al. (2006) highlight the significance of strategic fit in enhancing relationship performance within GAM programs. The importance of reconfiguration processes, central coordination of strategic and tactical actions, and cultural elements during GAM implementation is further emphasized by Ellis and Iwasaki (2018), Gao and Shi (2011), Kadam et al. (2023), and Swoboda et al. (2012b).

Moreover, Hui Shi et al. (2004) argue that a company's global change capabilities significantly impact GAM success in high-velocity markets, with higher capabilities leading to increased institutionalization and effectiveness. Lautenschläger (2020) further posits that GAM competencies, cultural distance between supplier and GA, and the supplier's technological advancements are key determinants of buyer-supplier GAM relationships.

In a nutshell, the research topic of GAM is multifaceted and provides researchers with an opportunity to examine it holistically and study the interconnections among various elements of GAM.

## **2.2.4 Benefits and implementation of GAM**

This section examines the advantages of GAM from the viewpoints of both suppliers and buyers (GAs), elaborating on the potential benefits derived from each side. In addition, it highlights the turning point at which a supplier should consider adopting a GAM program in order to optimize business relationships.

### **2.2.4.1 Benefits of GAM for Suppliers and GAs**

By implementing GAM, suppliers can get a range of benefits, such as greater revenue, improved customer satisfaction, access to innovation, tailored solutions, strategic alliances, and competitive advantage (Birkinshaw, Toulan, and Arnold 2001; Czaplewski, Gonzalez-Padron, and Gruen 2015; Hui Shi, Zou, and Cavusgil 2004; Parvatiyar and Gruen 1999; Yip and Madsen 1996). In this regard, GAM offers an environment for suppliers to establish long-term, collaborative partnerships with their key accounts, resulting in mutual advantages for all actors. For instance, Hennessey and Jeannet (2003) suggest that suppliers who adopt GAM can take advantage of cross-selling and upselling possibilities, expand their customer base, and gain price leverage. In addition, GAM improves customer satisfaction by delivering superior service, streamlined communication and collaboration, and effective management of supply chains (Hui Shi, Zou, and Cavusgil 2004). Hennessey and Jeannet (2003) argue that besides the relational and financial benefits, GAM enables suppliers to develop strategic partnerships with buyers, which may assist them in establishing deeper relationships, co-creating values, and aligning their objectives. With buyer and supplier collaborations, suppliers can obtain access to breakthrough technology, equipment, and services, as well as extend their business opportunities (Jajja et al. 2017). Gounaris and Tzempelikos (2014) identifies “customized solutions” as a crucial component of managing GAs and may improve customer loyalty and retention. Furthermore, GAM enhances a supplier’s reputation by strengthening their brand image, trustworthiness, and credibility (Jean et al. 2015). Finally, suppliers may obtain a competitive benefit by differentiating themselves from competitors, increasing their market share, and strengthening loyalty of customers (Barney 2001; Thoma 2012).

On the other hand, GAM also gives customers or GA organizations a number of benefits. In line with the results of Gosselin and Bauwen (2006), GAM enables strategic alignment by aligning GA company objectives, business demands, and market trends with suppliers, therefore increasing cooperation and synergies. Parvatiyar and Gruen (1999) posit that GA

companies may generate cost savings by optimizing procurement processes, consolidating suppliers, and exploiting their greater negotiating power. Besides that, GAs may improve product and service quality by resolving quality issues and implementing monitoring systems in a close collaboration with suppliers (Birkinshaw, Toulan, and Arnold 2001). A handful of recent GAM-related studies have highlighted the importance of sustainability aspects in GAM. By close collaboration between buyer and supplier organizations, GAM promotes sustainability by encouraging the development and implementation of environmentally sustainable products, social responsibilities, and fair trade practices (Kolk and van Tulder 2010; Thorlakson, Zegher, and Lambin 2018). Finally, GAM programs improve overall organizational learning through information sharing, continuous improvements, and skill development (Harvey, Myers, and Novicevic 2003; Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002).

After examining the multiple benefits that the GAM program provides to both buyers and suppliers, it is essential for suppliers to evaluate their individual situations and determine when it is reasonable to adopt a GAM program. In the following section, the key requirements and underlying principles for supplier's GAM program adoption are discussed.

### **2.2.4.2 Deciding when to implement a GAM program in supplier organizations**

Suppliers may ask, "When is the right time for us to implement the GAM and optimize our relationships with global customers?" This section discusses the critical criteria and circumstances that ought to encourage suppliers to consider implementing a GAM program in their organization.

Based on the empirical research of Yip and Bink (2007), a supplier should adopt a GAM program in the event that any of the following four conditions are satisfied.

#### **Condition 1: Products and services**

Suppliers must first evaluate if their products or services require global coordination and have sufficient margins to sustain GAM initiatives prior to implementing GAM programs. Suitable choices include (1) complex products or commodities with added value that require global consistency, and (2) global businesses with interconnected supply chains. Cisco Systems, for example, is a global leader in networking and telecommunications technology. Cisco's products, which include routers, switches, and security appliances, are complex and require consistent performance across the global market. In addition, Cisco supports GAs with intricate, integrated supply chains that rely on reliable communication and data transfer. Cisco has a

GAM program in which GA managers interact with GAs such as IBM and Microsoft to provide them with consistent service, product standardization, and effective supply chain management across several countries. This strategy helps Cisco to satisfy the specific demands of its GAs, establish strong relationships, and foster business growth.

### **Condition 2:** Global customer footprint and customer demands

As GAM operates in a globally integrated framework, it is essential for suppliers to determine whether or not their customers have a global presence. In addition, global customers frequently expect a single point of contact, united resources, globally uniform prices, standardized products, and, in some cases, service in markets where the customer does not operate (Yip 2018). To maintain positive relationships with their GAs, suppliers should adopt a GAM program to meet these requirements.

### **Condition 3:** Importance of multinational customers

Yip and Bink (2007) provide the following criteria for determining the importance of a global customer: (1) At least 5 % of a supplier's revenues come from a single global customer; (2) more than 10 % of revenues come from multinational customers coordinating global or regional purchasing; (3) more than 25 % of revenues come from multinational customers regardless of their purchasing approach; and (4) large multinational customers are the most profitable accounts for the supplying organization. To secure their market position, suppliers should certainly consider implementing GAM in these circumstances.

### **Condition 4:** Competitive advantages

If major competitors provide GAM to the customers, suppliers should also implement GAM in order to remain competitive. Global customers set a higher priority on GAM program offerings and features when selecting their global suppliers. Therefore, designing a GAM program that aligns the two organizations and provides mutual benefits is another way to gain a competitive advantage (Arnold, Belz, and Senn 2001).

In conclusion, suppliers should implement a GAM program when their products and services need global coordination and have reasonable profit margins and global customers demand GAM. Such customers have a major impact on the supplier's business, and GAM offers a competitive advantage. By establishing a GAM program, suppliers may better meet the

demands of their global customers, build healthy relationships, and remain competitive in a globally integrated market.

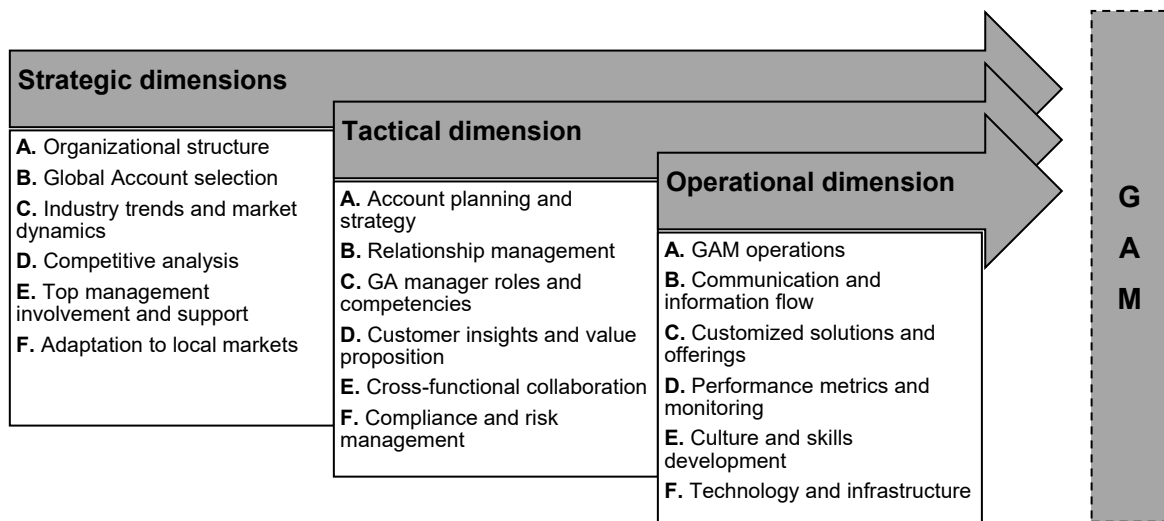
### **2.2.5 Three-Dimensional Global Account Management (3D-GAM) framework**

Multiple GAM frameworks have been developed in the past to explain and analyze the complex nature of GAM, thereby shedding light on GAM implementation, performance, and success factors. Yip and Madsen (1996) developed a basic plan for GAM, which includes factors that drive industries to globalize, the need for GAM, global strategy in organizations, and challenges with implementing GAM. According to them, the extent to which organizations can benefit from GAM is impacted by the factors that cause industries to globalize, and this demands adjustments such as offering the same products worldwide. In addition, the success of GAM is dependent on organizational factors that influence global operations. Senn and Arnold (1999) presented a three-step GAM implementation framework comprising strategic, operational, and tactical levels, claiming that its use in industrial enterprises exceeds traditional RM. Despite an extended analysis of success drivers, the authors acknowledged the potential of other elements affecting GAs satisfaction and urged for future research into GAM dimensions to achieve a full understanding of GAM. On the basis of the bargaining framework of relational contracting theory, Harvey, Myers, and Novicevic (2003) presented a step-by-step approach for management to follow while implementing GAM programs. Furthermore, the literature-based conceptual model of GAM from Wilson and Weilbaker (2004) is regarded as one of the most rigorous in the field and outlines three stages of GAM development such as getting started, developing GAM competencies, and sustaining the efforts with thirteen research propositions, offering a circular view of GAM.

Drawing on previous theoretical models and an extensive literature review (see Appendix 8.1), the author developed the Three-Dimensional Global Account Management (3D-GAM) framework depicted in Figure III. This framework extends the work of Senn and Arnold (1999) and consolidates several GAM-related themes categorized under strategic, tactical, and operational dimensions. Each dimension of the 3D-GAM framework and its corresponding subcategories are described below in Figure III.

**Figure III:** Three-Dimensional Global Account Management (3D-GAM) framework

Source: Created by the author, based on the framework proposed by Senn and Arnold (1999).



### 2.2.5.1 Strategic dimensions

The strategic dimensions of GAM comprise an overall structure that enables the alignment of corporate objectives with the specific objectives of GAs. These aspects establish the foundation for building long-term relationships, promising mutual growth, and enrich a mutually beneficial partnership between the supplying company and its GAs. In this broader strategic context, six distinct dimensions that provide an overview of strategic GAM will be examined.

#### A. Organizational structure

The importance of organizational structure in GAM is undeniable as it breaks down power relations between global and local teams, thereby influencing effectiveness, coordination, and the ability to address local and global challenges (Montgomery and Yip 2000; Sanford and Maddox 1999). Yip and Bink (2007) identify three principal structures of GAM: coordinated GAM, control GAM, and separate GAM. “Coordinated GAM” involves country heads supervising local accounts, whereas GA managers have comparatively limited authority. The advantage of such structure is that it is easy to implement via an additional coordination layer; however, its effectiveness remains restricted (Yip and Bink 2007). The widely accepted “control GAM” structure enables country heads to manage local accounts, with GA managers having direct authority over country heads. This creates a balance between global authority and local knowledge; however, friction may arise between global and local interests. “Separate GAM” establishes an independent business unit in which GA managers directly handle big GAs

and supervise country heads responsible for other small accounts. The benefits include full authority over GAs, streamlined implementation, and less conflict between local and global interests. In contrast, disadvantages of such structure include high expenses associated with implementation and limited knowledge sharing between local and global teams (Yip 1989; Yip and Bink 2007). When designing their GAM structures, organizations should deeply evaluate factors such as cost, efficiency, knowledge sharing, and the balance between global and local interests. The choice of structure should be tailored to the organization's particular needs and goals, with the purpose of optimizing the strategic approach to effectively address both local and global issues.

### **B. Global Account selection**

In order to optimize GAM strategies, selecting GAs requires analysis of numerous factors. The important considerations in GA selection include:

- **Size and revenue potential:** In the selection of GAs, account size should be key criteria, but emphasis should also be placed on new sales opportunities, as opposed to relying solely on current revenue to determine the significance of GAs (Parvatiyar and Gruen 1999; Yip and Bink 2007).
- **Geographic spread:** GAM is suitable for customers who have substantial businesses in multiple countries. National account management, on the other hand, could assist customers with a concentrated market presence significantly (Shi et al. 2010).
- **Integration capabilities:** To ensure effective GAM, it is crucial to evaluate a customer's organizational structure, processes, and information systems for central coordination of global purchases, and to classify their integration capabilities as low (country-level strategies), medium (country, regional, and global-level strategies), or high (global-level strategies) (Yip and Bink 2007; Zupancic and Müllner 2008).
- **Strategic, structural, and cultural fit:** According to Toulan, Birkinshaw, and Arnold (2006), the process of choosing GAs necessitates a thorough evaluation of strategic, structural, and cultural compatibility to ensure long-term success. The concept of strategic fit involves the assessment of product strategy, growth alignments, and market operations, whereas structural fit refers to the evaluation of personal match, geographical coverage, and internal support (Birkinshaw, Toulan, and Arnold 2001; Chorn 1991). The concept of cultural fit pertains to the assessment of organizational compatibility, collaborative potential,

adaptability, and innovation level, which collectively enhance GAM and foster fruitful business relationships (Patyal et al. 2020; Wendt 2015).

By combining these qualitative and quantitative factors, global suppliers can effectively select GAs and optimize their customer portfolio.

### **C. Industry trends and market dynamics**

Understanding industry trends and market nature is essential for effective GAM in the global business environment of today, which is rapidly evolving. These trends include technological advancements, shifting consumer behavior, and regulatory changes that have an effect on market demand and competition (Cui, Griffith, and Cavusgil 2005; Yip and Bink 2007). For example, Salesforce, a cloud-based software company, has integrated Artificial Intelligence (AI) into its platform through the introduction of AI technology called “Einstein,” which enables GA managers to gain a deeper understanding of customer needs, forecast future trends, and enhance sales techniques by providing data-driven insights and recommendations tailored to each GA (Julienne, Damperat, and Franck 2019). GAM practitioners should remain updated on industry trends and market situations in order to anticipate the impact of these factors on their GAs and formulate strategies to ensure long-term growth and customer retention.

### **D. Competitive analysis**

Competitive analysis is an essential component of GAM, since it enables organizations to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their competitors, as well as potential opportunities and threats (Porter 2008). By analyzing the product offerings, pricing, distribution channels, and marketing strategies of competitors, GA managers can better comprehend the competitive landscape and differentiate their own offerings to create unique value propositions for their accounts (Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002). Amazon Web Services (AWS), for instance, closely examines Microsoft Azure’s offerings and pricing strategies to identify gaps and opportunities, which enables AWS to develop solutions and pricing models that are attractive to their global B2B customers (Gupta, Mittal, and Mufti 2021).

### **E. Top management involvement and support**

The involvement of top management to the GAM program assures the availability of required resources, stimulates cross-functional collaboration, and supports in aligning the organization’s strategic objectives with GA priorities, and establishes social contacts with GA (Guesalaga

2014). This executive involvement facilitates more effective decision-making, organizational alignment, and demonstrates Procter & Gamble's (P&G) dedication to long-term relationships and mutual growth (Shi et al. 2005).

### **F. Adaptation to local markets**

GAM necessitates adapting to local markets in order to effectively meet the specific requirements and preferences of customers in various regions (Hennart 2009). This includes understanding cultural nuances, legal and regulatory environments, and economic conditions in order to customize offerings and create strategies that resonate with local consumers (Ghauri and Cateora 2009). McDonald's, for example, offers the McAloo Tikki burger with potatoes instead of beef in India, where cows are considered sacred, and the Teriyaki burger in Japan, to adjust to the cultural preferences (Khan and Khan 2013). This flexibility enables GA managers to build trustworthy customer relationships and promote sustainable growth across diverse markets.

#### **2.2.5.2 Tactical dimension**

Tactical dimensions in GAM comprise robust planning and execution techniques tailored to the specific needs of each GA. The strategic objectives are transformed into concrete actions within these dimensions, so implementing the engagement with GAs. We will look at six important tactical aspects that are involved in GAM.

### **A. Account planning and strategy**

Account planning and strategy in GAM involves the systematic analysis and planning of the customer's business, recognizing their demands and goals across various geographic regions, and developing a detailed, customized strategy that will increase revenue, improve customer relationships, and ensure GA's satisfaction (Ryals and Rogers 2007; Zecevic 2021). As suggested by McDonald, Millman, and Rogers (1997), the Customer Portfolio Matrix (CPM), which was originally proposed by Fiocca (1982), has been recognized as a valuable tool for account segmentation. In most cases, involving GAs in the planning process is advantageous, as it tends to increase customer commitment to the supplier's strategy. This participation of GA reduces uncertainty and enables a more efficient allocation of resources by facilitating cross-functional planning, thereby maximizing their utilization (Ryals and Rogers 2007).

### **B. Relationship management**

The effective relationship management comprises cultivating and maintaining strong, long-lasting relationships with customers to foster loyalty, trust, and mutual development (Gounaris and Tzempelikos 2014; Ivens and Pardo 2007). It requires proactive communication, collaborative problem-solving, and the offering of customized solutions that meet the specific needs of GAs (Guenzi, Georges, and Pardo 2009; Millman 1996). For example, SAP, a global software company, emphasizes relationship management in its dealings with significant GAs like Coca-Cola (Mathur 2021). SAP assigns account managers to their accounts, offers unique solutions, and provides consistent customer support. This strategy promises gaining insights on their customers' requirements, thus encouraging mutually beneficial interactions.

### **C. GA manager roles and competencies**

The success of GAM programs is heavily reliant on the key roles played by GA managers, often characterized as political entrepreneurs with boundary-spanning responsibilities (Wilson and Millman 2003). Wilson and Millman (2003) identified a typology of GA managers, comprising three distinct types: the analyst, the politician, and the entrepreneurial strategist. Each type brings unique skills and perspectives to GAM, contributing to the overall success of the program. Key competencies for GA managers includes strategic thinking, relationship building, understanding of cross-cultural competencies, and the ability to balance global and local interests (Kedia and Mukherji 1999; Wilson and Weilbaker 2004). For example, Salesforce invests in developing these capabilities in its managers handling key clients like Spotify, thereby enhancing their ability to manage these key relationships effectively (Sostrin 2022).

### **D. Customer insights and value proposition**

B2B companies rely on the collection of customer insights and the development of a compelling value proposition, as these elements enable them to differentiate themselves from competitors while navigating the complex demands of GA (Seiler, Engelen, and Goffin 2022). Gaining an knowledge of the GAs' business environment, objectives, and challenges enables organizations to develop tailored solutions (Day 2006). In return, these solutions generate incomparable value and increase customer satisfaction (Kasiri et al. 2017). In the context of GAM, the Market-based Organizational Learning (MBL) theory suggested by Sinkula, Baker and Noordewier (1997) facilitates the generation and utilization of GA insights. This procedure consists of four phases:

- Phase 1 (dentification): Determine the specific needs of the GA and transform relevant market information into practical insight.
- Phase 2 (distribution): To ensure an extensive awareness of the GA's requirements and challenges to fulfill those requirements, distribute these insights to all levels of the organization involved in GAM.
- Phase 3 (interpretation): Interpret these insights jointly and agree on how important they are in developing marketing strategies and making GAM decisions.
- Phase 4 (storage): Keep these insights in the collective memory of the organization. This enables their future use and improves the organization's capacity to administer the GA more efficiently.

Businesses are better able to align their product or service with the needs of GA when they incorporate GA insights into their value proposition. This strategy fosters GA loyalty and strengthens their position on the global market, providing them with a competitive advantage.

### **E. Cross-functional collaboration**

There is consensus in the marketing literature that cross-functional collaboration is one of the essential resources for successful product innovation (Luca and Atuahene-Gima 2007). Cross-functional collaboration is essential for effective GAM because it ensures a smooth integration of internal and external resources to satisfy the needs of GAs. GA managers need to collaborate with GAs, country heads, as well as internal departments such as sales, marketing, R&D, customer service, and operations, all of which influence overall GAM performance (Yip 2018).

### **F. Compliance and risk management**

Compliance and risk management are vital GAM components since they help organizations direct the numerous legal, regulatory, and ethical surroundings in which GAs operate. By proactively addressing potential risks and ensuring compliance with the relevant laws, suppliers can secure their credibility, maintain the confidence of their global customer, and prevent interruptions in operations (Magnu and Chou 2010). Lockheed Martin, a multinational aerospace, defense, and technology corporation, places a strong emphasis on compliance and risk management. This includes adhering to strict export control regulations, safeguarding intellectual property, and implementing robust cybersecurity measures to secure its global customers and maintain the integrity of its business relationships (Sears 2006). By prioritizing

compliance and risk management, organizations can ensure the long-term success and stability of their GAM initiatives while also nurture the confidence and trust of their GAs.

### **2.2.5.3 Operational dimension**

The operational dimension of GAM is centered on the everyday management of GAs and the infrastructure required for successfully supporting them. These dimensions examine the implementation of strategic and tactical plans, thereby ensuring that the GAM ecosystem provides superior customer service, efficient operations, and effective communication. In this context, we will discuss six operational dimensions that highlight the most crucial elements of operational GAM execution.

#### **A. GAM operations**

GAM operations consist of the daily responsibilities of GA managers. These responsibilities involve building relationships with global customers and internal stakeholders, developing and implementing strategic account plans, and coordinating various internal and external functions (Birkinshaw, Toulan, and Arnold 2001; Malcolm McDonald and Diana Woodburn 2015). As a first point of contact, GA managers play a crucial role in coordinating global sales operations, handling KAs, interpreting new business opportunities, and leveraging their expertise to achieve organizational objectives (Lacoste, Zidani, and Cuevas 2022; Yip and Bink 2007). However, the success of GAM operations is dependent on the efficient allocation of resources, GA's potential and the strategic match between the supplier and GA. GAM requires strategic resource allocation to maximize output and performs a crucial role in achieving global sales revenue targets (Guesalaga et al. 2018; Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002).

#### **B. Communication and information flow**

The success of GAM is heavily dependent on effective communication and seamless information flow, which facilitates interaction, sharing of knowledge, and well-informed decision-making processes (Lai and Yang 2017; Schultz and Evans 2002). Global suppliers use digital tools such as CRM software (for example, Salesforce, Microsoft Dynamics) and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems (for example, SAP, Oracle) to centralize customer interactions and coordinate communication between departments (Kumar and Reinartz 2012). LinkedIn and other professional networking platforms facilitate B2B interactions and lead generation. Webinars and virtual events are often hosted with the use of Zoom, Webex, or Microsoft Teams. Help Desks (for example, Zendesk, Freshdesk) streamline customer service,

whereas devoted customer portals offer an extensive platform for resource sharing and direct communication. Most significantly, GA managers should align their communication styles with the cultural backgrounds of their accounts in order to facilitate mutual understanding and effective communication (Kadam, Niersbach, and Ivens 2023; Shachaf 2008).

### **C. Customized solutions and offerings**

In GAM, customization is a strategic approach that involves tailoring solutions to the unique needs of GAs, enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Toulan, Birkinshaw, and Arnold 2006). It requires a deep understanding of a GA's strategic goals, local market conditions, and operational necessities to develop offerings that align with their objectives (Loch 2000). Customization not only adapts but innovates, promoting a partnership-based approach and value co-creation opportunities (Hadaya and Cassivi 2012). For instance, Salesforce offers highly customizable CRM solutions. Customers can customize the platform extensively to fit their sales, customer service, and marketing processes (Müller et al. 2009). This not only satisfies specific customer needs, but also deepens customer trust and relationships. Therefore, customization in GAM develops connections that are mutually beneficial, increasing satisfaction and loyalty (Kasiri et al. 2017).

### **D. Performance metrics and monitoring**

GAM relies heavily on performance measurement and monitoring to evaluate the current state of the business relationship with GAs and to plan for future developments. B2B companies make use of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the following ways:

- **Revenue growth:** Monitoring the revenue generated by GAs over specific intervals is crucial in GAM for analyzing account performance and potential. An evaluation of progress towards revenue targets can assist GA managers in identifying underperforming accounts, identifying areas that require strategic improvement, and refining global sales strategies accordingly.
- **Customer retention rate:** GA managers track the percentage of GAs that stay active over time to determine the customer retention rate. This statistic demonstrates the performance of GAM strategies and helps in the identification of customer churn risk.
- **Customer satisfaction:** Customer feedback surveys and Net Promoter Scores (NPS) are frequently used to assess GA satisfaction. These findings allow GA managers to identify areas of concern and take actions to improve the overall customer experience.

- **Customer Lifetime Value (CLV):** This is a forecast of the total future net profit due to the relationship with a GA. It can assist a supplying company in determining how much investment an individual GA deserves.

In addition, Homburg, Workman, and Jensen (2002) emphasize the significance of intangible metrics such as customer trust and relationship quality in determining GAM success, arguing that not only quantitative measures but also qualitative measures are significant.

### **E. Culture and skills development**

GAM demands a unique combination of capabilities, including strategic competence, relationship-building capabilities, and cultural awareness (Guesalaga et al. 2018; Kadam, Niersbach, and Ivens 2023). GA managers are analogous to chess grandmasters in their strategic maneuvering in the complex global market landscape. It is essential for GA managers to comprehend cross-cultural nuances in order to ensure harmonious operations in the complex global environment (ALHussan, AL-Husan, and Fletcher-Chen 2014). Therefore, skill development is not only about individual competencies, but it is also about nurturing a culture that promotes GAM success. Amazon, known for its rigorous training programs for GA managers, incorporates this principle. The company fosters a culture of continuous learning through GAM training. These programs equip managers to guide GA complexities, even though completion does not bind them to stay. This, argues Cutter (2019), is a strategic move considering the high cost and time associated with new talent acquisition and training, likely boosting employee retention.

### **F. Technology and infrastructure**

In GAM, the use of appropriate technology and infrastructure is pivotal to facilitating effective data management, communication, customization, and performance monitoring. The deployment of sophisticated technology such as CRM systems, advanced data analytics, and digital communication tools can significantly optimize the delivery of services to GAs, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction (Mandina 2014; Pohludka and Štverková 2019; Rapp, Trainor, and Agnihotri 2010). Consider Microsoft's approach; they utilize their sophisticated CRM and data analytics platforms to drive their GAM initiatives and provide superior service to GAs such as Procter & Gamble (Kate and Manrodt 2012). Thus, the strategic use of technology and infrastructure can facilitate operational streamlining, enhance decision-making capabilities, and improve the overall effectiveness of GAM.

In conclusion, the successful implementation of the GAM program necessitates all three discussed strategic, tactical, and operational dimensions, each of which plays a unique role in GAM. In the section that follows, which is the final section of this chapter, we will evaluate the potential limitations of GAM literature which present opportunities for future research.

### **2.2.6 Limitations and opportunities for further research**

A rich body of GAM research has delivered various insights, ranging from its implementation and development to its pivotal role in RM (Arnold, Birkinshaw, and Toulan 2000; Yip and Madsen 1996). However, acknowledging the limitations within this existing literature provides a solid foundation for further advancements in the field.

The historical development of GAM research holds hidden flaws: an overemphasis on its past. While foundational works by Yip (1989), Millman (1996), Yip and Madsen (1996), and Montgomery et al. (1999) established GAM as distinct from traditional sales and linked it to RM, research largely stagnated in the adoption, development, and RM-focused aspects of GAM. This singular lens lacks the ability to acknowledge the different cultural settings in which GAM exists, hence overlooking its deep complexity. Consequently, crucial questions about how national and organizational cultures influence GAM implementation and effectiveness remain largely under addressed.

Furthermore, a geographical bias towards North America and Europe is evident in the existing literature. This creates a significant knowledge gap regarding GAM practices in developing economies, particularly in regions like India (ALHussan, AL-Husan, and Fletcher-Chen 2014; Kadam, Niersbach, and Ivens 2023). Such geographical limitations hinder the development of a truly global perspective, neglecting the potential impact of cultural factors, including cultural distance, on GAM effectiveness. As highlighted by Ellis and Iwasaki (2018) cross-cultural studies are essential to filling this critical knowledge gap.

Another important limitation lies in the scarcity of research directly focused on GAM performance measurement. With few exceptions like Shi et al. (2010), Salojarvi and Saarenketo (2013), and Jean et al. (2015), the field lacks robust studies examining GAM efficacy, particularly across different national contexts. Given the challenging nature of managing GAs in today's interconnected world, further research on performance, potentially incorporating country-specific investigations, is critical for advancing our understanding of GAM impact.

In terms of research methodologies, a dominance of conceptual and qualitative approaches within GAM research presents another limitation (Wendt 2015). While valuable, this overreliance restricts the depth and breadth of knowledge acquisition. Integrating mixed methods research could shed new light on various facets of GAM and enhance the overall rigor of the field.

Finally, existing GAM models often display their own limitations. Many tend to be primarily theoretical, focusing on high-level perspectives, a limited number of factors, or simply reiterating established knowledge (Birkinshaw, Toulan, and Arnold 2001; Hui Shi, Zou, and Cavusgil 2004). The lack of a robust and empirically validated conceptual framework applicable to cross-cultural GAM contexts, along with the mainly theoretical nature of frameworks like those proposed by Wilson and Weilbaker (2004), Yip and Madsen (1996), and Senn and Arnold (1999), highlight the need for innovative, data-driven studies. Ideally employing larger sample sizes, such studies could significantly enhance our understanding of GAM, illuminate the influences of culture, and provide more generalizable results.

By acknowledging and addressing these limitations, researchers can create a foundation for broadening and strengthening the discourse on GAM. With this objective in mind, the following section will transition to an examination of national culture, providing essential context for the subsequent discussions within this dissertation.

### **2.3 National culture**

National culture, an invisible force, quietly influences our perceptions, behaviors, and the fundamental structure of our societies. This chapter will analyze the concept of national culture, beginning with its definitions and critical research frameworks. Its impact on individual behavior and business practices will be investigated, with a focus on its effect on GAM. In the end, the current limitations and potential opportunities in this field of research will be looked at. This detailed examination aims to broaden the understanding of national culture and its wide-ranging ramifications.

#### **2.3.1 Definition**

Edward Tylor, commonly regarded as founder of anthropology, established the landscape of anthropological theory in the late 19th century (Tylor 1889). Tylor (1871, p. 3) provided an early definition of culture as “a complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals,

law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” Consequently, this fundamental definition has served as the foundation for further subsequent discussions of culture. In the middle of the 20th century, Kroeber and Parsons (1958) discover national culture has multiple meanings. National culture, according to Kroeber and Parsons, is one of the most influential and interdisciplinary subjects. Kroeber and Parsons asserted that national culture symbolizes conveyed and generated arrays of values, ideas, and other “symbolic-meaningful systems” that serve as elements in the modelling of human behavior and the elements generated by behavior (Kroeber and Parsons 1958).

As societies evolved and developed, scholars began to identify cultural patterns associated with national identity. Geert Hofstede took the first significant step towards designating national culture in the second half of the 20th century. Hofstede (1980a, p. 15) defined national culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of one group or category from those of other groups or categories.” His pioneering work identified several cultural dimensions, such as power distance, individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede 1980b). Unlike Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s (1997b) perceive culture as the kinetic reconciliation of opposing values, not as static points on two-dimensional maps. Contrary to Hofstede’s assertion that cultures are fundamentally distinct, they argue that all cultures face similar dilemmas but create different inventive solutions. Robert House and his team from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania contributed notably by launching the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) project, which expands our understanding of national culture. They proposed that national culture is manifested in societal values and practices, and they expanded on Hofstede’s work by investigating nine cultural dimensions (House et al. 2004). Subsequently, Hofstede revised his original work in light of their independent research in Hong Kong and added two new dimensions to his model: long-term versus (vs.) short-term orientation and indulgence vs. restraint (Hofstede and Minkov 2010). Furthermore, Crane, et al. (2008) describe the term national culture deliberates on the shared values, comprehension, beliefs, norms, and main concerns that are mutual among members of a nation. This addition underlined the nature of national culture and the constant effort to fully understand its complexities. In their paper attempting to establish the relationship between national culture and organizational culture, Mansaray and Jnr (2020) supported the definition of national culture as a distinct group of individuals by means of its ideas, values, and traditions. This

reinforcement emphasizes the continued importance of “shared values and norms” for comprehending national culture.

Each definition provides unique insights into national culture, illuminating distinct facets of this multifaceted concept. The author summarizes the various definitions of national culture as follows:

“National culture embodies a shared, yet dynamic, set of values, beliefs, norms, and practices that shape a nation’s collective perspective on the world. This complex phenomenon directs both individual and collective interpretations, problem-solving, and identity formation, all while constantly interacting with external cultural influences and undergoing internal change through individual and group activity.”

Building on the definition of national culture, the theoretical models and frameworks that provide structured lenses for analyzing these complex concepts of culture will be looked into in the following section.

### **2.3.2 Key theoretical models and frameworks in national culture studies**

In the continually growing body of research on national culture, numerous theoretical models and frameworks have emerged that offer distinct perspectives on this multidimensional concept. Although the wide range of these models demonstrates the complexity and diversity of cultural phenomena, primarily a few have achieved broad acceptance and extensive application in cross-cultural research, leading to widespread recognition. These models are Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede 1980a), Trompenaars’ model of national culture differences (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997a), Schwartz’s cultural values theory (Schwartz 1994), The GLOBE study (House et al. 2004), Hall’s context culture model (Hall 1976), and culture map (Meyer 2016). They are significant contributions to the field that have shaped our understanding of national culture in fundamental ways. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the field of cultural studies incorporates various additional perspectives that, despite not being as well-known, provide valuable insights into national cultural phenomena.

Appendix 8.3 contains a complete listing of these supplementary studies. We will conduct an extensive review of the primary models, while acknowledging the continued relevance and contribution of others within the context of cultural research as a whole.

### **A. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory**

Geert Hofstede (1980a) developed cultural dimensions theory in the late 1970s, which is a foundational framework in cross-cultural research. The model, which was based on a survey of over 110,000 IBM employees from 70 countries, introduced four initial dimensions:

- **Power distance:** This dimension describes the degree to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect unequal power distribution (Hofstede 1994).
- **Individualism vs. collectivism:** Individualism emphasizes self-reliance and personal achievements, whereas collectivism promotes group harmony and shared goals (Hofstede 2011).
- **Masculinity vs. femininity:** This dimension is also known as motivation towards achievement and success. As Hofstede (1998) suggested, this dimension indicates society's views on assertiveness, competition, and material success (associated with masculinity) versus caring for others and quality of life (associated with femininity).
- **Uncertainty avoidance:** This dimension shows how much a culture dislikes uncertainty and ambiguity and supports attitudes and structures that promote conformity (Hofstede 2011).

These dimensions were later expanded to include “long-term vs. short term orientation” and “indulgence vs. restraint” (Hofstede and Minkov 2010).

- **Long-term vs. short term orientation:** Long-term focuses on future rewards, thrift, perseverance, while short-term prioritizes present or past, tradition, and immediate gratification (Hofstede and Minkov 2010).
- **Indulgence vs. restraint:** Indulgence cultures prioritize enjoying life and fulfilling desires, while restraint cultures emphasize control and curbing impulses for societal norms (Hofstede and Minkov 2010).

Regardless of its extraordinary geographical scope and empirical base, Hofstede's model is criticized for oversimplifying complex cultures, using outdated data, and focusing on national averages that ignore internal diversity (Kiril Dimitrov 2014; McSweeney 2002).

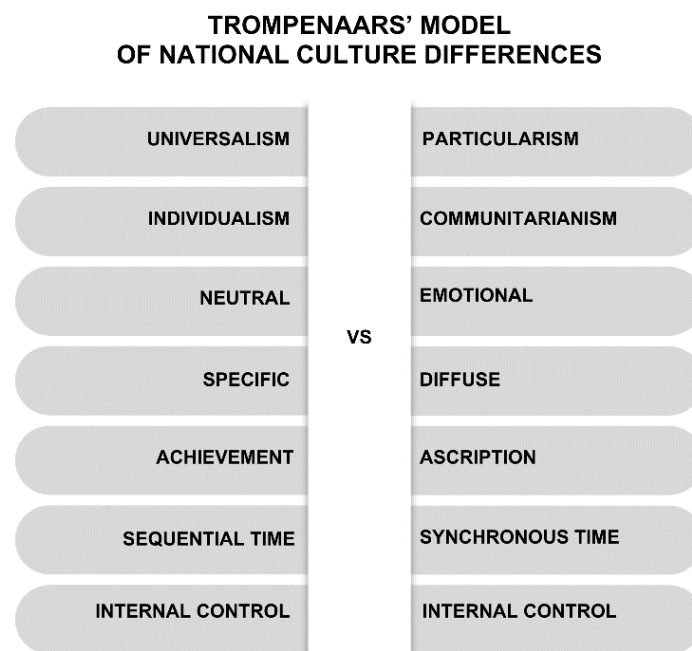
Nevertheless, Hofstede's approach serves as a foundational framework for the study of national culture, highlighting the diverse and complex nature of cultural phenomena.

## B. Trompenaars' model of national culture differences

The model of national culture differences proposed in the 1990s by Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner provides a nuanced approach to cultural understanding that focuses on resolving dilemmas (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997a). The model consists of seven dimensions, as depicted in Figure IV.

**Figure IV:** Trompenaars' model of national culture differences

Source: Designed by the author, adapted from the conceptual framework of Trompenaars' (1996b) model to visually represent its core concepts.



- Universalism vs. particularism: According to Trompenaars (1996b), this dimension looks at whether a society prefers to apply rules universally to everyone (universalism) or whether it adjusts rules to specific situations and relationships (particularism). For example, the USA uses laws equally for everyone, while China considers relationships when applying rules.
- Individualism vs. communitarianism: Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000) refer it to the extent to which individuals are expected to stand up for their own interests and their immediate family (individualism) or whether the group, community, or society should take priority over one's individual needs (communitarianism). For example, US celebrates individual success, while Japan prioritizes family and group harmony.

- Neutral vs. emotional: These relate towards the feelings and expressions of societies. In cultures that are neutral, emotions are controlled and calm, whereas in cultures that are emotional, feelings are freely and naturally expressed (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 2020). For example, Japanese maintain composure, while Italians openly express emotions.
- Specific vs. diffuse: As suggested by Trompenaars (2004), this dimension refers to how individuals separate the work and personal lives (specific) or whether these areas are closely linked and overlap (diffuse). For example, Germany keeps work and personal life separate, while Brazil blends them.
- Achievement vs. ascription: It addresses how people attain status. Status in achievement-oriented societies is determined by what individuals achieve, whereas status in ascription-oriented society is determined by age, gender, relationships, or other factors (Trompenaars 1996b). For example, Silicon Valley rewards individual effort, while India respects inherited caste systems.
- Sequential vs. synchronous time: These reflect the way societies view time and structure events. In sequential cultures, events are scheduled in a linear fashion, whereas in synchronous cultures, time is flexible and multiple events can occur simultaneously (Trompenaars 2004). For example, Germany values strict schedules, while Mexico embraces multi-tasking and flexible timing.
- Internal vs. external control: This dimension refers to societies' perceptions of their environmental control. In cultures with internal control, people believe they have control over nature and the environment, whereas in cultures with external control, they believe they should live in harmony with nature and the environment (Trompenaars 1996b). For example, western culture seeks to dominate nature, while indigenous cultures prioritize living in balance with it.

The development of these dimensions involved a quantitative survey of over 46,000 managers in 40 countries, followed by statistical analysis to identify common patterns and correlations (Brendan McSweeney 2016). This model's distinctive features include its examination of attitudes towards time and the environment, as well as its emphasis on dilemma resolution. The model provides useful insights into the complexity and variability of cultural attitudes and behaviors, particularly in terms of situational and relational dynamics (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 2020).

### **C. Schwartz's cultural values theory**

Shalom H. Schwartz's model of cultural dimensions contributed an important new perspective to the study of national culture by advancing the understanding of cultural values (Schwartz 1994). The research attempt that spanned a decade and resulted in Schwartz's model included information from 55,022 teachers and students in over 72 countries and 81 different cultural groups (Schwartz 2011). It proposes following cultural dimensions:

- Conservatism vs. intellectual autonomy vs. affective autonomy: Conservatism promotes maintaining the status quo, etiquette and restraint regarding actions that could disrupt the solidarity group or the established order (Kaasa 2021). According to Tekeş et al. (2019), intellectual autonomy values encourage individuals to independently pursue their own ideas and intellectual goals. Affective autonomy values encourage the pursuit of emotions, pleasure, and individual experiences (Kostis 2021). For example, Japan emphasizes tradition and social order (conservatism), while Denmark encourages independent thinking and emotional expression (intellectual/affective autonomy).
- Hierarchy vs. egalitarianism: The unequal distribution of authority, roles, and resources is referred to as hierarchy. Egalitarianism, on the other hand, focuses on the distribution of authority, roles, and resources fairly (Güss and Tuason 2021). For example, South Korea maintains strict social hierarchies, while Sweden promotes equality in all spheres.
- Mastery vs. harmony: Mastery is the desire to control and alter the surroundings in order to accomplish personal or group objectives. Harmony refers to blending in and cooperating with the surrounding environment, as opposed to influencing or dominating it (Kostis 2021). For example, USA emphasizes individual achievement and control (mastery), while China values maintaining group harmony and balance with nature.
- Embeddedness vs. autonomy: Embeddedness is the degree to which individuals are integrated into their social groupings, whereas autonomy refers to the degree to which individuals have the independence to pursue their own interests (Masuda et al. 2019). For example, India places strong emphasis on family and community obligations (embeddedness), while Western cultures often prioritize individual independence.
- Harmony: This dimension is concerned with the peace and settlement of conflicting demands and objectives (Hofstede 2011). For example, Thailand prioritizes maintaining social peace and avoiding conflict (harmony), while Germany values direct communication and resolving issues head-on.

Extensive empirical research and statistical analysis were used to identify cross-cultural similarities and correlations using these dimensions. The model provides an exhaustive depiction of societal value systems and their interactions. Critics have noted, however, that, like previous models, Schwartz's model may oversimplify and overgeneralize complex cultural phenomena (Bender 2022). Despite these criticisms, Schwartz's cultural values theory provides an inclusive framework for understanding and comparing national cultures, with its unique focus on societal-level values providing crucial insights into the cultural behavior foundations.

### **D. The GLOBE study**

The GLOBE project by House et al. (2004) provides an integrated approach to the study of national culture, with a focus on leadership and management. The GLOBE study enhanced our understanding of culture by distinguishing between cultural practices ("as they are") and cultural values ("as they should be") through the collaboration of over 200 researchers and data from more than 17,000 managers across 62 countries (Bullough, Moore, and Kalafatoglu 2017; Czarnecka, Brennan, and Keles 2018). The following nine cultural dimensions comprise the GLOBE framework:

- Power distance: This dimension is similar to Hofstede's dimension.
- Uncertainty avoidance: This dimension is similar to Hofstede's dimension.
- Institutional collectivism: This dimension indicates the degree to which organizational and societal practices encourage collective action (Brewer and Venaik 2011).
- In-group collectivism: It is the level to which individuals' express pride, loyalty, and unity in their organizations or families (Javidan and Dastmalchian 2009).
- Gender egalitarianism: It describes the degree to which a society minimizes stereotypes about gender and promotes gender equality (House et al. 2004).
- Assertiveness: This relates to how much people in a society are direct, open-minded, and competitive in their dealings with others (Terlutter, Diehl, and Mueller 2010).
- Future orientation: It is the degree to which people engage in future-oriented behaviors such as planning and investing (Venaik, Zhu, and Brewer 2013).
- Performance orientation: It is the extent to which a society encourages and rewards group members for greater productivity and achievement (House et al. 2004).
- Humane orientation: It refers to how much a society encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, generous, caring, and kind to others (House et al. 2004).

The incorporation of leadership behavior and differentiation between practices and values provides an exceptional perspective on culture, making it highly applicable to cross-cultural leadership and management research (House et al. 2002). Researchers, such as Brewer (2011) criticized this study for its complexity and potential validity concerns associated with the use of self-report measures and the interpretation of survey instruments. However, the GLOBE study is still a major and influential contribution to the literature on national culture.

### **E. Hall's context culture model**

The context culture model, developed by Hall (1976), provides an original perspective through which one can analyze national culture by concentrating on the context in which communication occurs. Hall distinguishes high-context cultures, in which communication is largely implicit and significantly dependent on context, from low-context cultures, in which communication is explicit and the message contains the majority of information (Wurtz 2005). Japan, for instance, is frequently cited as a high-context culture in which nonverbal signals and the context of a conversation bear significant weight, whereas the US is generally regarded as a low-context culture that prefers explicit, detailed communication (Richardson and Smith 2007). Although Hall's model is not dimensional like the previously discussed models, it provides a valuable perspective on multicultural ways of communicating and their influence on interpersonal relationships. This new way of thinking has a significant impact on the field of cross-cultural communication, strengthening our understanding of the profound impact of cultural context on communication (Brodowsky and Schuster 2020; Gudykunst 2003).

### **F. Erin Meyer's culture map:**

The culture map by Meyer (2016) provides a practical framework for business professionals operating in a global environment by building on existing models. The culture map identifies eight scales representing critical areas that can vary across cultures: Communicating, Evaluating, Persuading, Leading, Deciding, Trusting, Disagreeing, and Scheduling (Meyer 2016). Rather than designating a fixed point on the spectrum, each scale places a culture in relation to other cultures. The communicating scale, for example, ranges from low-context cultures (explicit communication) to high-context cultures (implicit communication), replicating Hall's model but situating it within broader cultural parameters. Meyer's model is notable for its applicability to real-world situations, which assists professionals in navigating

the complexities of cross-cultural communication, decision-making, innovativeness, and management in an international business context (Nyssen Guillén and Deckert 2021).

This summary of important models and frameworks highlights the broad range and richness of perspectives in national culture research. Each model, from Hofstede's innovative cultural dimensions to Meyer's culture map, contributes distinct insights to our understanding of the multifaceted nature of culture. Despite their differences, all models aim to illuminate how national culture influences the global community.

As we transition from theory to practice, it is essential to recognize the practical relevance of these models. The following section will examine the concrete effects of national culture on individual conduct and business practices. On the basis of the cultural dimensions and values emphasized by these models, we will investigate their real-world effects on the formation of both individual and organizational contexts.

### **2.3.3 Impact of national culture on individual behavior and business practices**

As societies become more interconnected, it becomes increasingly important for both individuals and companies to be aware of the relationship between culture and behavior. The "theory of planned behavior" proposed by Ajzen (1991) is one of the major theories that explain individual behavior. According to Ajzen, a person's behavior is determined by their intention to participate in the behavior, which is influenced by their attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Bosnjak, Ajzen, and Schmidt 2020). As an example adopted from Yang (2012), based to the theory of planned behavior, an individual's decision to buy a smartphone is influenced by their positive perception of its features (attitude), societal influence or the trend of friends owning one (subjective norms), and the belief in their ability to afford it (perceived behavioral control).

However, Ajzen's theory does not explicitly take into account the influence of national culture, making Hofstede's (1980a) work relevant. As mentioned in the previous section, the cultural dimensions theory of Geert Hofstede describes the effects of a society's culture on the values of its members and the relationship between these values and behavior. One of Hofstede's dimensions is power distance, which refers to the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect unequal distribution of power. This factor may deeply impact individual behavior and business procedures. In cultures with a large power distance, such as India and China, individuals frequently accept a hierarchical order in which everyone has a

place, and which requires no additional justification (Hofstede et al. 2019). This acceptance can shape business practices in terms of organizational structure and decision-making procedures.

The influence of national culture on individual behavior and business practices extends to numerous domains, such as marketing, technology consumption, and organizational practices. The work of Mooij (2021) titled “Global Marketing and Advertising: Understanding Cultural Paradoxes” provides an overview of the paradoxes in global marketing communications and the influence of culture on global communications. This study examines how national culture influences marketing and advertising behaviors, which are fundamental components of business practices. In the domain of technology, the study from Marcus and Gould (2000) titled “Crosscurrents: cultural dimensions and global Web user-interface design” discusses the impact of cultural dimensions on user interface designs. For example, Android manufacturers design user interfaces for specific markets: Western versions prioritize simplicity and minimalism, appealing to efficiency preferences, whereas Asian versions, seen in markets such as South Korea and Japan, offer vibrant colors and rich features, aligning with local tastes for technology integration and visual richness. Similarly, research from Zaidi, Henderson, and Gupta (2017) titled “The moderating effect of culture on e-filing taxes: evidence from India” investigates the impact of culture on the adoption of an electronic tax filing system in India. This study revealed the effect of national culture on the adoption of new technologies and systems.

The influence of national culture on individual behavior and business practices is not only observed in theory, but also in practice. For instance, Brockner et al. (1992) discovered that national culture substantially influenced employees’ responses to layoffs. In individualistic cultures, employees who retained their jobs after a layoff experienced guilt as a survivor, whereas in collectivist cultures, survivors experienced fear of future layoffs. This study proves that national culture significantly impacts individual behavior and, consequently, business practices. In terms of organizational practices, the study from Sørnes et al. (2005) titled “A Reflexive Model of ICT Practices in Organizations” presents a reflexive model of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) practices in organizations that takes the influence of culture into account. For instance, in Scandinavia, organizations adopt ICT solutions that support flexible work and remote access, aligning with cultural values of egalitarianism and work-life balance. This includes collaborative platforms for a distributed workforce, contrasting with cultures favoring traditional office hours and face-to-face office settings.

In conclusion, national culture significantly influences individual conduct and business practices. The theory of planned behavior and Hofstede's cultural dimensions offer useful frameworks for comprehending these influences. Further empirical research demonstrates the ubiquitous influence of national culture in a variety of domains, including marketing, technology usage, and organizational practices. As societies become increasingly interdependent, the significance of understanding the influence of national culture on individual behavior and business practices continues to rise.

### **2.3.4 Impact of national culture on GAM**

The impact of national culture on GAM is not just a topic of academic interest in the modern day when business crosses borders but it is a crucial factor in determining the success of international business operations. Understanding the relationship between culture and GAM is a strategic necessity for businesses operating globally (Wilson and Woodburn 2014).

Beugelsdijk, Maseland, and Hoorn (2015) revealed that modern societies incline more towards individualism and indulgence and less towards power distance, indicating a shift in the culture that influences GAM. This change has substantial repercussions for the structure of GAM programs. In cultures with low power distance, for instance, GA managers and national heads may need to employ a collaborative rather than hierarchical approach. This is evident in companies such as Google, where a horizontal organizational structure promotes collaboration and open communication across all organizational levels (Isac et al. 2021).

Holt and McDonald (2000) examined the role of the GA manager in greater detail. They also covered that the efficacy of GAM relationships is influenced not only by the GA manager's culture but also by the national culture of GAs. For instance, a manager from a culture with a high-power distance may need to modify their approach when interacting with a customer from a culture with a low-power distance. This demonstrates the importance of cultural adaptability in GAM. Lautenschläger (2020) examined the relationship between GA managers and their customers to further investigate this concept. Understanding the cultural context of a GA can result in stronger relationships and improved outcomes, according to the researcher. This can be seen in multinational corporations such as IBM, where comprehending the cultural nuances of their customers has been crucial to their international success (Murrell, Forte-Trammell, and Bing 2009). In fact, national culture can serve as a catalyst for GAM. By adopting their customers' cultural styles, GA managers can develop stronger relationships and achieve better

results (Holt and McDonald 2000). In order to establish rapport and trust with a Japanese customer, a GA manager should align with Japanese culture. For instance, the 2006 Minato Ward elevator accident in Tokyo illustrated the cost of cultural misunderstanding for Schindler Group, a Swiss-based elevator company (Haghirian and Gagnon 2011). Schindler's slow and perceived insufficient response to the tragic death of a teenager in one of their elevators contrasted sharply with Japanese expectations for immediate responsibility and empathy. This cultural misalignment led to public outrage, loss of trust, and significant financial and reputational damage to Schindler's operations in Japan, underscoring the importance of adapting to local cultural norms in international business (Rothlin and McCann 2016).

In 2023, the focus of our research was on the cultural aspects of GAM, specifically in the context of relationships between Indian customers and German suppliers. Our findings showed that cultural disparities and miscommunications can have a significant impact on the interactions between customer and suppliers, thus underscoring the essential role of cultural competence in GAM (Kadam, Niersbach, and Ivens 2023). In Study II, every aspect of this research is described. Furthermore, Kessapidou and Varsakelis (2002) discovered that international firms that were able to adjust to the Greek culture performed better in Greek market. This demonstrates the significance of cultural adaptation in international business and is reminiscent of McDonald's success in catering to local preferences in different countries by adapting its menu.

In conclusion, national culture has a profound and multifaceted effect on GAM. It impacts the organization of GAM programs, the relationship between GA managers and their accounts, and the effectiveness of GAM strategies. Businesses could use national culture as a catalyst to develop stronger relationships, manage conflicts, and achieve better results in the global marketplace if they comprehend and adapt to cultural differences. In the next chapter will focus on the limitations of extant research and possible avenues for future research specific to national culture.

### **2.3.5 Limitations and opportunities for further research**

Although research concerning national culture has given useful insights, some limitations demand further investigation. These opportunities open the way for a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of cultural relations between countries.

One limitation lies in the portrayal of cultures within quantitative research. Often characterized as static entities, this approach overlooks the dynamic nature of cultures, particularly in the face of rapid globalization and technological change. As Craig and Douglas (2006) argue, capturing the crucial “fluid nature of culture,” necessitating research methods that can track transformations over time. Myers and Tan (2002) share this point of view, highlighting the transformative impact of the internet on cultural boundaries and norms. Embracing longitudinal designs offers valuable insights into these evolving patterns, enriching our understanding of how cultures adapt and reshape themselves.

Another key limitation revolves around the Western-centric bias within cultural studies. McKearney et al. (2023) point out the predominance of Western theories and contexts, neglecting the valuable perspectives and experiences found in diverse regions. This necessitates a shift towards greater inclusion of non-Western scholars and contexts. Exploring under-researched regions can significantly diversify our cultural insights and ensure a more representative understanding of global culture.

Furthermore, the overreliance on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions presents limitations. Jones (2007) and McSweeney (2002) criticize the inherent oversimplification within these widely used frameworks, arguing they struggle to capture the complexities of modern cultures. This prompts a call for integrating emerging cultural dimensions that more accurately reflect the multifaceted nature of national and regional identities.

Beyond national boundaries, a crucial limitation lies in neglecting cultural diversity within-nation. Schneider and Barsoux (2002) suggest adopting a more granular approach that acknowledges the diverse array of subcultures present within nations. Examining regional variations, ethnicities, and professional contexts can significantly enrich our understanding of cultural nuances and their impact on behavior and interactions.

Finally, the traditional monodisciplinary approach to studying culture presents limitations. Hayes and Fryling (2009) emphasize the need for interdisciplinary research to fully grasp the multifaceted nature of culture. Recognizing the influence of history, geography, economics, and politics necessitates collaborating across disciplines to achieve a more detailed understanding of cultural nuances and their impact on various aspects of human life.

## **2.4 Organizational culture**

“Culture eats strategy for breakfast,” as famously articulated by management consultant Peter Drucker, shows the importance of organizational culture in developing organizational strategies. This section investigates the notion of organizational culture, examining its definitions, terminologies, foundational theories, and the influence of cultures on organizational behavior. It concludes by highlighting the limitations of current literature and suggesting directions for future research.

### **2.4.1 Definition and terminology**

The scholarly discussion around organizational culture, alternatively referred to as corporate culture, had significant growth in the latter half of the 20th century, particularly in the 1970s and 1990s. Esteemed researchers such as Pettigrew (1979), Hofstede (1980a), Schwartz & Davis (1981) and Schein (1985) made noteworthy contributions to this field of study. The phrase of “the way we do things around here,” as introduced by Deal and Kennedy (1982) in their seminal work “Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life,” effectively captures the broad dimension of organizational culture, providing a concrete manifestation of this abstract concept.

Schein (1983, pp. 1–2) defined organizational culture as following:

“Organizational culture is the pattern of basic assumptions which a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”

This prominent definition placed significant emphasis on the learning and teaching that are inherent in the creation and upholding of organizational culture. As a result, it offered a nuanced viewpoint that facilitated an investigation of the adaptive and integrated functions of corporate culture. In his work, Hampden Turner (1990) redirected the discourse towards the origins and testing of fundamental assumptions that exist within an organization. He defined corporate culture as a set of assumptions that emerge from a group’s external adaptation and internal integration efforts. Denison (1990) provided a thorough explanation of culture as the foundation of organizational management behaviors and practices. In contrast to previous conceptions,

Hofstede shed light on the cognitive characteristics that are strongly connected to corporate culture. Hofstede (1991) elaborated organizational culture as “the collective programming of the mind,” emphasizing the psychological foundations and the presence of common cognitive frameworks among members of an organization. This viewpoint clarified the significant consequences that culture has on the paradigms that guide organizational decision-making. The notion of strong cultures, which O’Reilly and Chatman (1996, p. 196) defined as “a set of norms and values that are widely shared and strongly held throughout the organization,” highlight the significance of consensus and cohesion in the value systems of organizations. In establishing a historical and experiential framework for corporate culture, Andrew Brown (1998) articulated it as a temporal progression of values and beliefs that have developed over the course of an organization’s existence and are reflected in both the physical environment and the behavior of its members. Building upon previous interpretation, Schein (2010) highlighted organizational culture is a set of shared underlying ideas formed by a group to address external adaptation and internal integration challenges. These broad definitions demonstrate evolutionary, adaptive, and educational aspects of organizational culture, emphasizing the complex interaction between internal organizational mechanisms and external environmental influences.

After providing an overview of various interpretations of organizational culture, the following section seeks to enhance understanding of this concept by examining distinguished models and frameworks that have influenced the academic and practical understanding of organizational culture throughout a period of time.

### **2.4.2 Key theoretical models and frameworks of organizational culture**

This section will examine several fundamental theoretical models and frameworks related to organizational culture.

#### **A. Schein’s model of organizational culture**

Edgar Schein, a renowned contributor in the field of corporate culture, presented an elaborate model comprising three distinct levels – artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions – that simplify an understanding of organizational culture.

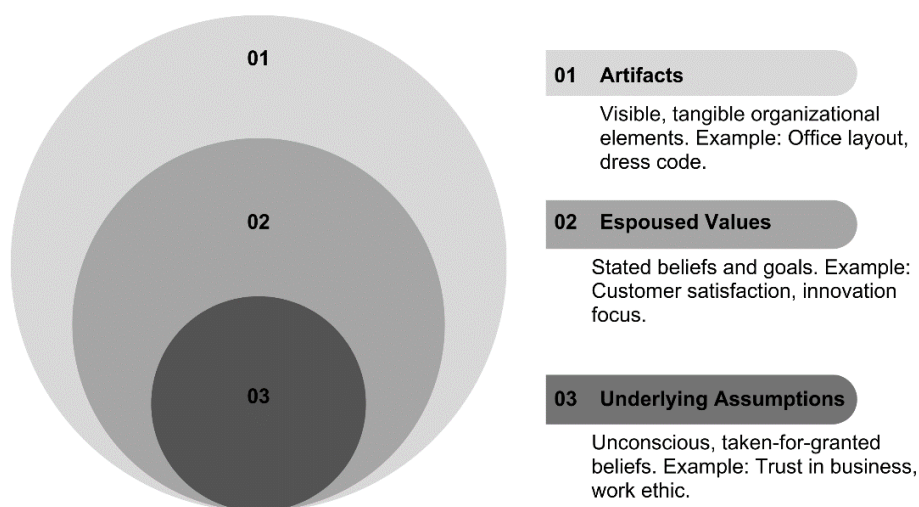
- **Artifacts:** These are the visible and tangible aspects of an organization that can be recognized by the senses. They are seen in the forms of products, services, and observable behaviors like dress code, office layout, company rituals, and official narratives. According

to Schein (2010), these aspects, while immediately recognized, are difficult to evaluate in isolation since they represent only the surface layer of the organization's culture. Although these elements may be easy to identify, they cannot be analyzed individually due to the fact that they only constitute the outermost layer of the organization's culture, as described by Schein (2010).

- **Espoused values:** The espoused values of an organization are its stated beliefs and values. These reflect the set of principles and regulations of an organization. They consist of the philosophies, strategies, and objectives that the organization formally supports. The vision, mission, and standards of the organization are influenced by these values, which are not only communicated by senior management, but may also influence the incorporation of their own personal values into the company's culture (Mumford et al. 2002). According to Tellis, Prabhu, and Chandy (2009), leaders have the ability to influence organizational culture and trigger a series of shifts in employee behaviors by endorsing particular values and actions.
- **Underlying assumptions:** These are the core elements of an organization's culture; they are typically unconscious, assumed notions, viewpoints, emotions, and feelings. These core cultural aspects emerge from repeated successes and shared experiences. Schein (2010) argues that the behaviors of individuals and an organization as a whole are influenced by underlying assumptions, which are frequently ignored or not deliberately addressed.

**Figure V:** Schein's model of organizational culture

Source: Created by the author, based on Schein's (2010) model of organizational culture.



Schein (2010) suggests that in order to gain a full grasp of an organization's culture, one needs to look behind stereotypes and examine the underlying principles that influence everyday behaviors and actions. This model helps leaders in deciphering organizational culture, allowing for more effective management and transformative initiatives.

### **B. Denison's model of organizational culture**

Denison and Mishra (1995) employed a mixed-methods approach to examine 764 firms in their groundbreaking study, evaluating the influence of organizational culture on performance measures. They discovered that corporate culture, as defined by four dimensions (mission, consistency, involvement, and adaptability) is crucial in producing outcomes. A well-defined "mission" provides an organization with direction through clear objectives, "consistency" promotes a unified culture grounded in shared values, "involvement" increase employee engagement, accountability and ownership, and "adaptability" enables the organization to innovate and learn, ensuring versatility in environments. Their findings indicate that involvement and adaptability are important determinants of organizational growth, whereas consistency and mission are more closely related to profitability. Moreover, in the case of larger organizations, all four dimensions contribute to employee satisfaction and quality as a whole.

### **C. Cameron and Quinn's competing values framework**

The competing values framework by Cameron and Quinn (1999) is a groundbreaking work that categorizes corporate cultures into four distinct subtypes: clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy. Clan culture promotes internal concentration, flexibility, and creates a family-like work environment (Lund 2003). It values harmony, morale, and staff involvement, similar to Gore-Tex's culture, which emphasizes team collaboration and treats the organization as a community with shared ideals, instilling a strong sense of loyalty and devotion. Adhocracy culture is defined by an external focus paired with flexibility, which promotes innovation and creativity (Gupta 2011). For instance, organizations like Google reflect this culture by promoting risk-taking and valuing new ideas and innovative projects in order to stay competitive in the fast-paced technology industry. Market culture is externally focused, with an emphasis on stability and control. It is motivated by competition and obtaining tangible outcomes (Ülle Übius and Ruth Alas 2009). For example, Walmart is a prime example of how to dominate the retail sector by focusing on efficiency, competition, and customer satisfaction. Hierarchy culture emphasizes internal maintenance, valuing stability and uniformity through

established procedures and clear chains of command (Cameron and Quinn 1999). The US Army exemplifies this culture by prioritizing order, regimentation, and a well-defined structure to ensure efficiency and discipline. The reliability of the framework is supported by a large sample size, including responses from over a thousand firms. It was developed using both qualitative observations and quantitative data, especially through the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI). The competing values framework provides a useful lens for organizational culture, backed by industry research. However, as Moonen (2017) argues, its four-type approach risks oversimplifying complexities. Despite this, it remains a valuable tool for understanding and shaping organizational development and effectiveness.

### **D. Deal and Kennedy's cultural model**

Deal and Kennedy (1982) propose that the creation of a company's culture is dependent upon the interaction between two key factors: feedback speed and risk. The model identifies four distinct organizational cultures: the Tough-Guy Macho culture, which highlights rapid feedback and high risk; the work-hard, play-hard culture, which demonstrates fast feedback but low risk; the bet-your-company culture, which delays the results of high-risk decisions; and the process culture, which shows low risk and slow feedback. Deal and Kennedy further argue that an organization's cultural identity is mainly determined by its rituals, traditions, and leaders. It is argued that the manner in which leadership supports and practices cultural characteristics has an important effect on whether the organization's culture is strengthened or transformed.

### **E. O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell's organizational culture profile**

The Organizational Culture Profile (OCP) from O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991) offers a framework for recognizing, assessing, and quantifying organizational culture. The key concept of the OCP suggests that organizational culture can be concisely expressed within a set of core values shared among members of the company. The OCP framework outlines seven fundamental categories of cultural values: innovation, stability, respect for people, outcome orientation, detail orientation, team orientation, and aggressiveness.

The OCP framework is noteworthy because it is like an X-ray of a company's soul. It examines not only what companies do, but also the "why" and "how" of their day-to-day activities. What is particularly remarkable is how these values express themselves in real-life situations. Respect for people can imply different things in a tech startup and a century-old manufacturing enterprise. Furthermore, the OCP framework is not static; it enables a dynamic insight of culture

(O'reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell 1991). As companies evolve, their cultural profiles also transform. This tool possesses the capability to assist leaders in effectively managing and adapting to various organizational developments, like mergers or globalization, by understanding and applying the cultural levers available to them.

### **F. Charles Handy's cultural typology**

Charles Handy's typology of organizational culture was first introduced in his 1976 book, "Understanding Organizations," although it gained more prominence in his later works in the 1980s and 1990s. Charles Handy (2007) offers a framework for examining organizational cultures by categorizing them into four separate categories: power culture, role culture, task culture, and person culture.

The uniqueness of the "power culture" is its extreme centralization of power (Handy 2007). Rapid decision-making at the highest levels allows adaptability to market fluctuations. This may impede innovation, however, by prohibiting input from others at lesser levels. For instance, a small business where decisions are made by a single owner indicates power culture. On the other hand, "role culture" is characterized by its rigid structure and a significant focus on clearly set goals and responsibilities. This particular culture places a high importance on processes and consistency, which fosters stability and systematic decision-making but might be reluctant to innovation and change (Handy 1976). For example, a government agency where each employee has a specific role and set of responsibilities. The "task culture" places a high value on adaptability and flexibility. It promotes cooperation and is focused on resolving challenges and achieving particular objectives. Although this setting fosters innovation and adaptability, it might encounter difficulties in maintaining consistency and planning for the future. For instance, a project team in a tech company working together to develop a new app demonstrates task culture. Lastly, the "person culture" prioritizes the significance of individual talent and expression. This culture type is characterized by an emphasis on the growth and acknowledgement of individual contributions, which can result in exceptionally high levels of innovation. Nevertheless, this may present obstacles to collective integrity and organizational unity. For example, a non-profit organization where the focus is on individual development and achievement, shows the person or support culture.

### **2.4.3 Organizational culture and internal network dynamics**

Inside an organization's systems, the internal network serves as the lifeline, connecting departments, encouraging collaboration, and facilitating information flow. But what fuels the network's efficiency and effectiveness? Introducing corporate culture, a hidden yet powerful force that shapes the basic principles of network behavior.

Organizational culture is not limited to the macro level; it permeates the fabric of individual employees. The cultural atmosphere has a significant impact on motivation and ethics, both of which are necessary components of a functional network. When an organization promotes intrinsic motivation by recognizing and rewarding effort, individuals are naturally motivated to contribute, which increases network productivity. Similarly, ethical behavior, which is essential for trust and openness inside the network, flourishes in an environment that values integrity and fairness. Treven et al. (2008) and Sarros et al. (2002) examine this link, highlighting the importance of leadership in shaping these individual qualities through culturally driven beliefs.

The internal network functions as a collaborative ecosystem, rather than a collection of isolated nodes. Here, organizational culture acts as the conductor, orchestrating a smooth exchange of information and resources. According to Kotter (2008), a strong, united culture promotes a sense of solidarity and direction. This translates to departments and teams easily organizing their efforts toward common goals, resulting in a network that resonates with purpose. Lok and Crawford (2004) found that culture had a beneficial impact on job satisfaction and dedication, emphasizing its importance in building a collaborative network environment.

In addition to collaboration, a healthy internal network requires its members to remain engaged and productive. Sokro (2012) emphasizes the critical relationship between organizational culture and employee performance. When a culture acknowledges and rewards hard work, it stimulates motivation, resulting in higher network productivity. Furthermore, a culture that prioritizes continual learning and development, as proposed by Ramdhani et al. (2017), provides employees with the skills and knowledge required to adapt to changing network demands, assuring the network's long-term resilience.

To summarize, organizational culture is the primary orchestrator of the internal network's performance and efficacy. It changes individuals' qualities, promotes teamwork and commitment, and boosts performance and adaptability. An organization can maximize the

potential of its internal network by cultivating a culture that aligns with its strategic objectives, thereby transforming it into a powerful driver of performance.

#### **2.4.4 Organizational culture and external network dynamics**

Beyond an organization's interior edges, a complex movement of relationships takes place within its external network. GAM serves as the strategic unit, organizing relationships with major customers and suppliers that are influenced by organizational culture.

As Harvey et al. (2003) argue, the culture of GAM teams is central in moderating the relationship between supplier-customer diversity and performance. Building a culture of trust inside the team as well as inside partner organizations is critical. This is consistent with Day (1994) and Deshpandé et al. (1993), who emphasize the necessity for cooperative cultures to negotiate the growing complexity of global systems and align with integrated tactics. Wilson and Weilbaker (2004) enhance this notion by connecting distinct GAM types (entrepreneurial, innovative, and economic) to the company's global capabilities and cultural foundation.

Real-world example of this cultural influence include Marriott International's Alliance Account Program, where cultural alignment with customers and stakeholders is a major selection criterion (McNeill 2005). Spencer (2007) and Shi et al. (2004) found that culturally aligned GAM programs that are strategically created and backed by the organization's core principles are effective.

Cultural differences can frequently lead to relational disputes (Amason 1997; Jehn and Mannix 2001). This emphasizes the significance of cultural concerns in international business, particularly in conflict resolution (Yip and Bink 2007). Furthermore, Jean et al. (2015) shows how an information-intensive culture may expand supplier IT capabilities, improve market monitoring, and therefore contribute to GAM success.

By applying the resource-based view from Barney (1986), we can see how corporate culture serves as a valuable resource. Fang and Zou (2010) and Kirca et al. (2009) provide empirical evidence showing how a learning culture and market-oriented behavior, often influenced by national culture, enhance the development of marketing capabilities and improved market insights.

Cultural differences also play an important role in modifying GAM methods across locations. Iacobucci et al. (2003) highlight the large differences in factors influencing repeat purchases

across areas, showing the importance of culturally sensitive approaches. For example, a focus on the human element in service may be more relevant in collectivistic societies than in individualistic ones.

In conclusion, corporate culture influences external network behavior in GAM. It molds team behavior, builds trust, aligns strategies, resolves conflicts, and develops critical capabilities. Recognizing and profiting from the power of culture serves as essential for developing effective GAM programs and strengthening long-term relationships with GAs.

### **2.4.5 Limitations and opportunities for further research**

This section evaluates the existing constraints and highlights potential research opportunities in the discipline of organizational culture.

An observable limitation is the assumption that all organizations are aware of and actively manage their cultural impact effectively. Insights from qualitative interviews with GAM experts suggest that a minority are either unaware of or outright skeptical about the impact of culture. Investigating why some organizations overlook cultural factors could uncover barriers to cultural engagement and offer strategies to enhance cultural awareness. Further examination of the concept of “cultural distance” is also required. Current studies sometimes oversimplify this idea by using broad geographic metrics, neglecting the nuanced distinctions in language, values, and regional nuances. House et al. (2004) and Laroche et al. (2003) suggest that recognizing subcultural differences can enhance the understanding of cross-cultural management.

Another challenge is the gap between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Combining mixed method research approaches as proposed by Harrison (2013) by conducting a content analysis of 2072 articles published between 1990–2010, may provide a greater awareness of cultural phenomena. Organizational diversity, which includes different workforces and subcultures, is frequently overlooked in traditional research that assumes a homogeneous organizational setting (Soltani 2010). This underscores the need for exploration of internal diversity and its effects on organizational behavior to achieve a deeper understanding.

Expanding the scope of research to include non-Western views is also critical (Ellis and Iwasaki 2018). Comparative studies in various cultural environments, along with the adoption of indigenous research methods, can significantly enhance our understanding of global cultural

impacts. This trend toward inclusivity and diversity in research techniques addresses the crucial need for better understanding of organizational culture in a variety of circumstances (Tzovara et al. 2021).

As Glosch and Srivastava (2014) pointed out, the challenge of effectively measuring organizational culture requires serious attention. Employing diverse evaluation tools to capture the various facets of culture, and developing methods to track cultural evolution over time, could offer insights into the complex nature of culture. This broad approach to cultural assessment and tracking emphasizes the use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in capturing the nuances of organizational culture.

By addressing these constraints and using the recognized possibilities, we could strengthen our understanding of both national and organizational cultures. Embracing complexity, interdisciplinary collaboration, and integrating multiple perspectives are essential for creating a more broad and precise representation of cultural procedures.

## 3 GAM and Organizational Culture: A Literature-based Conceptual Model

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### 3.1 Abstract

Globalization is increasingly driving global collaboration while also presenting unique challenges in managing diverse cultural partnerships. GAM focuses on offering specialized services to key multinational customers to foster long-term relationships with select international clients for mutual benefits. This study analyses the impact of organizational culture on GAM performance, a relatively under-researched area. It aims to develop a model that integrates cultural differences between GAs and suppliers, covering various organizational aspects.

This study builds upon extensive literature reviews in KAM, GAM, and organizational culture, culminating in the creation of a GAM model that emphasizes organizational culture. It reveals that cultural differences significantly influence business opportunities in GAM, suggesting that minimizing these differences is essential for sustaining profitable, long-term relationships.

The dissertation acknowledges limitations, such as its reliance on literature and the simplified treatment of national culture in the model. Theoretically, it offers a new approach by integrating organizational culture into GAM, making a substantial contribution to academic literature. Managerially, it provides valuable insights for global sales managers and executives in multicultural environments, offering both conceptual and practical applications of organizational culture in GAM.

**Keywords:** Key account management, Global account management, Organizational culture, Literature research, Conceptual model development

### 3.2 Introduction

The emergence of GAM signifies a pivotal shift in business strategy, driven by the complexities of operating in today's globalized markets. As Wilson and Weilbaker (2004) argue, GAM transcends traditional business practices by acknowledging the unique challenges posed by cultural diversity. This shift necessitates a move away from isolated organizational components and towards a systems-based approach, recognizing the value-based relationships and interdependence that define complex systems like GAM. Systems theory, as proposed by Bertalanffy (1968) and Checkland (1981), emphasizes the importance of examining interactions and interdependence within such systems. Checkland (1985) reinforces this approach by highlighting the soft system methodologies in business context and proposing a framework for understanding their operations.

Despite significant theoretical progress in GAM research by Yip et al. (1996), Parvatiyar & Gruen (1999), and Wilson & Weilbaker (2004), a critical gap remains. Existing models often prioritize GAM methods, neglecting the crucial role of cultural distance. While acknowledging the potential of incorporating cultural elements, researchers suggest the need for a more nuanced approach. Shi et al. (2004) call for a holistic understanding that acknowledges the systemic impact of organizational culture on GAM and the intricate connections between them, enhancing our insight into their relationship. Addressing this gap, this study aims to develop a "GAM model of organizational culture" grounded in existing literature. This model will integrate actors, resources, and activities within a broader framework of global cross-cultural contexts, focusing on the inter- and intra-organizational networks that characterize international corporate operations. By recognizing the systemic nature of organizational culture and its pivotal role in GAM, this study seeks to deepen our understanding of GAM interactions in the global corporate environment.

This study addresses the "Research Question 1" of how national and organizational cultural characteristics interact to influence the alignment of key components within a GAM framework while also exploring how these cultural factors can be integrated to develop a culturally adaptive GAM model for enhancing cross-cultural effectiveness.

To achieve this, the following objectives are established:

**Objective 1:** Conduct an extensive review of KAM, GAM, and organizational culture literature to identify existing knowledge and areas requiring further exploration.

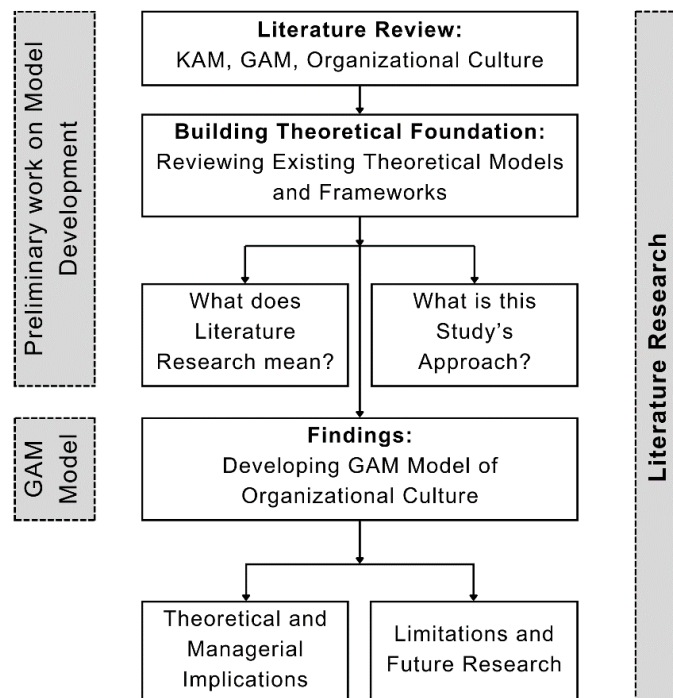
**Objective 2:** Evaluate existing theoretical models and frameworks to assess their applicability to GAM and organizational culture.

**Objective 3:** Develop an integrated GAM model emphasizing the role of cultural distance, drawing upon organizational and cultural theories.

**Objective 4:** Elucidate the connections between various model components, with particular focus on the importance of cultural distance within GAM networks.

**Figure VI:** Study I layout

Source: Created by author.



The study follows a structured approach, beginning with a literature review of KAM, GAM, and organizational culture to establish the theoretical context (Figure VI). This is followed by the construction of a theoretical foundation through critical evaluation of existing models and frameworks within the domain. Informed by this groundwork, the study delineates its methodological approach, culminating in the formulation of a GAM model that weaves organizational culture into its core. The findings aim to enhance our current understanding of GAM, ultimately leading to discussions on the theoretical and managerial implications of the research. Additionally, the study acknowledges its limitations and suggests directions for future inquiries in the field.

### 3.3 Building theoretical foundation

This chapter identifies the theoretical framework and models underpinning GAM, including the CAGE distance framework, the IMP group’s interaction and ARA models, and the network model of KAM. The Schein’s model has already been discussed in the Literature Review chapter and hence will not be repeated here.

#### 3.3.1 Theoretical framework and models

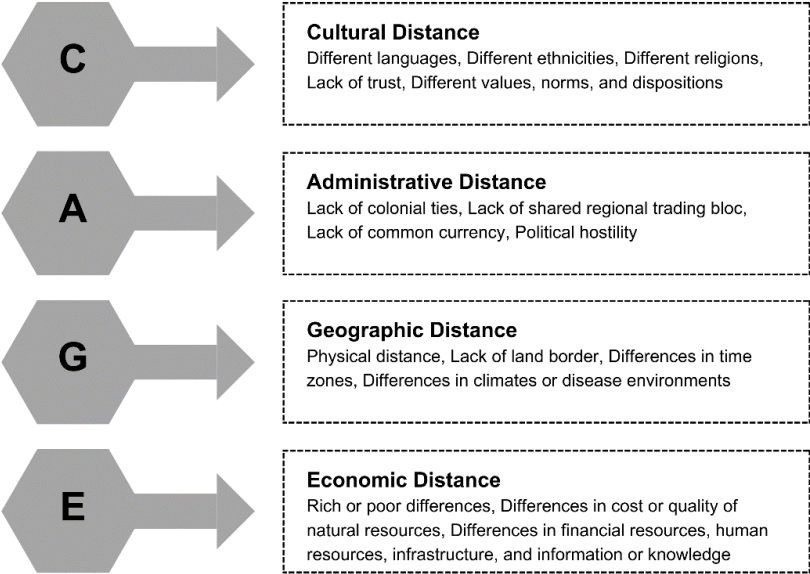
To begin discussing theoretical framework and models, the subsequent section addresses the cultural distances in global businesses with CAGE distance framework.

##### 3.3.1.1 CAGE distance framework

Depicted in Figure VII, Ghemawat’s (2001) CAGE distance framework is considered as one of the most extended frameworks discussed in the topic of organizational culture for investigating the role and effect of diversities on enterprise internationalization. “CAGE” stands for Cultural, Administrative, Geographic, and Economic dimensions of differences across countries. Cultural distance indicates differences in social norms, languages, and beliefs. Administrative distance introduces discrepancies in bureaucratic, working, and political structures. Geographic distance refers to the real distance in miles or kilometers from one country to another. Lastly, economic distance shows differences in economic conditions (Ghemawat 2014).

**Figure VII:** CAGE distance framework

Source: Created by author, adapted from Ghemawat’s (2001) CAGE distance framework.



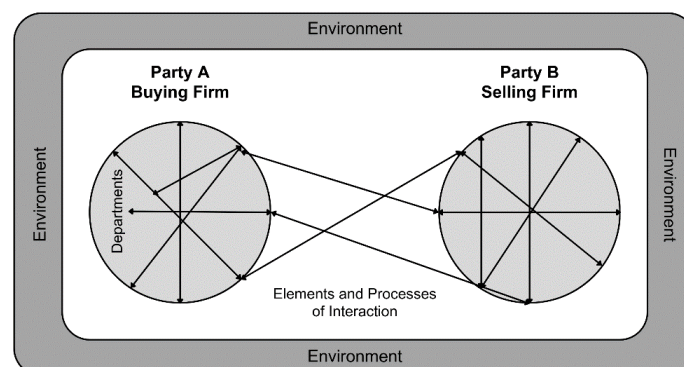
According to the framework, all of the four dimensions play an important role in international market selection of any organization. As the aim of the study is to understand the organizational culture, the main focus is the “cultural distance” dimension. Cultural distance affects buyer preferences, as it represents the initial ways of interaction between individuals, organizations, and institutions. Diverse religious views, ethnic differences, social conventions, and language hindrances can greatly interfere with business collaboration between companies (Griffith and Dimitrova 2014). According to Ghemawat (2014), trade between countries that share a common language will be around three times greater than between countries without a common language. Most often, cultural distance is a dominant factor in the decision-making process of selecting a product. For instance, in most cases, the Japanese people prefer automobiles and home appliances in a small size. It is considered as a social standard in countries where space is highly valued. To conclude, the CAGE framework proves that distance should be evaluated in the decision-making of any company’s global expansion.

### 3.3.1.2 The interaction model of IMP group

The interaction model from the IMP group by Håkansson (1982) shows that relationships between customer and supplier can be turned into profitability. The profitability on both sides can be a unit of measurement of the quality of relationships (Håkansson and Snehota 1995). It also demonstrates that buyer and supplier encounter several interaction processes which are accomplished underneath the environment. The model, which is shown in Figure VIII, is divided into four variables: (1) the interaction process, (2) the interactive parties, (3) the atmosphere, and (4) the interaction environment.

**Figure VIII:** The interaction model of IMP group

Source: Created by the author, based on the interaction model from the IMP group as adapted from Håkansson (1982).



### **Interaction processes:**

As Håkansson (1982) suggests, there are four kinds of exchanges that are addressed in the IMP model. The first one is the interaction process, which is viewed as a center of the model. The first exchange it represents is the “product or service exchange”. During this interaction between buyer and supplier, the characteristics of the products or services can significantly impact the relationship or bonding between them. The second exchange is “information exchange” where the content has its value. Buyer and supplier transfer sensitive information often at a personal level. The third one is the amount of money exchanged between the buyer and supplier. It is the “financial exchange” which indicates how important the relationships are between buyer and supplier. Finally, the “social exchange” helps in trust-building and reduces insecurities in relationships.

### **Interacting parties:**

The interaction between buyers and suppliers, which are the interacting parties, is often influenced by the philosophies of companies and the behaviors of the people that are involved in the exchange (Stahl and Sully de Luque 2014). The characteristics of individuals include what they are aimed for, such as their work experience, hierarchy level, and negotiation styles. Additionally, organizational factors play a significant role. For example, “technology” is one of the factors where differences in systems such as ERP or CRM affect the interaction process. Another crucial factor is the “organizational structure and the size of the company” that influence the inter-and intra-organizational strategies.

### **Atmosphere:**

There are two elements that contribute to the relationship atmosphere. The first is how the relationships between the two players, buyers and suppliers, have evolved. The second factor is their contribution to future relationship development. The relationship atmosphere also points out the microelements that affect the quality of cooperation between the two actors. These microelements generally include cooperation vs. conflict, power vs. dependence, trust vs. opportunism, and closeness vs. distance (Tangpong, Hung, and Ro 2010). The IMP Group includes one more dimension called “understanding and commitment” which helps to integrate the atmosphere variable in the RM research.

### Environment:

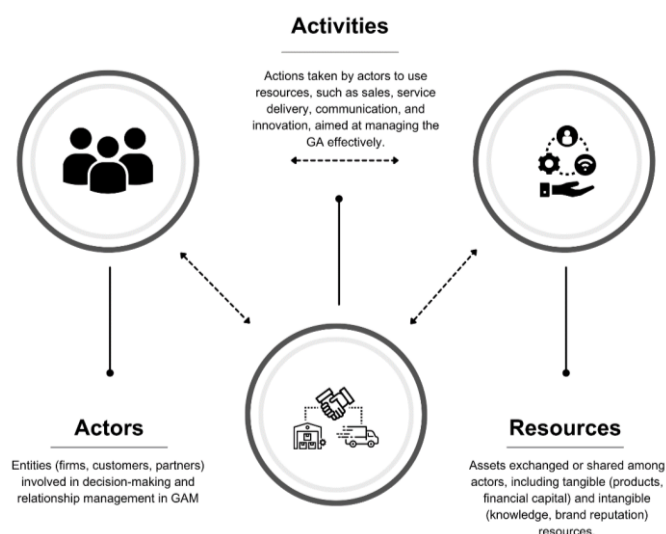
The relationships between buyer and supplier cannot be established without the interaction environment. Håkansson (1982) suggests five key elements that are involved in environment. The first one is the “market structure” which relies on the number of participants involved in the interaction and the stability of the market participants. The “dynamic” factor, as the second one, involves several components, such as the ability of organizations to respond more quickly to product adaptations than their competitors, and acquire knowledge of their businesses. The third factor is “internationalism” which requires adjusting the structure, processes, and culture of an organization based on the demands of the international customer. The fourth one represents the “position of marketing channels” consisting of the marketing mix strategies, which are product, price, place, and promotion. The last factor is the “social system”, in which the organization must comply with the laws and regulations of the countries where they have their customers.

### 3.3.1.3 The ARA model of IMP group

The ARA model is developed by Håkansson and Snehota (1995) and highlights the importance of business networks as a set of connected business relationships. These relationships and their roles in networks are described by three corresponding elements: actors, resources, and activities, hence ARA, shown in Figure IX.

#### Figure IX: ARA model

Source: Designed by the author, based on the ARA model adapted from Håkansson and Snehota (1995), visually interpreted for clearer interpretation.



### **Actors:**

The actor layer involves individuals, groups, business departments, companies, or groups of companies. Hakansson and Johanson (1992, p. 28) define actor as “those who perform activities and/or control resources.” Actors start, grow, and end business cooperation with other actors, and their activities depend on direct and indirect authority over the available resources. In this consideration, the ability and experience of actors have a direct impact on the way they manage resources and carry out activities. In this interaction process, the success of actors depends on their relationships with their networks (Håkansson and Johanson 2018). Actors can achieve all the targets only if they receive full support from their network. If the relationship network is against actors, they would struggle in managing other actors, resources, and activities (Håkansson and Johanson 1992). That indicates the significance of business actors, relationships, and their mutual ties via resources and activities. Hakansson and Ford (2002) suggest that the value of actors depends on the importance of the relationships – the more valuable a particular relationship is, the more significant are the actors involved.

### **Resources:**

Resource-based theories claim that the performance of an organization depends on how it combines different types of resources into its offers, and by doing so it creates value for some market segment (Hunt and Davis 2012). Resources are segmented into two categories – tangible and intangible ones. The tangible resources are, for example, IT equipment, production machines, or financial resources. The intangible ones include knowledge, patents, or license agreements. According to Håkansson and Johanson (1992), resources are a means used by actors when they perform activities. “Business relationships” are viewed, therefore, as “resources”, since Håkansson and Snehota (1995) claim that relationships are intangible resources that link together different resource segments. In this consideration, relationship-building needs financial resources, and the return on investment can be achieved once the relationships are fully developed. At that point, relationships are seen as an asset that needs to be managed efficiently and effectively.

### **Activities:**

The relationship between two groups of people, or two companies, affects the way they conduct activities (Håkansson and Snehota 1995). Compared to people, activities between companies are more complex, as they are more diverse and are performed at a higher frequency. In

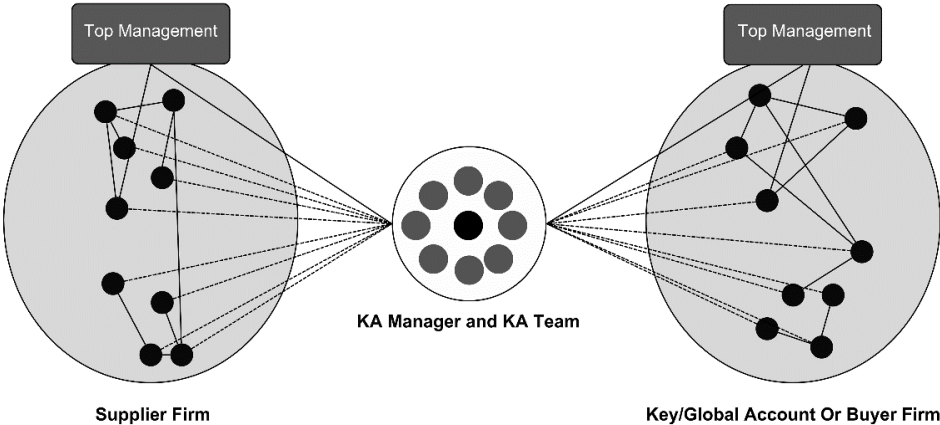
relationships between two companies, the internal and external activities are connected. Examples are activities in production, logistics, or administration. By merging these activities, the profitability of both companies can be improved. However, the internal structure of the organization must be compatible with the external activities (Håkansson and Ford 2002). As shown in Figure IX, actors, resources, and activities are interconnected and interdependent. Therefore, the coordination between them can be seen as an accelerator for developing every segment of business relationship that exists in this network.

### 3.3.1.4 The network model of KAM

As Wilson and Millman (2003) indicate in KAM, that not only the control of the internal network is decisive, but also the external network must be taken into account. Ivens and Pardo (2007) link this to the RM and argue that it is the role of KA manager who needs to manage not only the internal network, but also the external one that involves the cluster of relationships between the organization as the supplier and the KA organization as the buyer. The network model of KAM by Ivens et al. (2016) is shown in Figure X, where the KA manager is a relational coordinator positioned between supplier firm and buyer firm. KA manager’s mission, therefore, is to optimize value creation inside the supplier and KA relationships. To achieve this goal, KA managers need to bring into effect the relevant actors and departments inside the organization. They also identify their customers’ demands, adjust them internally, and establish connections between their organization and customer side units. These connections comprise production, R&D, logistics, and finance (Ivens et al. 2016; Pardo, Ivens, and Wilson 2014).

**Figure X:** Network model of KAM

Source: Designed by the author, based on the Network model of KAM adapted from Ivens et al. (2016) and Niersbach (2016).



The model shows the internal structure of a company where point marks indicate the departments such as production, marketing, human resources, or individuals relevant to KAM. The people in the departments interact with each other. This is expressed by the dotted lines. Ivens et al. (2016) specifically focus on top management and show that with regards to the external network with KAs, the top management plays a significant role for an effective implementation of KAM. The top management is, therefore, placed above the other areas. Other researchers such as Millman and Wilson (1999) and Workman, Homburg, and Jensen (2003), also present similar understandings regarding the role of the top management in KAM. Both buying and supplying firms are interconnected by KA manager and KA team. Niersbach (2016) further expands this model with an exceptional approach in her dissertation entitled “The internal KAM activities of supplier firms” and analyzes it empirically by means of various expert interviews.

To conclude, there is one theoretical framework and four theoretical models which are discussed in this section. First, the CAGE distance framework shows four different dimensions that should be considered when crafting international strategies or expanding business internationally. Companies must, however, consider one important dimension which is “cultural distance” as it has direct influence on the market potential. Second, the interaction model of the IMP group represents the buyer-supplier interconnections. Third, the ARA model extends the attributes of an interaction model to indicate that the relationship between the buyer and supplier can be profitable through the linking of actors, resources, and activities shared by the two firms. Fourth, the network model of KAM identifies that not only the internal network between actors is sufficient, but the external one between buying and supplying firms can also result in value generation. Finally, Schein’s model, which is also discussed in the Literature Review chapter, shows that each firm is separated by different organizational cultures in one or another way, in which some aspects are observable, while the other important aspects are non-observable.

### **3.3.2 Theoretical foundations for developing integrated model**

Understanding the role of GAM in different cultural contexts demands a theoretical framework that goes beyond isolated viewpoints. This part looks into the theoretical basis that will guide the development of an integrated model for GAM and organizational culture.

### **Systems theory and the understanding of interconnectedness**

As propounded by Bertalanffy (1968), systems theory emphasizes the significance of a holistic view when dealing with complex organizational phenomena. It posits that interconnected components within a system exert mutual influence, shaping the overall outcome. This perspective proves invaluable in the realm of GAM and cultural behaviors, where numerous frameworks interact and converge. Examining various models through the lens of systems theory – including the CAGE distance framework, the IMP group’s interaction model, ARA model, the network model of KAM, and Schein’s model of organizational culture – enables a multifaceted understanding of GAM.

### **Embracing adaptability through complexity theory**

Complementing systems theory, complexity theory, as advanced by Anderson (1999), further enriches the integrated approach. It suggests that systems display non-linear dynamics, emergent properties, and adaptation, which are evident in the interaction between GAM and cultural factors. This theoretical perspective underpins the notion that effective management of the inherent unpredictability of GAM partnerships and cultural exchanges requires a framework that is both global and adaptable to evolving GAM trends.

### **Integration of theories for enhanced decision-making**

Figure XI illustrates an integrated decision-making process on the basis of both systems and complexity theories within the context of GAM and organizational culture. This process commences with “GAM observations,” a stage dedicated to manifold data collection, which includes activities such as market analysis, cultural insights, performance metrics, and stakeholder feedback. This stage aligns with systems theory’s emphasis on a holistic view where interconnected components within a system exert mutual influence (Bertalanffy 1968).

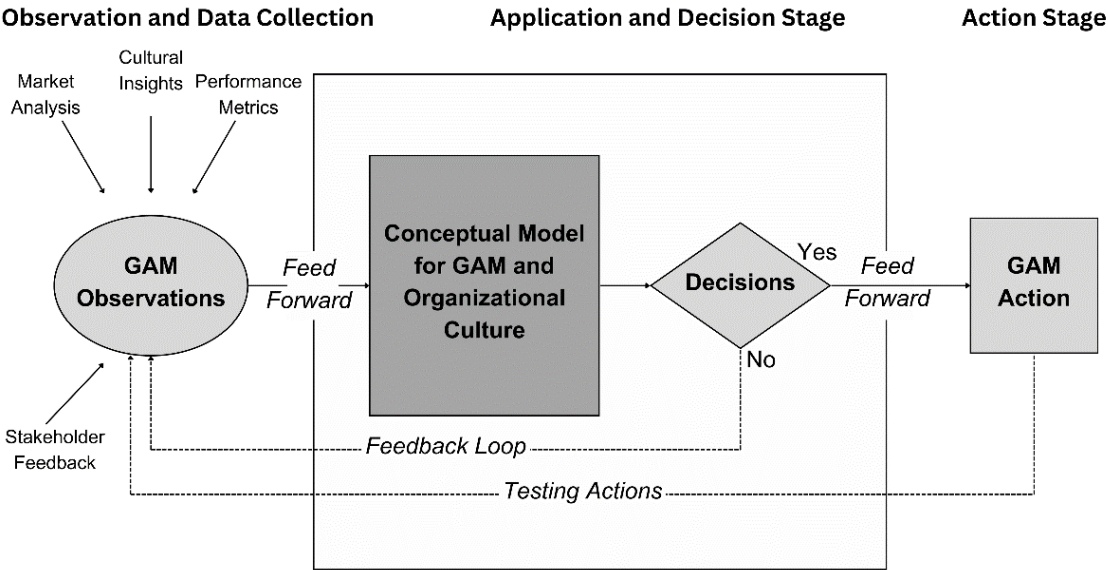
The collected data then serves as input for the “conceptual model for GAM and organizational culture,” which represents the core of the integrated framework. This model synthesizes various models and frameworks through the lens of systems theory, capturing the multifaceted characteristics of GAM.

The “application and decision stage” reflects the non-linear dynamics and emergent properties emphasized by complexity theory (Anderson 1999). Decisions are made based on the guidance obtained from the conceptual model, leading to the “action stage” where GAM actions are

implemented. The outcomes of these actions are then fed back into the system, illustrating the adaptability and feedback loops characteristic of complex systems.

**Figure XI:** Integrated decision-making model

Source: Created by the author, applying Boyd’s (2018) OODA loop in the GAM decision-making model.



Drawing inspiration from Wilson and Weilbaker’s (2004) approach of constructing a “literature based conceptual model” for GAM, this integrated framework transcends a mere combination of existing models. It represents a significant advancement in conceptualizing GAM within a complex and culturally diverse business environment. The integration of systems and complexity theories within this multi-theoretical approach establishes a robust foundation for the integral model, equipping it to address the complexities of GAM across diverse cultural settings.

**3.4 Research methodology**

The research methodology is divided into two separate parts. The first part focuses on a review of the concept from “literature review,” covering primary and secondary research, the process of performing this research, and any limitations involved. The second part addresses the

study's individual approach for conducting a literature review, the procedure of developing the conceptual model, and the limitations of the research.

### **3.4.1 Literature review**

The literature review strengthens rigorous research, shaping its quality and integrity. It examines existing scholarly work, providing researchers with a thorough understanding of their selected research topic. As Randolph (2019) emphasizes, a well-crafted review showcases the author's expertise involving knowledge of relevant terminology, theories, key factors, and methodological approaches. This process involves delving into the subject matter and critically evaluating existing studies to identify trends, debates, and potential avenues for further exploration, thus contributing to the advancement of the discipline (Booth 2016).

#### **3.4.1.1 Primary and secondary research**

The credibility of a literature review hinges on the quality of its sources. Boote and Beile (2005) underscore the importance of drawing upon reliable scientific sources to ensure research integrity. Engaging critically with both primary and secondary literature is crucial to provide the research with a solid empirical foundation (O'Donnell 2017).

Primary research, as highlighted by Yin (2018), involves collecting firsthand data directly relevant to the specific research question. This approach empowers researchers to gather data using diverse methods like interviews, surveys, observations, and experiments, offering direct and insightful perspectives on the subject matter. Although it is often time- and resource-intensive, primary data holds immense value due to its accuracy and reliability (Jones 2010).

Secondary research, in contrast, focuses on interpreting, evaluating, or synthesizing information previously gathered in primary research studies (Yin 2018). This contains a diverse range of sources, including scholarly articles, books, and media content, which provide indirect information about the original research (Hox and Boeije 2005). The challenge lies in meticulously selecting and assessing these sources to ensure their relevance and trustworthiness within the context of the research topic (Rabianski 2003).

To illustrate the distinction, a study analyzing the impact of social media on political mobilization can be considered. Primary data comprises original posts, tweets, or comments on social media platforms directly related to a specific political event. However, a scholarly study examining these interactions and their impact on political engagement would be categorized as

secondary research. This differentiation highlights the significance of source selection in shaping the research field.

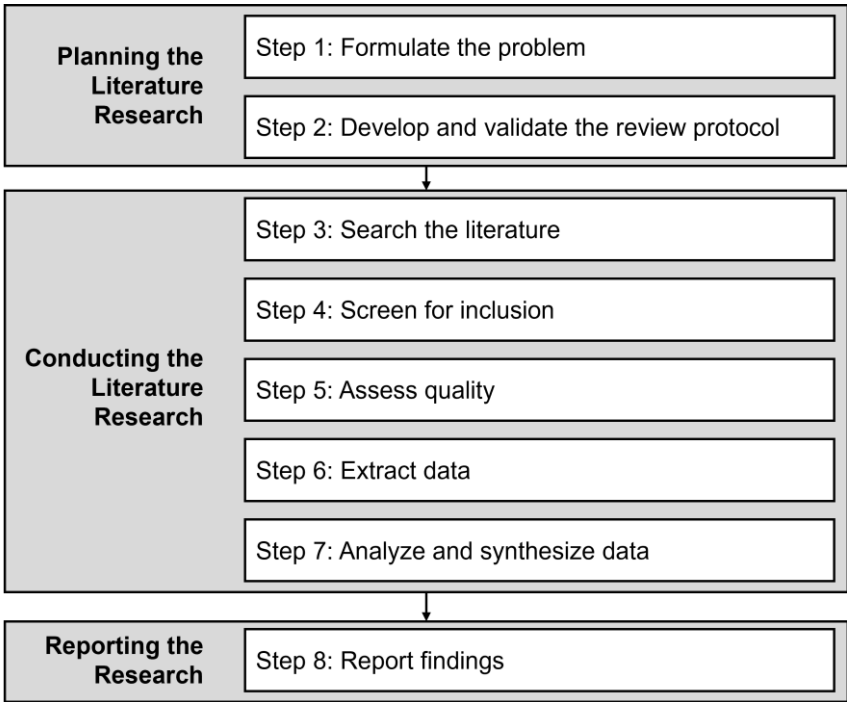
Furthermore, incorporating diverse perspectives and methodologies from different fields can enrich the literature review, amplifying its breadth and depth. Interdisciplinary approaches unveil novel insights and offering a more nuanced understanding of complex issues (Snyder 2019).

**3.4.1.2 Conducting literature research**

The procedure for conducting literature research is a meticulously structured endeavor which reflects the rigor and depth of academic investigations. This multistep approach, as described by Brereton et al. (2007) and Kitchenham et al. (2009), includes planning, conducting, and reporting phases, each of which is critical to the successful execution and completion of a literature review. Xiao and Watson (2019) extended Kitchenham’s concept by reviewing journal papers published between 1996 and 2016, proposing an eight-step strategy that gives a clear framework for performing systematic literature research, as depicted in Figure XII.

**Figure XII:** Process of conducting systematic literature research

Source: Created by the author, based on the steps for conducting literature research as outlined by Xiao and Watson (2019).



### **Step 1: Planning (formulate the problem)**

The first step in doing a literature review is to develop research questions that will guide the entire review process. These questions, based on the research's specific aims and objectives, ensure that the literature search remains precise and purposeful. Following this, a review protocol is developed, which details the methods to be employed during the review (Kitchenham et al. 2009).

### **Step 2: Planning (develop and validate the review protocol)**

The review protocol outlines a detailed plan, including study objectives, questions, search strategies, inclusion and exclusion criteria, data extraction and analysis methodologies, and reporting guidelines. This technique is essential for reducing researcher bias and establishing a systematic approach to literature reviews (Gomersall et al. 2015).

### **Step 3: Searching (search for potential literature)**

In the digital age, electronic databases have emerged as the key source for discovering relevant literature, providing access to a massive collection of academic journals, books, conference proceedings, and thesis reports. Platforms like Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insights, and Google Scholar are useful in this phase (Araújo and Casimiro 2023).

### **Step 4: Selection (screen for inclusion)**

This step entails a thorough evaluation of the retrieved references to determine their relevance using established inclusion and exclusion criteria. The evaluation normally begins with an inspection of the abstracts and, if necessary, the conclusion sections of papers to determine their suitability for review (Brereton et al. 2007).

### **Step 5: Selection (assess the quality)**

The next step is to conduct a detailed quality assessment of the selected studies, evaluating their internal validity, methodology, results, and the generalizability of the findings (also known as external validity). This evaluation is critical for determining the reliability and applicability of study findings (Fink 2019).

### **Step 6: Extraction (extract the relevant data)**

Data extraction, often known as coding, is an important process that involves identifying and categorizing key information. As pointed out by Soiferman (2010), the approach might be

inductive (data to theory) or deductive (theory to data). The precision of this method is critical to the validity of the research findings.

### **Step 7: Analysis (analyze and synthesize data)**

After data extraction, the researcher synthesizes the information in accordance with the research aims. Depending on the nature of the study, data might be presented in a variety of ways, including verbal descriptions, tables, and graphs (Dixon-Woods 2011).

### **Step 8: Reporting (report the findings)**

The final step involves the critical review of the draft by the research team, followed by the presentation of the findings. Andrews and Harlen (2006) suggest that regardless of the chosen methodology, the literature review process must be transparent, structured, and reliable, culminating in data-driven conclusions.

The procedures explained above provide a well-established structure for performing literature research that emphasizes systematicity, transparency, and thoroughness. Following this organized procedure allows researchers to articulate the complexity of literature review with simplicity and accuracy, thereby improving the quality and impact of their educational endeavors.

### **3.4.2 Study's approach for literature research**

The previous discussion explained the literature research framework. This section describes the author's personalized approach for conducting literature research, further detailing the processes involved in formulating a conceptual model and delineating research boundaries.

#### **3.4.2.1 Literature review**

In alignment with the methodologies proposed by Xiao and Watson (2019) and Guesalaga et al. (2018), the author's approach to literature research is methodically segmented into five distinct phases: planning, searching, selection, extraction and analysis, and reporting.

#### **Phase 1: Planning**

The literature review's scope is meticulously defined with the objectives to: (1) conceptualize GAM and organizational culture by developing a conceptual model, (2) compile theoretical and conceptual frameworks that encapsulate GAM and organizational culture as depicted in

scholarly literature, (3) analyze and examine the relationships between these frameworks and models from the last three decades, with an objective of explaining the concept of “cultural distance.”

### **Phase 2: Searching**

To search through online databases such as Google Scholar, Science Direct, and Emerald, a strategic combination of keywords is employed:

- (key OR large OR strategic OR major OR national OR global) AND (account OR customer) AND (management OR manager)
- (national OR corporate OR organizational) AND (culture)

The selection of keywords and acronyms, including KAM, SAM, NAM, and GAM, incorporate a broad spectrum of relevant literature, acknowledging the absence of a singular, definitive work on KAM or GAM.

### **Phase 3: Selection**

The initial search produced 127 sources. After careful review, this was narrowed down to 71 that met specific criteria relevant to the research topic and methodology. Sources were excluded for reasons such as not containing key search terms like GAM or KAM, lacking empirical methodology, or missing proper citations.

### **Phase 4: Extraction and analysis**

Adopting the content analysis methodology as recommended by Krippendorff (2018), the author engages in a thorough extraction and synthesis of data pertinent to the research objectives. This process is guided by the “concept of fit” suggested by Venkatraman (1989), ensuring that the data meticulously aligns with the research’s thematic and methodological frameworks.

### **Phase 5: Reporting**

This phase encapsulates the presentation of research findings, showcasing the developed conceptual model and delineating its applicability and relevance.

This systematic analysis of literature establishes a strong scholarly basis for the research and enables a detailed examination of the interaction between GAM and organizational culture.

Meticulous adherence to methodological base ensures that the research is firmly grounded on and expands existing knowledge on this research topic.

### **3.4.2.2 Methodological approach to developing the conceptual model**

Developing the conceptual model of GAM and organizational culture involves an extensive incorporation of theories and models from various strings of literature, with a main focus on the supplier-side views and GAM relationships, as well as the impact of organizational culture. This integration is achieved through a methodical process, leveraging established models to encapsulate the multifaceted interactions and cultural dimensions.

The foundation for understanding the supplier-GAM relationship is established by two seminal models: (1) the interaction model of the IMP group, proposed by Håkansson (1982), which provides a micro-environmental perspective on the close interactions between suppliers and GAM entities; and (2) the network model of KAM, which offers insights into the network of relationships that form between GAs. This approach is supplemented by Niersbach (2016), who elaborates on the network of relationships that is central to KAM, which can be applied in GAM context. In addition, Wilson and Millman (2003), who discuss the various forms and stages of GAM implementation, emphasize the diversity of connections and interactions across functional and hierarchical boundaries within and outside the organization.

To synthesize these relationships into an integrated framework, Hakansson and Snehota's (1995) ARA model is incorporated, which provides a structure for summarizing the actors, resources, and activities involved in GAM and fully showing the supplier-GA relationship. Since there is no framework that clearly links organizational culture and GAM, integrating them presents an unusual challenge. Nevertheless, Ghemawat's (2001) CAGE serves to illustrate cultural distances, whereas Schein's (1985) organizational culture model is used to embed cultural dimensions within GAM, given its wide adoption and application in understanding organizational culture.

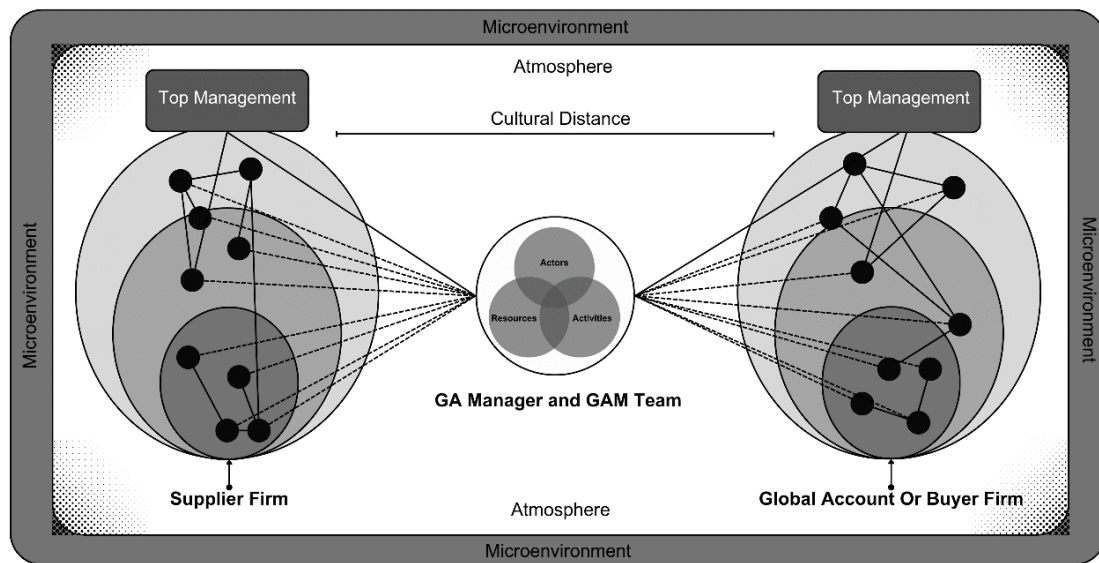
The rational integration of the interaction and network models, as well as the ARA framework, results in the development of a comprehensive conceptual model, which incorporates the CAGE framework and Schein's model of organizational culture. This model not only encapsulates the complexities of GAM and supplier relationships, but also integrates the pivotal aspect of organizational culture, thereby offering an all-encompassing view of GAM within the context of global business operations.

### 3.5 Research findings

This findings section presents a final conceptual model of GAM and organizational culture, depicted in Figure XIII, which is constructed using one theoretical framework and four previously stated models. The section provides a description of the architecture of the model and describes each subparts. It offers insights into the integration of GAM practices and organizational culture and examines their combined influence on GAM initiatives. This model is characterized by its unique composition, in which external and internal networks, GAM operations, cultural distance, and surrounding factors merge together to create a broad perspective on managing GAs.

**Figure XIII:** Conceptual model for GAM and organizational culture

Source: This conceptual model for GAM and organizational culture is the final version, fully designed and created by the author.



#### 1. Internal and external networks

The initial layer of the model comprises the interconnected internal and external networks that depict the framework of relationships between the supplier and GA organizations. These networks create operational efficiency. Departmental and functional areas which are vital to the organization are represented by a number of interconnected nodes. According to Ivens et al. (2016) and Niersbach (2016), every node in these networks is an integral component of a broader ecosystem that exhibits mutually beneficial effects on other nodes, thereby establishing a complex web of relationships.

GAM simplifies the complexities of cross-border collaborations by acting as a centralized point of contact that facilitates interactions within these networks (Birkinshaw, Toulan, and Arnold 2001). The crucial aspect is the integration of technology into these networks. Technological progress has made it possible for collaborative decision-making and real-time communication to occur, allowing networks to rapidly adjust to the ever-changing requirements of international business activities. This is especially significant in sectors such as the automotive industry, where swift strategic and operational adaptations are required due to technological advancements like autonomous driving (Javaid et al. 2021).

### **2. GAM as the bridge**

The bridge between the supplier and the GA is an integral component in the GAM architecture, which includes actors, resources, and activities – elements that resonate with Håkansson and Snehota's (1995) ARA model. Montgomery and Yip (2000) describe these elements as essential to GAM, emphasizing their significance in creating long-term, mutually beneficial relationships.

#### **GAM Actors:**

The GAM actors are critical because they conduct and control the web of relationships between the supplier and GA. According to Wilson and Millman (2003), the GA manager is a “political entrepreneur,” a function that requires strategic coordination across the two networks, effectively bridging organizational boundaries. According to Singh and Rhoads (1991), this “boundary-spanning” role is critical for providing value for both the supplier and the GA. Furthermore, as indicated by Yip and Bink (2007), the GA team consists of varied collaborators from multiple divisions such as R&D, logistics, and finance, ensuring multilevel network of interactions. Millman and Wilson (1999) emphasize the strategic importance of GAM by advocating for senior management involvement in GAM processes, underlining the necessity for cultural competence among all players to fit with the GA's corporate culture.

#### **GAM Resources:**

GAM resources are classified as tangible or intangible assets. Plants, machinery, and technology systems are examples of tangible resources, whereas knowledge, leadership skills, and organizational culture are examples of intangible resources (Gruber et al. 2010; Helfat and Peteraf 2003). The management of these resources, particularly relationships with customers, which Kozlenkova, Samaha, and Palmatier (2014) define as an intangible resource, is essential

for sales and distribution performance. Aycan, Kanungo, and Sinha (1999), as well as Chan, Shaffer, and Snape (2004), recognize that resource distribution has a direct connection with the cultural match between buyers and suppliers, implying that GAM resources should be tailored to the organizational culture, thereby improving the cultural fit between supplier and GA.

### **GAM Activities:**

GAM actions include price customization, product and service customization, offering superior services, and exchanging information – all with the goal of strengthening the relationship with GAs (Hui Shi, Zou, and Cavusgil 2004; Montgomery and Yip 2000). As the model says, these actions should be carried out within a global cultural framework, ensuring that both suppliers and GAs contribute to a unified, culturally aware business environment. This global cultural framework is essential for establishing global customer interactions and reflects a well-integrated GAM strategy.

GAM, in essence, functions as a “multidimensional bridge” that not only connects but also aligns the supplier and GA through coordinated management of actors, resources, and activities. This bridge fulfills the potential for greater global collaboration and synergy, emphasizing the importance of cultural understanding and strategic coordination in international business.

### **3. Cultural distance**

In GAM, cultural distance plays an important role in conceptualizing the differences in company strategy and administrative practices that occur while operating across different cultural segments. This third key element of the model represents the disparities in organizational cultures between the supplier and the GA, especially when the GA is located in a foreign nation. The model further expands the concept of how variances in organizational culture within the GAM framework are shaped. This exploration is supported by findings from Gerhart (2009), Joiner (2001), and Muijen and Koopman (1994), who have shown that organizational cultural differences are frequently a reflection of larger discrepancies in national cultures. Essentially, the model investigates the impact of national culture differences on how organizations within GAM perceive and interact with one another.

Leadership style is often viewed as a defining characteristic of corporate culture in order to effectively portray these cultural differences. According to Lok and Crawford (1999) and Ogbonna and Harris (2000), the nature of leadership, for example, Steve Jobs’ preference for a high-power distance culture at Apple versus Narayan Murthy’s advocacy for a low-power

distance culture at Infosys, can reflect and shape an organization's culture, whether it is "product-oriented" or "employee-oriented."

Overlooking these cultural differences has serious consequences. According to Fan and Zigang (2004), the failure of multinational corporations in global initiatives is frequently linked to a failure to prepare for cross-cultural variances. Solberg (2008) expands to this by stating that cultural variations bring uncertainty at both the intra- and inter-organizational levels, which can contribute to performance ambiguity.

Furthermore, cultural alignment has a direct impact on business potential. Lautenschläger (2020) argues that a "cross-cultural match" between supplier and GA is not only beneficial but also necessary for the development of new business opportunities inside GAM. When cultural differences remain large, such alignment sets the way for synergistic partnerships that are more likely to be successful and offer more significant chances for mergers and collaborations.

To summarize, the model highlights cultural distance as key to global business success, urging further study on bridging cultural differences to enhance GAM strategies for economic success.

#### **4. The surroundings**

The surrounding elements in the GAM model have the microenvironment and atmosphere, which play critical roles in creating the forces between suppliers and GAs. Market trends, market structures, market growth, internationalization, and social systems are all aspects of the microenvironment that have a substantial impact on organizational strategies and operations (Agnihotri et al. 2023).

For example, the growing interest in autonomous driving technology involves recalibrating vehicle manufacturers and suppliers' strategic and development approaches to match with such market evolutions (Hein et al. 2018). Additionally, Germany's national sustainability goals show that government policies can affect business practices. This encourages companies and their customers to include these sustainability goals in their strategic planning (Schunke 2019).

The atmosphere, on the other hand, defines the supplier-GA relationship and is characterized by factors such as power dynamics, reliance, collaboration levels, and social distance. According to Håkansson (1982) and Plugge, Wijers, and Wagenaar (2008), these aspects contribute to behavioral characteristics that are necessary to the relationship climate within GAM. According to Håkansson and Snehota (1995), intercompany dependence can result in

shared resources and cost savings, emphasizing the idea that the microenvironment and climate are essential for developing productive GAM partnerships.

The development of this conceptual model recognizes the multidimensional character of the business factors involved, setting the groundwork for a debate on the issues experienced during the GAM model's formulation, particularly with regard to organizational culture.

### **3.6 Research implications**

This research not only offers valuable insights into the academic discourse on GAM and organizational culture, but also translates these findings into practical implications for managerial practices.

#### **3.6.1 Theoretical implications**

This study extends beyond earlier limitations by integrating multiple theories and addressing important gaps highlighted in the discipline. Notably, it sheds light on the previously understudied impact of cultural influences in GAM, as highlighted by Jean et al. (2015) and Wilson and Millman (2003). By integrating organizational culture into the GAM framework, the research not only highlights its importance but also examines its interaction with buyer-supplier relationships. This approach enriches our theoretical understanding of how organizational culture shapes GAM potency, providing a novel lens for analysis.

Building upon the work of Ivens et al. (2016) and Niersbach (2016), this study introduces the "GAM model of organizational culture." This conceptual model represents a significant step forward by incorporating cultural elements into the intra- and inter-organizational networks of GAM as well as KAM, enabling a deeper understanding of how cultural differences impact GA interactions. It serves as a cornerstone for both GAM literature and the field of cross-cultural management, offering a fresh framework for examining organizational culture within the context of international business.

Furthermore, the unique combination of four theoretical models and one framework into a singular conceptual model offers a novel perspective on organizational culture in GAM. This approach not only fills existing gaps in the literature by integrating various GAM and cultural concepts, but also paves the way for future research avenues. It encourages a reevaluation of how organizational culture is understood within GAM, establishing the way for exploring new

theoretical approaches that shed light on the complexities of managing GAs in diverse cultural settings.

These combined theoretical contributions significantly advance our understanding of GAM and organizational culture, presenting a multidimensional model that serves as a beginning point for future academic exploration.

### **3.6.2 Managerial implications**

Beyond theoretical contributions, this study offers valuable practical insights for managers.

Firstly, managers are encouraged to apply the principles of system theory to their GAM programs. Examining GAM programs through a systems thinking lens fosters a deeper understanding of the interdependence within their GAs. This broad approach, as advocated by scholars like Kowalkowski (2011), can reveal opportunities where targeted actions lead to significant improvements in account performance and relationship quality.

Secondly, by highlighting the importance of cultural aspects, this research provides a foundational framework for global sales managers, GA managers, and executives operating in multicultural buyer or supplier environments. This framework acts as a guide for identifying critical areas for development and potential improvements in the business strategies of multinational organizations. Drawing upon the study's emphasis on understanding cultural components, managers can make informed decisions that enhance cross-cultural collaboration and effectiveness.

Thirdly, GAM participants are encouraged to consider crucial questions regarding the impact of cultural variations on sales performance, the intercultural skills necessary for effective GAM, and the design of cross-cultural training programs. Addressing these questions is essential for organizations aiming to establish a culture of openness and adaptation within their global operations. By nurturing cultural competence among employees, organizations can manage the complexities of international business with greater agility and success.

Managers who adopt a systems theory approach to their GAM practices can cultivate a more adaptable and integrated approach to managing GAs. This not only empowers them with better decision-making capabilities, but also positions their organizations for superior performance. By bridging the gap between theoretical advancement and practical application, this study

provides a valuable roadmap for enhancing GAM practices and navigating the landscape of international business with cultural competence.

### **3.7 Limitations and directions for future research**

This study advances our understanding of the interaction between GAM and organizational culture, while recognizing limitations that pave the way for future research. The reliance on literature review pointed out by Jean et al. (2015) and Wilson & Millman (2003) restricts the generalizability of findings, necessitating broader case studies for wider applicability. Additionally, the selective review of 71 primary sources (out of an initial 127) suggests the potential for a more extensive exploration of the topic.

The study lays the groundwork for conceptual exploration of “cultural distance,” offering a foundation for future empirical research aimed at identifying and mitigating cultural disparities between suppliers and GAs. Further investigation is necessary to review the complexities of specific cultural elements influencing relationships, particularly in contexts with significant cultural differences. As Wendt (2015) demonstrated, a qualitative investigation could be highly beneficial in pinpointing the exact cultural factors that shape these international business interactions.

Furthermore, exploring the success of GA managers in navigating intercultural disparities presents another exciting avenue for future research. Examining whether cultural understanding or adherence to traditional management approaches yields better outcomes in GAM could provide valuable insights, adopting the work of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997a) who offer a framework for understanding cultural dimensions and their impact on business operations.

Expanding the analysis for improved implementation of GAM requires examining relationships between various GAM influencing variables and GAM performance. In this context, utilizing the FsQCA method, as described by Ragin (2009), could enable a detailed investigation of the causal relationships between different factors that contribute to the success of GAM. This analytical approach could offer the significant advantage of incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a bilateral perspective on causal GAM configurations. The following study II shifts our focus from the conceptual understanding to their real-world application in India and Germany, directly applying the Peter Drucker’s insight that “culture eats strategy for breakfast” to understand cultural influences in global business practices.

## 4 The Cultural Factors in GAM

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### 4.1 Abstract

This study examines the cultural factors affecting GAM in the interactions between Indian buyers and German suppliers. It aims to investigate these vitality, contributing to a deeper understanding of how cultural elements impact business relationships in a global context. Methodologically, the study is grounded in a critical literature review of KAM, GAM, and organizational culture. The research then advances through an exploratory case study involving 23 GA managers from German multinational companies managing Indian GAs. The study uses consensus and template methods to analyze qualitative data, offering a detailed insight into the relationship between culture and GAM. Key findings reveal that language, communication styles, the concept of time, conflict avoidance strategies, organizational structure, decision-making processes, trust, and relationship are pivotal cultural factors influencing GAM in the German Indian business sphere. Furthermore, this study develops a cultural framework specifically tailored for managing Indian GAs successfully. The research, however, acknowledges limitations due to the significant cultural diversity within India, particularly between Northern and Southern regions, which challenges the generalization of cultural factors in GAM. Nonetheless, these identified factors serve as foundational elements for developing cultural dimensions in diverse cultural collaborations. For practical implications, this research offers critical insights for global sales managers, GA managers, and executives planning to engage with Indian buyers or suppliers, providing them with a framework to manage cultural complexities effectively. In terms of originality and value, this study significantly contributes to the B2B marketing literature on KAM and GAM, particularly by integrating a cross-cultural perspective. It stands out by providing a cultural lens to understand and manage global business relationships, specifically between Indian and German corporate entities.

**Keywords:** India, Germany, Relationship marketing, Case studies, Corporate culture, Business-to-business marketing

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**Footnote:** The findings of subchapter 4.4 have been published in a journal article, cited as follows:

Kadam, N., Niersbach, B., & Ivens, B. S. (2023). The cultural factors in global account management: the case of Indian buyers and German suppliers. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 38(2), 353-366. DOI:10.1108/JBIM-12-2021-0594

## 4.2 Introduction

The landscape of GAM has undergone significant transformations since its inception in 1990s, shaping the interconnectedness of global workplace (Wilson and Weilbaker 2004). Navigating the GAM necessitates a nuanced understanding of international cooperation, both at functional and subsidiary levels across diverse countries. While research acknowledges the influence of internal and external factors on GAM effectiveness (ALHussan, AL-Husan, and Fletcher-Chen 2014; Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002), the role of culture, often acknowledged but not fully investigated, needs deeper exploration (Fletcher and Fang 2006; Jean et al. 2015; Yip and Madsen 1996). The well-known examples of failed multinational collaborations like Daimler-Chrysler and Sprint-Nextel, attributed to cultural clashes, underscore the need for a broad understanding (Badrtalei and Bates 2007; Nguyen and Kleiner 2003).

This study addresses “Research Question 2”, examining how cultural differences between India and Germany impact the implementation and success of GAM strategies in cross-border business relationships.

This study dives into the cultural influences on GAM, focusing on the Indian context. Part 1 aims to identify and comprehend the substantial impact of cultural factors on GAM in India, delving into the fundamental cultural elements that shape GAM strategies and operations. To achieve this, the study pursues three objectives:

**Objective 1.1:** Conduct an extensive literature review on KAM, GAM, national culture, and organizational culture, establishing a firm theoretical foundation.

**Objective 1.2:** Gather high-quality primary data through semi-structured interviews with German GA managers responsible for Indian accounts, capturing real-world insights into cultural influences on GAM.

**Objective 1.3:** Analyze the collected interview data using template analysis, identifying and categorizing the specific cultural factors that significantly influence GAM practices within India.

Part 2 examines the distinct cultural differences between India and Germany in the context of GAM. It aims to construct a qualitative cultural performance framework tailored to the Indian business landscape. This section entails three objectives:

**Objective 2.1:** Employ thematic analysis on the interview data and insights from the literature review to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural elements impacting GAM.

**Objective 2.2:** Analyze the key cultural differences between India and Germany using Trompenaars' model, specifically focusing on their impact on GAM strategies and practices.

**Objective 2.3:** Develop a comprehensive cultural performance framework based on the thematic analysis results, equipped to guide GA managers in navigating the cultural nuances of the Indian market in their GAM practices.

This study bridges a significant knowledge gap by investigating the impact of cultural factors on GAM, particularly within the Indian context. Its findings contribute to the theoretical discussions in GAM, B2B marketing, and RM, while also offering practical insights for managers and organizations operating in culturally diverse environments. The following section looks into the existing research on GAM to lay the groundwork for our investigation.

### 4.3 Literature review

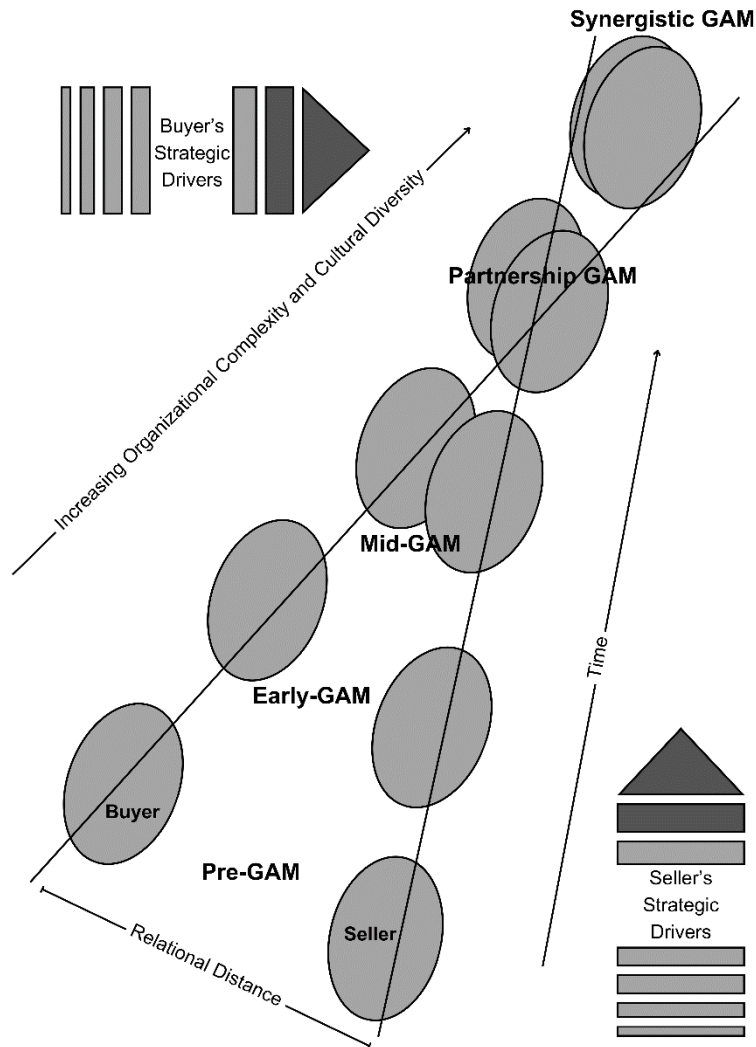
GAM programs have become essential to supplying firms seeking to strengthen their relationships with global customers in the field of B2B marketing. These programs constitute a complete strategy for managing KAs worldwide, enabling suppliers to provide uniform service and assistance to key customers in several countries. Unilever's specialized GAM initiatives for customers such as Wal-Mart demonstrate the importance of centralized coordination by dedicated teams or individuals to efficiently oversee worldwide activities (Birkinshaw, Toulan, and Arnold 2001; Jean et al. 2015).

As depicted in the GAM relationship development model from Wilson and Millman (2003), in Figure XIV, the GAM relationship has various phases, commencing with the "pre-GAM" stage. During this phase, although no actual transaction occurs between the buyer and supplier, the supplier begins the evaluation of potential accounts to determine strategic alignment. Next comes the "early-GAM" phase, which involves the early business transactions and the formation of a growing relationship. During the "mid-GAM" stage, the relationship became more complex and significant for both sides. The Partnership GAM phase represents the supplier establishing themselves as a valuable strategic asset, with trust becoming a fundamental aspect of the partnership, which shares the similar views with Tzempelikos and Gounaris (2017). The "synergistic GAM" stage is marked by quasi-integration when strong

relationships between the buyer and supplier result in mutual benefits reflecting a deep and collaborative relationship.

**Figure XIV:** GAM relationship development phases

Source: Adapted from Wilson and Millman (2003).



According to Yip and Bink (2007), the implementation of GAM programs is a deliberate and tactical decision, that depends on recognizing of customers that have substantial size, revenue potential, and strategic importance, as well as the involvement of centralized procurement and shared commitment from top management. The successful implementation of GAM relies on key elements such as marketing activities, the involvement of GA managers, the formation of GA teams, and access to functional support (Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002). Moreover,

the alignment between supplier and GA is essential for improving GAM performance, emphasizing the need for senior executive level involvement to support more efficient interactions (Shi and Gao 2016). However, the effectiveness of GAM programs is not only decided by how well the structure and operations are aligned, but also greatly influenced by the cultural aspects of the interactions. ALHussan, AL-Husan, and Fletcher-Chen (2014) highlight the negative consequences of cultural differences on the relationships between suppliers and buyers, which can harm profitability and overall relationship outcomes. This highlights the importance of integrating “cultural factors” into the GAM strategy to promote coherence and shared understanding.

The development through the GAM phases mentioned above not only includes operational and cultural aspects, but also signifies the shift from purely transactional interactions to long-term, collaborative partnerships. This shift highlights the importance of trust and commitment as one of the fundamental elements for achieving a competitive advantage (Ivens and Pardo 2008; Tzempelikos and Gounaris 2015). The integration of GAM and organizational culture crystallizes the kinetics involved in the management of GAs. Adopting a RM philosophy, as recommended by Grönroos (1997) and Piercy (2009), requires an enduring organizational culture that encourages and facilitates these cross-boundary partnerships. Cultural alignment is crucial for the effective execution of GAM programs and for steering through the phases of relationship formation as outlined by Millman and Wilson (2003).

Applying Trompenaars’ dimensions into GAM closely aligns with principles derived from B2B marketing theory, including the focus on RM. This approach emphasizes the significance of recognizing and adapting to the cultural contexts for GAs. By applying Trompenaars’ framework, businesses could avoid cultural conflicts, enhancing their ability to forge strong, trust-based relationships with global customers (Trompenaars 1996a). This strategic application is supported by RM theory from Berry (1983) and cultural insights from Hofstede (2011) that promote tailored, culturally sensitive interactions to facilitate successful B2B engagements, developing long-term relationships in diverse corporate environments.

In conclusion, effectively managing GAs through GAM programs requires a distinct approach that includes operational and structural elements, as well as a deep understanding of cultural factors. Among the complex challenges presented by global businesses, incorporating cultural understanding, in addition to a strong framework for cultivating relationships, could prove essential to establishing enduring and profitable GAM alliances. This approach to

GAM strengthens the relationships between suppliers and buyers and brings to the wider discussion on the strategic value of cultural competence in GAM.

#### **4.4 Cultural factors in GAM: Case of Indian buyers and German suppliers**

Expanding upon the basic structure of this study discussed in the Introduction, this section discusses Part 1, which is study IIA, with a particular focus on identifying cultural factors that are crucial to GAM in Indian and German context. Prior to reviewing the outcomes, we will discuss a detailed overview of the research methodology, data collection, and analysis procedures that were employed to justify this investigation.

##### **4.4.1 Research methodology**

The decision to apply a qualitative research methodology in this study, as recommended by Javalgi, Granot, and Alejandro (2011), and Singh et al. (2021), proves the effectiveness of this approach in examining cultural nuances. The previous investigations by Wendt (2015), Ellis and Iwasaki (2018), Deeter-Schmelz, Lauer, and Rudd (2019), and Kumari and Nirban (2018) demonstrate the ability of qualitative research to reveal cultural characteristics in different countries, providing solid evidence for its use in studying cultural differences.

The decision to utilize case study research, influenced by Dubois and Gadde (2002) and Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki, and Welch (2010), is driven by the method's exceptional capacity to offer full understanding of the actions and choices made by individuals and teams in organizations. The validity of this method is further demonstrated by Barratt, Choi, and Li (2011), who emphasize the significance of collecting data that is firmly rooted in the environment. This is a fundamental advantage of case studies, as they effectively capture the core essence of organizational science. Adopting Yin's (2009) structured approach, which includes stages of planning and designing the case, conducting the case study and evaluating the data, and documenting the results, improves the study's robustness by ensuring a methodical and deep examination of the research topic. Creswell (2013) acknowledges this decision, highlighting the qualitative case study's potential to provide a deep explanation of complex phenomena, such as cultural discrepancies and industrial marketing behaviors. Adopting Yin's (2009) structured methodology improves the study's robustness by ensuring a methodical and thorough investigation of the topic.

This approach combines qualitative research with case study methodology, utilizing academic literature and proven methods to provide a detailed evaluation of cultural differences and organizational behaviors, which ensure a detailed and contextually informed analysis.

#### **4.4.2 Data collection and data analysis**

In accordance with the methodological framework outlined by Yin (2009), data collection and analysis procedures were meticulously designed to ensure a systematic examination of the case study.

##### **4.4.2.1 Data collection**

The data collecting methodology used in this study was based on arguments of Ritchie et al. (2013) that qualitative research samples should precisely reflect the perspectives and beliefs of the specific group or culture being studied. This involved gathering data from competent and capable key informants. In accordance with this approach, a purposive sampling technique was utilized, in line with the suggestions of Palinkas et al. (2015) regarding the significance of selecting a homogeneous sample group that fulfills specified criteria in order to obtain significant insights.

The selection procedure focused on multinational firms who have a substantial corporate presence in Germany, with a minimum company net worth of \$10 million and an active GAM program. In addition, managers were selected based on their expertise in GA management, their involvement with Indian GAs, and their worldwide experience, guaranteeing a wide array of opinions.

In order to tackle the difficulty of locating companies that met the stringent criteria required for a study centered around a singular company, the research methodology was expanded to encompass GA managers across multiple industries. The purpose of adopting a multi-firm approach was to improve perception of cultural behavioral disparities, based on Boddy's (2016) observation that qualitative research could reach data saturation by 12 to 25 interviews. As a result, a total of 23 detailed semi-structured interviews were carried out with managers from various industries including technology, healthcare, finance, and among others, as depicted in Table II and Table III.

The interviews were segmented into three primary components.:

The initial segment of the interviews dived into the basic principles and structural frameworks of GAM programs, offering an essential understanding of how these programs are developed and put into practice. The subsequent emphasis was placed on the second segment of cultural relationships, specifically examining the experiences of managers with Indian GAs, with the objective of revealing the minute details of intercultural elements inside GAM.

The final section employed the snowball sampling technique, as suggested by Biernacki and Waldorf (1981), to extend the reach of the study. Managers were asked to recommend other potential research participants, thereby using their professional networks to identify additional sources of valuable insights.

**Table II:** List of companies

Source: Created by the author, based on original research and analysis.

Company	Industry type	Company size	Number of employees worldwide (approx.)	GA manager
Company 1	Technology	Large	18,000	A
Company 2	Electronics and telecommunications	Medium	13,000	B
Company 3	Technology	Large	70,000	C, J
Company 4	Manufacturing	Large	290,000	D
Company 5	Manufacturing	Small	1,000	E
Company 6	Technology	Large	100,000	F
Company 7	Energy and utilities	Large	140,000	G
Company 8	Healthcare	Medium	66,000	H
Company 9	Manufacturing	Small	1,000	I
Company 10	Technology	Small	997	K
Company 11	Manufacturing	Medium	11,000	L
Company 12	Telecommunication	Small	1031	M, O
Company 13	Manufacturing	Large	303,000	N
Company 14	Technology	Large	56,606	P
Company 15	Chemical	Large	35,700	Q
Company 16	Technology	Large	139,995	R
Company 17	Technology	Small	2,050	S
Company 18	Chemical	Large	17,901	T
Company 19	Technology	Large	31,000	U
Company 20	Energy and utilities	Large	30,000	V
Company 21	Manufacturing	Small	5,100	W

**Remarks:** Company's net worth: Small: < 1 billion USD; medium: from 1 to 5 billion USD; large: > 5 billion USD. Additionally, the employee numbers are obtained from the official websites of the organizations.

**Table III:** Respondents’ list and demographic details

Source: Created by the author, based on original research and analysis.

Respondent	Experience in GAM (years)	Age (years)	Gender (M/F/D)	Interview duration (minutes)
A	5-10	30-50	F	37.14
B	Over 10	Over 50	M	38.11
C	Over 10	Over 50	M	27.51
D	Over 10	Over 50	M	48.03
E	5-10	30-50	F	30.53
F	Over 10	Over 50	M	28.38
G	Over 10	30-50	F	50.16
H	Over 10	30-50	M	53.19
I	5-10	30-50	M	35.23
J	Over 10	Over 50	F	43.35
K	Over 10	Over 50	M	33.35
L	Over 10	Over 50	M	35.42
M	Under 5	30-50	F	50.28
N	Over 10	30-50	M	47.01
O	Under 5	30-50	F	64.04
P	Over 10	Over 50	M	50.07
Q	5-10	30-50	M	25.42
R	Over 10	30-50	F	29.15
S	Under 5	30-50	F	28.10
T	5-10	30-50	M	33.59
U	5-10	30-50	F	28.42
V	Under 5	30-50	F	39.32
W	5-10	30-50	M	38.05
				<b>Average = 40.62</b>

The study primarily focused on the development phases of the Mid-GAM and Synergistic GAM relationship suggested by Wilson and Millman (2003), excluding the initial phases where participants’ experience with GAs was considered insufficient. This was carried out to ensure compliance with the set selection criteria. In order to reduce participant bias and improve the credibility of the study, a triangulation approach proposed by Natow (2020) was utilized. This involves performing an examination of comparison between the study’s findings and the existing literature on GAM and organizational culture. The analysis focused on cultural aspects, which were found to be consistent with the research conducted by Deshpande and Farley (1999), Lautenschläger (2020), and Wendt (2015). In order to reduce potential bias from the researchers, the findings were reviewed with the participants themselves. This examination confirmed a strong correlation between their experiences and the insights of the study, thereby confirming the reliability and relevance of the methodology.

#### 4.4.2.2 Data analysis

The data analysis section was well-organized to address the complex nature of analyzing the large dataset gathered from semi-structured interviews with 102,064 words or 7,808 lines of text. In order to ensure precise understanding and avoid any misinterpretation of this extensive textual information, the analysis was carried out with MAXQDA, a specialized software program intended for qualitative data analysis. The “template analysis (TA)” method, consisting of three steps as outlined by King (2012), is employed for data analysis. It involves organizing textual data using a hierarchical system of codes, referred to as “templates,” enabling the analysis at various levels of depth. This coding approach differentiates between higher-order codes, which encapsulate the main themes and orientations of the interviews, and lower-order codes, which offer specific distinctions within and across the dataset.

**Table IV:** Template analysis: the initial coding template

Source: Created by the author, based on original research and analysis

<b>1. Language &amp; Communication</b> 1.1 Indirect communication 1.2 Accent and gestures	<b>3. Organization and Administration</b> 3.1 Organizational hierarchy 3.2 Power distance
<b>2. Conflict Avoidance</b> 2.1 Politeness 2.2 Harmony	<b>4. Trust and Relationships</b> 4.1 Relationships before business 4.2 Networking

At first, the raw data were analyzed by transcribing and carefully examining the 23 interviews to acquire an in-depth understanding of the content. Subsequently, a preliminary coding step was conducted to determine a pre-existing theme, which served as a guide for developing an initial coding template. This approach is similar to conventional techniques used in TA, where significant textual fragments are identified based on their possible relevance to the subject of inquiry. In accordance with King’s (2012) recommendation, the first template was deliberately designed to be simple and concise, consisting of four higher-order codes and eight lower-order codes (Table IV). Upon implementing this template in the initial 15 interviews, further patterns emerged, leading to the need for revising and expanding the template. The iterative approach, as outlined by Brooks et al. (2015), entails continuous review and adjustment of the template in order to attain a full perspective on the data.

The completion of this method resulted in the creation of a final template consisting of six higher-order codes and twenty-three lower-order codes (Table V). This template perfectly reflects the organized thematic structure of the data. Codes such as “corporate collectivism” and “leadership style” were integrated into the concept of “organizational structure,” while others like caste system and nationalism were excluded due to insufficient evidence.

**Table V:** Template analysis: the final coding template

Source: Created by the author, based on original research and analysis.

<b>1. Language &amp; communication</b> 1.1 High-context communication 1.2 Indirect communication 1.3 Indian accent and gestures 1.4 “Yes” culture	<b>4. Organizational structure</b> 4.1 Organizational hierarchy 4.2 Power distance 4.3 Corporate collectivism 4.4 Leadership style
<b>2. Conflict Avoidance</b> 2.1 Politeness 2.2 Respect and harmony 2.3 Subtle negotiation	<b>5. Decision-making</b> 5.1 Decision-makers 5.2 Decision influencers 5.3 Being “adjust”
<b>3. Concept of time</b> 3.1 Readiness 3.2 Long-term thinking 3.3 Working last minutes	<b>6. Trust and relationships</b> 6.1 Relationships before business 6.2 Collaborations at the institutional level 6.3 Collaborations at an individual level 6.4 Networking 6.5 People-oriented 6.6 Flow of information

The final template did not incorporate factors such as age, technology, infrastructure, resource availability, country size, communication, and religion. However, their importance was recognized.

The analysis combined these factors by utilizing the CAGE distance framework and Hall’s Iceberg Model, which ensured a thorough examination of the data within wider theoretical frameworks, as described in the following research findings section.

#### 4.4.3 Research findings

The analysis of cultural factors in Indian setting employed the Hall’s Iceberg Model and the CAGE distance framework in order to break down cultural elements and relevant factors effectively. The CAGE framework by Ghemawat’s (2001) being applied to particularities of the Indo-German business landscape is depicted in following Table VI.

**Table VI:** CAGE distance framework in GAM in an Indian and German context

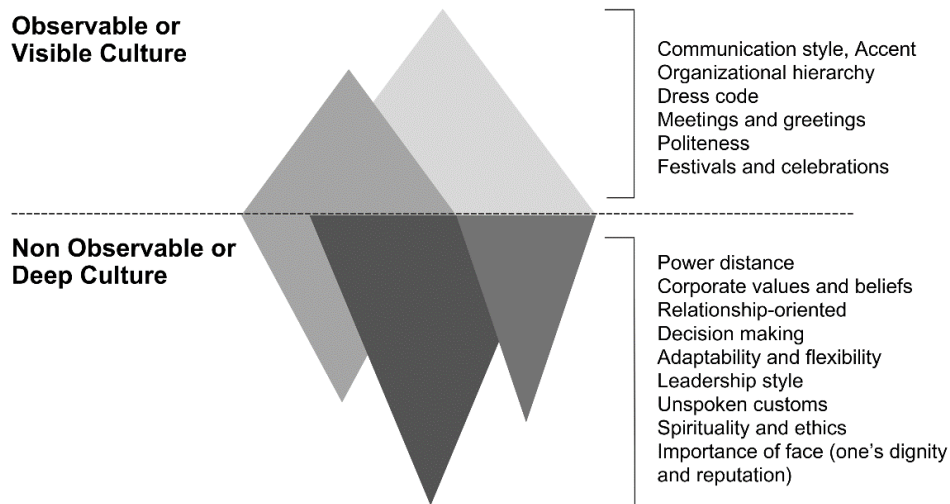
Source: Created by author, adapted from Ghemawat (2001).

<b>Cultural factors</b>	<b>Administrative factors</b>	<b>Geographic factors</b>	<b>Economic factor</b>
language and communication, ethnicity, religion, social norms, trust and relationships, age factor	organizational hierarchy, power distance, political influence, different currencies, government policies	physical distance, size of countries, lack of common borders, natural resources, difference in climates	technology, infrastructure, availability of resources, differences in GDP per capita, availability of workforce

Clearly observable aspects of Indian culture include communication styles that are subtle and indirect, as well as various accents that showcase the country’s diverse linguistic landscape. The value of a clear organizational hierarchy is frequently understood through interpersonal exchanges, whereas dress codes and the manner in which meetings and greetings are conducted reveal conventional social norms. Expressions of politeness and the rituals of festivities reveal insight into the cultural values and beliefs. However, when the business relationship progresses from initial interaction (pre-GAM and early-GAM phases) to more involved interactions (mid-GAM and partnership GAM phases) the less observable but crucial elements of Indian culture become apparent. These factors include the notion of power distance, which impacts the level of respect displayed in corporate relationships, as well as the dominant corporate values and beliefs that affect the overall approach to business procedures. In Indian culture, decision-making processes typically prioritize relationships and emphasize consensus, taking into account the collective rather than individual viewpoints. Furthermore, leadership style often combines assertive and nurturing approaches, maintaining a delicate balance between respecting hierarchical positions and valuing human ties. Discussions and collaborations require a careful approach due to the cultural roots of adaptability, flexibility, and unspoken customs. The practice of Indian business is deeply intertwined with spirituality and individual value systems, as every individual’s distinct set of values shapes their professional behavior. Furthermore, the notion of “keeping dignity and reputation” through the practice of “saving face” plays a crucial role in business interactions. This cultural emphasis impacts both individual behavior and business transactions, revealing a deep feature of the cultural mindset. The significance of maintaining one’s reputation in an organizational setting is well documented in academic literature, including the research conducted by Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998), who examine this idea in the context of intercultural communication.

**Figure XV:** Cultural iceberg in Indian context

Source: Designed by the author, adapted from Hall (1976) and specifically applied to the Indian context.



**Figure XVI:** Consensus illustration of the cultural factors in GAM

Source: Designed by the author for enhanced presentation, created using MAXQDA software.

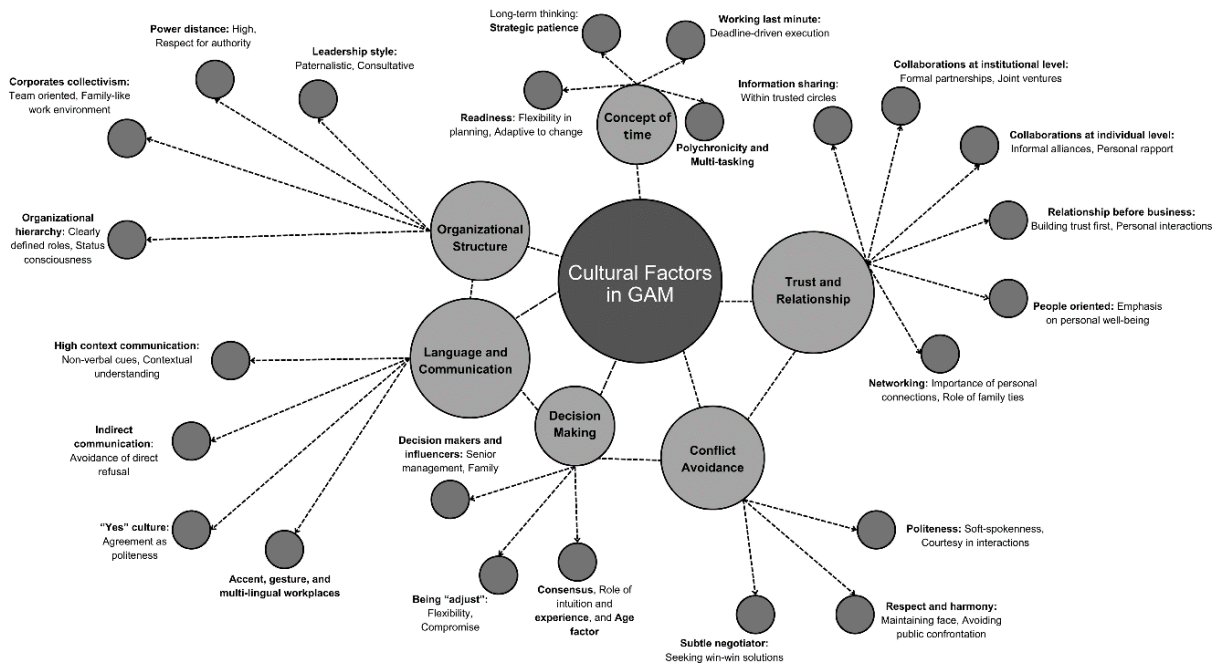


Figure XV encapsulates the cultural factors pivotal in GAM within the Indian context. This approach, grounded in the work of Romney, Weller, and Batchelder (1986), provides a precise and reliable depiction of collective cultural insights (Casimir, Tobi, and Tamás 2022). When

collaborating with Indian leadership, both German GA managers and managers from other countries should take into account six crucial cultural factors: “language and communication,” “organizational structure,” “decision-making,” “trust and relationships,” “conflict avoidance,” and “concept of time”. The specific details of each individual factor are examined as follows.

### **Language and communication**

German managers have observed that Indian managers possessed a high level of proficiency in the English language. This is a noteworthy ability considering the linguistic variety in India, which contains more than 700 languages (Singh and Dhussa 2020). German managers embrace low-context communication, which prioritizes directness and explicitness.

*“Getting used to Indians more implied way of talking was tough. [...] It is so different from the straight-to-the-point style we have back in Germany.”* (Respondent S)

This means that messages are presented simply and without relying heavily on contextual cues. Indian managers, on the other hand, frequently utilize high-context communication, placing significant reliance on indirect cues, context, and nonverbal indications to successfully convey messages. This reflects a more complex and indirect approach to sharing ideas.

### **Organizational structure and decision-making**

The research conducted by Marcos-Cuevas et al. (2014) and Toulan, Birkinshaw, and Arnold (2006) highlights the importance of standardized structures in GAM. These organizational structure plays an essential role in improving overall organizational success by ensuring a better alignment between buyers and suppliers. However, the complexities of India’s organizational structure add another level of hurdle to decision-making. The study conducted by Ardit, Nayak, and Damci (2017), demonstrates a direct correlation between hierarchical structures and delays in decision-making. These studies emphasize the bureaucratic obstacles that are inherent in traditional Indian businesses.

*“I have observed that working within Indian organizations demands a unique understanding [...] The workflow is notably hierarchical, with team members often looking to the leadership for guidance. This structure means that any form of agreements requires the green light from top management.”* (Respondent D)

Despite these hurdles, German GA managers have demonstrated an incredible degree of perseverance and patience, which are essential for successfully connecting with the Indian

businesses. The Indian management environment is characterized by a decision-making style that is driven by consensus. This approach reflects a collectivist culture that prioritizes group unity and collective agreement, even if it means sacrificing efficiency in decision-making. The influence of unofficial relationships plays a significant role in this process, as decisions and operations frequently rely on personal contacts, enabling the bypassing of official hierarchies.

*“Managing in India means mastering the art of multitasking, negotiating uncertainty, and sometimes firefighting. These problems are not setbacks, but rather steppingstones to resilience and innovation. It’s a journey of growth for both us and our teams.”* (Respondent G)

As per Rao (2013), nepotism is ingrained in the culture of traditional Indian businesses. In close relationships, important positions are held by family members. The degree of favoritism in German organizations is far lower compared to Indian ones.

Furthermore, the phrase “adjust” is commonly used by Indians in economic collaborations. In Indian business culture, “adjust” means being highly adaptable and creative in finding solutions, often requiring flexibility and compromise in order to achieve the objectives (Rastogi, Rangnekar, and Rastogi 2018). Importantly, in Indian culture, the emphasis is on achieving overall outcomes and completing tasks rather than striving for perfection in every detail, contrasting with the German approach that often focuses on meticulousness in all aspects.

### **Trust and relationships**

In the domain of GAM, the vibrant interactions between trust, satisfaction, and commitment evolves as an essential components for evaluating the relationship quality and link directly with financial performance (Gounaris and Tzempelikos 2014; Guesalaga 2014).

*“I have been managing a global account from India for the last six years. I am acquainted with my Indian colleagues, and we became good friends. [ . . . ] At one point in time, he terminated his contract with another supplier solely because he knew me, and he trusted me that I will never deceive him with the services that my company provides to him ”.* (Respondent I)

In Indian context, trust and relationships play a core role, possibly due to its collectivist culture, which places a strong emphasis on community and interpersonal connections (Teklemariam 2021). German culture, in contrast, emphasizes efficiency and formal structures over human relationships due to its individualistic tendencies (Hofstede 2011). Based on this contrast, one

could hypothesize that trust and personal ties play an important part in decision-making and loyalty in Indian GAM settings. Meanwhile, efficiency rules, and contractual agreements have a greater influence on decisions in German context. This implies the existence of a cultural alignment hypothesis in GAM practices, where the success of business strategies depends on how well they match with the fundamental cultural values of society.

### **Conflict avoidance**

Prior studies have thoroughly investigated the impact of culture on conflict resolution approaches in multinational joint ventures, emphasizing the complexity of managing cultural disparities (Le Nguyen, Larimo, and Ali 2016; Morris and Fu 2001). In Indian business settings, the approach to conflict resolution is profoundly shaped by cultural norms that prioritize harmony, face-saving, and non-confrontational methods. This tendency to avoid conflict, both in professional and personal spheres, aligns with Thomas' (2008) conflict management styles, notably "compromise" and "leave well enough alone."

*"In my experience, Indians might avoid direct criticism and instead say what they believe you wish to hear, to prevent disagreements. It's a reflection of their cultural approach to preserve harmony"* (Respondent P)

Such strategies reflect a broader cultural emphasis on preserving relationships and maintaining societal unity, even at the cost of transparency and honest feedback. This approach highlights the significant cultural commitment to maintaining interpersonal harmony, as well as the challenges it provides in achieving an open dialogue and efficiently resolving disagreements.

### **Concept of time**

The disparities in the perception of time in business cultures between India and Germany can be explained by Hall's (1976) notions of monochronic time (MT) and polychronic time (PT) orientation. German culture, which adheres to MT, values punctuality, planning, and schedules, viewing time linearly and prioritizing the sequential completion of tasks. This reflects a broader cultural emphasis on efficiency and order. In contrast, Indian culture, characterized by PT, perceives time more fluidly, with a focus on relationships over strict schedules. This allows for a flexible approach to time, where multitasking and delays are acceptable if they serve interpersonal connections.

*“The Indian way of working and planning seems to be different. Indians are quite good at pulling everything in together at the last minute to get things done. Such things rarely occur in German organizations.”* (Respondent T)

In the Indian corporate culture, the concept of “taking your time” is valued as an indication of performing duties with diligence and thoroughness. It is important to avoid rushing into crucial decisions. Hastiness can be perceived as counterproductive and may inadvertently raise doubts or suspicions about one’s intentions among Indian colleagues (Hall 1976). This cultural preference underscores the importance of patience and careful consideration in business practices, reflecting a broader emphasis on relational over transactional interactions.

*“They do not mind arriving late for meeting and most things for projects get done just before the deadline”* (Teklemariam 2021, p. 38).

Indians prioritize long-term cooperation in business, focusing on building relationships grounded in mutual trust and confidence. This long-term orientation reflects a cultural value of sustained partnerships over immediate benefits, aiming to ensure collaborative success and growth (Hofstede 2011). This approach underscores the importance of commitment and continuity in Indian business practices.

After examining important cultural factors in the Indian setting, we will now shift our focus to a comparative analysis of Indian and German perspectives. This analysis will highlight the disparities between these two diverse societies.

## **4.5 Comparative analysis of managing cultural diversity in GAM from Indo-German perspectives**

Continuing our investigation into cultural aspects in GAM, part IIB of this study compares Indian and German cultural perspectives within the GAM framework. This study aims to clarify the role of different cultural orientations between these two nations, by examining specific cultural dimensions and unique business practices associated with the two nations.

### **4.5.1 Research methodology**

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative data from study IIA with a substantial literature review. The methodological choices are rooted in the pragmatist approach, which allows for the use of multiple methods to understand the research problem (Creswell and Clark 2017). Following an exploratory design, this study aims to deepen the

understanding of cultural influences within GAM, particularly between German and Indian companies. The research design is based on the work of Yin (2018), which advocates for case studies and interviews to examine the complex phenomena within their real-life context.

### **4.5.2 Data collection and data analysis**

This section will provide an overview of the data collection process, and methods employed in data analysis.

#### **4.5.2.1 Data collection**

Data collection in this study was conducted through two main approaches. The first involved interviews, where existing data from 23 German GA managers was supplemented with 5 new semi-structured interviews, following established qualitative data analysis methods by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), and interviewing guidelines by Rubin and Rubin (2011). The second approach was literature research, which entailed a systematic review of existing literature as outlined by Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart (2003), ensuring a rigorous examination of the field.

#### **4.5.2.2 Data analysis**

Thematic analysis was the chosen method for its utility in identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. The analysis was conducted following the six-phase guide proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which allows for a rich and detailed yet complex account of data.

**Phase 1** (familiarizing with the data): After transcribing the interviews, the data was read multiple times. During this initial engagement, notes were taken to capture first impressions, potential patterns, and initial insights that began to highlight cultural nuances.

**Phase 2** (generating initial codes): The transcriptions were systematically coded line-by-line. Codes were created for segments of data that captured key thoughts or concepts relevant to the research questions. For instance, when a German GA manager mentioned, “adjusting our approach to fit the Indian context,” a code such as “adaptation to Indian business practices” was generated. The detailed initial codes are mentioned in Table VII.

**Phase 3** (searching for themes): Codes were sorted into potential themes. Codes that related to understanding and valuing cultural differences were grouped under “cultural sensitivity and

awareness,” those that pertained to relationship dynamics were allocated to “building relationships,” and codes dealing with response to market changes were classified under “flexibility.”

**Phase 4** (reviewing themes): The themes were reviewed to ensure they formed a coherent pattern and accurately represented the coded data and the entire dataset. This involved a recursive process of refining the themes to best reflect the nuances of the data.

**Phase 5** (defining and naming themes): Each theme was defined and further refined. For instance: “cultural sensitivity and awareness” was defined as the recognition and appreciation of cultural norms and practices in the Indian business context. Theme “building relationships” incorporated the development of trust and collaborative partnerships with Indian counterparts. Theme “flexibility” related to the ability to adapt strategies and decision-making processes in response to the evolving Indian market.

**Phase 6** (producing the report): The final report was constructed by selecting compelling examples from the data that exemplified each theme, weaving these extracts into a narrative that addressed the research questions and linked back to the literature.

**Table VII:** Initial codes generated in thematic analysis

Source: Created by the author, based on original research and analysis.

Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness	Building Relationships	Flexibility
recognizing local norms, respecting Indian etiquette, understanding hierarchical structures, changing communication methods, recognizing Indian holidays, in order to respect Indian business practices, observing nonverbal clues, getting used to indirect communication, recognizing the significance of saving face, in accordance with Indian time perception, using Indian bargaining techniques, understanding Indian decision-making understanding Indian markets in context recognizing regional disparities within India, sensitivity to the historical setting of India	developing trust, participating in social contacts, maintaining long-term relationships, personal connection with clients, beyond corporate relationships, communication frequency, personal information sharing, increasing mutual understanding, building on shared ground, recognizing the significance of family in business, developing stakeholder relationships, sympathy for Indian partners, emotional intelligence assessment, follow-ups must be consistent, relationship dynamics management	changing with the market, responding quickly to consumer behavior, customizing items to meet the needs of Indians, adapting to the Indian business speed, agility in strategic planning, within cultural limits, innovative ways, negotiation flexibility, responsiveness to economic volatility adapting marketing methods, adaptability to bureaucratic challenges, problem-solving versatility, change management that is proactive, hierarchical navigation flexibility, keeping up with technical advancements,

		preparedness for policy changes
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In total, the initial coding process generated 52 distinct codes. These codes were then clustered into larger themes, ultimately resulting in the three key themes that were most prevalent and significant within the data: “cultural sensitivity and awareness,” “building relationships,” and “flexibility.” These themes were reflective of the underlying patterns and concepts that were consistently observed across the interviews.

### **Themes and definitions**

- **Cultural sensitivity and awareness:** This theme captures the extent to which German GA managers understand, respect, and value the cultural norms, communication styles, and business etiquettes prevalent in the Indian context. It reflects the importance of cultural intelligence in navigating cross-cultural business environments.
- **Building relationships:** This theme reflects the process and importance of developing robust, trust-based relationships with Indian GAs. It contains the strategies and behaviors employed by managers to foster long-term partnerships characterized by mutual respect and understanding.
- **Flexibility:** This theme is characterized by the adaptability of business strategies and operations in response to the vibrant Indian market. It includes the capacity for rapid response to changing business conditions and the ability to innovate within the framework of cultural nuances.

These themes represent the core aspects of cultural engagement and strategy that German managers should direct to ensure successful GAM in the Indian context, as identified through the thematic analysis process.

### **4.5.3 Research findings**

The outcomes of the study are discussed in this section and divided into two key parts. The first part of the findings section dissects the nuanced interactions between Indian and German business entities, employing Trompenaars’ model of cultural differences as a strategic analytical tool to reveal the underlying cultural currents that shape these complex international relationships. The second part then expands on these insights by presenting a dedicated

framework that captures the essence of cultural performance in the Indian business context, providing a nuanced understanding of how cultural elements interact with operational and strategic aspects of GAM.

#### 4.5.3.1 Indian-German business dynamics through Trompenaars’ model

This study leverages Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s (1997a) model of cultural differences to shed light on the cross-cultural interactions between Indian and German managers in the context of GAM. The findings highlight contrasting cultural dimensions that shape business practices and interactions in these two contexts.

The model offers a structured framework for analyzing cultural differences across seven key dimensions: universalism vs. particularism, individualism vs. communitarianism, specific vs. diffuse, neutral vs. affective, achievement vs. ascription, attitude towards time, and attitude towards the environment (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 2020). Examining the research findings through this lens allows for a deeper understanding of the Indian-German interactions.

**Table VIII:** Cultural differences between India and Germany through the lens of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s model

Source: Created by author, based on Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s cultural dimensions.

Cultural dimensions	German Culture	Indian Culture
Universalism vs. particularism	Principle-driven	Relationship-focused, contextual
Individualism vs. communitarianism	Self-reliant, structured	Group-oriented, collaborative
Specific vs. diffuse	Task-focused, Precision-oriented	Holistic, integrative
Neutral vs. affective	Emotionally reserved, controlled	Expressive, emotionally open
Achievement vs. ascription	Result-oriented, performance-centric	Status-ascribed, merit-based, S seniority-respected
Attitude towards time	Time efficient, deadline-conscious	Flexible, multi-tasking
Attitude towards the environment	Strategically adaptive, Resource-efficient	Adaptable, dynamic, tradition-respecting

### **Universalism vs. particularism** (rules vs. relationships)

German managers align with the universalism dimension, emphasizing formal rules and structured decision-making. In contrast, Indian managers, reflecting particularism, place greater value on relationships and context, leading to more nuanced and indirect communication and decision-making (Teklemariam 2021). This highlights the need for GAM strategies to adapt to varying needs for formality and directness in communication.

### **Individualism vs. communitarianism** (the individual vs. the group)

The individualistic approach of German managers is evident in their direct communication and decision-making based on rational analysis. Conversely, Indian managers exhibit a communitarian approach, prioritizing group harmony and consensus in decision-making, reflecting their high-context communication style (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 2020). GAM partnerships should accommodate these differences by allowing for group discussions and building trust through relationship-building.

### **Specific vs. diffuse** (the scope of relationships)

Germans tend to have a specific approach, separating work and personal life, and focusing on tasks. Indians, on the other hand, display a diffuse style, where relationships constitute a wider scope, blending personal and professional interactions (2021). This necessitates flexibility in GAM interactions, recognizing the potential for overlapping spheres of personal and professional interaction in the Indian context.

### **Neutral vs. affective** (expression of emotions)

German business culture, being more neutral, shows restraint in emotional expression, aligning with their preference for straightforward communication. Indian culture is more affective, allowing for greater emotional expression, which is integral to their communication style (Kapoor et al. 2003). GAM managers must be mindful of these differences, adjusting their communication style to be empathetic and respectful of emotional expression within Indian business interactions.

### **Achievement vs. ascription** (how status is accorded)

The findings support the view that in German culture, status is often accorded based on achievement, reflecting their focus on expertise and accomplishments. In Indian culture, status tends to be more ascribed, with factors like age and social connections playing a significant

role. GAM programs should recognize and handle these varied views on status and authority, encouraging appreciation for multiple forms of expertise and leadership throughout the collaboration.

### **Attitude towards time** (sequential vs. synchronous)

The German preference for punctuality and structured time management aligns with a sequential time orientation. Indian managers exhibit a more synchronous approach to time, often juggling multiple activities and displaying flexibility with time (Hofstede, 1997). GAM interactions should account for these differing time perceptions, allowing for both structured meetings and flexibility to accommodate unforeseen circumstances.

### **Attitude towards the environment** (control vs. accommodation)

German businesses have a control orientation, as well as a greater risk acceptance and innovation. Indian enterprises have an adaptive approach, being more cautious and agile to their surroundings (Winkler, Dibbern, and Heinzl 2008). GAM strategies should acknowledge these differing risk tolerances and approaches to change, encouraging a collaborative environment that balances innovation with adaptability.

This finding highlights the importance of understanding cultural differences between German and Indian businesses, for effective GAM. Recognizing and adapting to these cultural nuances is key to building trust, improving communication, and achieving successful GAM outcomes.

### **4.5.3.2 Framework for cultural performance in managing Indian GAs**

The analysis reveals that the Indian business environment uniquely combines tradition and modernity, emphasizing personal relationships, adaptability, and hierarchical structures as critical factors. This section examines three core elements that significantly impact the management of GAs in India, as illustrated in Figure XVII.

#### **1. Relationships and trust building**

In India, business interactions are deeply rooted in personal relationships and trust. Building trust, often nurtured through informal interactions, lays the foundation for successful collaborations. This necessitates investing time in understanding personal backgrounds, relationships, and prioritizing long-term partnerships over transactional interactions (Banerjee 2008). Respect, mutual understanding, and commitment form the bedrock of these

relationships, emphasizing the importance of authentic engagement beyond merely formal agreements.

## 2. Flexibility and adaptability

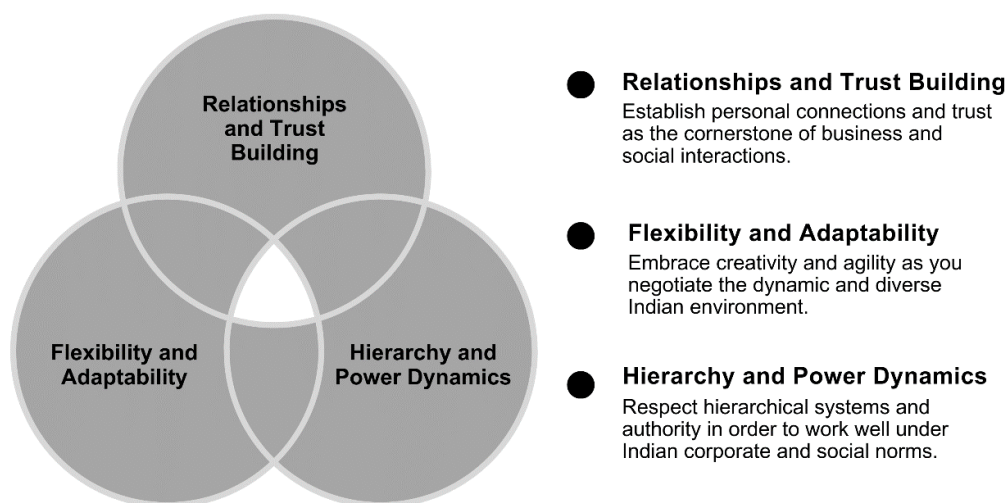
The Indian spirit of “Jugaad” embodies flexibility and adaptability. This reflects the ability to guide a business environment characterized by uncertainty and frequent changes (Kaur 2016). Embracing a flexible approach to planning, decision-making, and execution is crucial for success. This agility extends to accepting deviations from plans, tolerating ambiguity, and responding swiftly to evolving situations. Additionally, adapting to India’s polychronic time perspective, where multitasking and overlapping activities are the norm, is essential for building harmony and collaboration (Barzantny 2013).

## 3. Hierarchy and power dynamics

Understanding and navigating hierarchical structures and power distance is paramount in the Indian context. Respect for authority and seniority permeates Indian society and corporate culture (Sinha 2014). This necessitates recognizing both formal and informal power hierarchies, maintaining appropriate deference and communication protocols, and leveraging established relationships for decision-making and conflict resolution. Striking a balance between preserving traditional systems and embracing innovative approaches is key to lasting partnerships (Sheikh et al. 2019).

**Figure XVII:** Cultural performance framework for managing Indian GAs

Source: Designed by author.



### **Interconnectedness and practical implications**

The three core elements discussed above such as “relationship and trust building,” “flexibility and adaptability,” and “navigating power dynamics” are not separate entities but are precisely linked, together shaping the framework of successful business interactions with global customers in India.

Building trust serves as the bedrock upon which all other interactions are built. It establishes the foundation for genuine collaboration and ensures a platform for open communication and understanding. For instance, initial connections through informal gatherings like shared meals demonstrate the importance of establishing personal bonds beyond mere formalities before embarking on business ventures. This initial trust and understanding provide a fertile ground for navigating the unpredictable Indian market.

Flexibility and adaptability act as the threads that weave dynamism into these relationships. Recognizing India’s diverse and ever-evolving business landscape necessitates a willingness to adjust plans and strategies in response to unforeseen circumstances. Consider a multinational business supplier entering the Indian market. They might initially plan a specific launch date for their product. However, recognizing the cultural significance of upcoming festivals, they might strategically adapt their launch date to coincide with the festivity, leveraging established trust networks to gain greater market traction. This demonstrates how adaptability plays a crucial role in not only navigating the complexities of the Indian market but also in strengthening existing relationships.

Finally, understanding hierarchical structures and power dynamics introduces an additional dimension. Respecting authority figures, recognizing both formal and informal power structures, and maintaining appropriate communication protocols are crucial for positive engagement and collaboration. For instance, structuring interactions to acknowledge the decision-making power of senior executives or family patriarchs in family-run businesses demonstrates respect and facilitates smoother communication and conflict resolution. This element ensures all involved parties feel heard and valued, strengthening the overall partnership.

Therefore, success in the Indian business landscape hinges on the ability to effectively integrate and operate these interconnected cultural elements. It is not merely about adhering to individual practices, but rather understanding how they interact and influence each other. Finally, this

framework provides GA managers with the insights needed to build trust, embrace flexibility, and understand power dynamics, enriching successful and mutually beneficial partnerships in the vibrant Indian market.

### **4.6 Research implications**

Following an analysis of the framework for analyzing cultural performance in the Indian environment, this section discusses the study's theoretical and managerial implications.

#### **4.6.1 Theoretical implications**

This study makes a significant theoretical advancements in the field of GAM by explaining the important role of culture in defining GAM processes, with a particular emphasis on the intercultural interactions between Indian and German organizations. It sets new ground by defining and clarifying the cultural variables inherent to GAM by doing so enhancing a subject that has received little attention in the literature, especially in Indo-German settings (Jean, Sinkovics, and Cavusgil 2010; Wilson and Weilbaker 2004).

Cultural factors such as language and communication, conflict avoidance, the understanding of time, organizational structure, decision-making, trust, and interpersonal connections, shed insight on the diverse nature of cultural variety. This granular approach not only improves our understanding of intercultural interactions, but it also sets the ground for rigorous cross-national comparisons. However, such efforts recognize the need for more extensive data and refined analytical approaches to improve the generality of cultural insights in GAM situations.

The drawing of connections between cultural attitudes in buyer-seller relationships and the principles of governance systems as described by Baumüller (2007) is an important theoretical contribution of this work. This nexus opens up new conversations in the field of cross-cultural management theory, implying fertile territory for future research into the interaction of cultural factors and governance norms inside corporate transactions.

Furthermore, including Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1997a) cultural elements into Indian GAM methods broadens the theoretical terrain of cross-cultural management. This study defines the practical manifestations of these characteristics in GAM operations, providing a helpful template for theoretical extension and implementation in a variety of cultural settings.

In short, this research not only adds to the theoretical corpus by exploring cultural variables in the context of GAM, but it also stimulates a reevaluation of previous cross-cultural management

theories. This study lays the foundation for an advanced knowledge of cross-cultural interactions in the complicated realm of international business by combining and applying these ideas to the interactions between Indian and German business cultures.

### **4.6.2 Managerial implications**

On the management level, this study offers a set of actionable insights and strategic guidelines for GA managers operating within the diverse cultural contexts of Indian and international markets. First and foremost, the study's findings emphasize the importance of managers not only acknowledging, but also immersing themselves in the cultural complexities that characterize their engagement with GAs. This translates into an active and sympathetic engagement with GAs through constant face-to-face meetings, regular communications, and the formation of familial relationships that sustain trust and relationship longevity.

Furthermore, the study highlights Indians' changing attitudes toward foreign entities, emphasizing the progressive nature of culture as defined by Minkov (2018). Managers should engage their Indian counterparts with equality and respect, avoiding any trace of condescension to avoid negative connotations that may recall historical colonial subtexts.

The research also invites GAM participants to reflect on crucial questions such as the cultural impact on business outcomes, the necessary intercultural abilities for effective management, and organizational policies that can foster a suitable culture for GAM activities. This reflective technique is critical for finding opportunities for change and aligning company strategies with cultural sensibility.

In light of these findings, the study suggests that multinational firms consider "cultural fit" as one of the key components of their international operations. This includes providing extensive cultural training programs focused at improving GA managers' cultural flexibility, which is critical for creating trust and forging strong partnerships.

Furthermore, the value of strategic connection building and flexibility should not be neglected. Managers are encouraged to build deep relationships with GAs and stakeholders, as well as to be agile in reacting to the shifts of the Indian market. This includes a personalized approach that corresponds with local market and cultural expectations, maximizing the effectiveness of international business relationships.

#### **4.7 Limitations and directions for future research**

While this study discusses cultural subtleties of GAM, it does have some limitations that should be acknowledged. India's cultural fabric is incredibly complex, with each state having its own distinct cultural identity – a complexity that resists reduction to a single concept of culture. Because of the multifaceted nature of Indian culture, future research should take a more localized approach, possibly using the theoretical foundations laid by the IMP Group, which emphasizes the importance of interaction inside business networks. Furthermore, the study's dominating perspective is based on the experiences of German GA managers. Future research should examine the Indian perspective, perhaps guided by the principle of the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) emphasized by Vargo and Lusch (2008), which focusses on the co-creation of value and the necessity of reciprocal interactions in B2B settings. Prospective research could build on this work by combining qualitative methods, such as case studies influenced by RM theory's emphasis on long-term relationships, with quantitative analyses to investigate the bilateral forces of cultural influence. This type of research could also benefit from the theoretical frameworks provided by KAM literature, which could provide a more systematic approach to understanding the strategic nature of business partnerships. Furthermore, this work serves as a starting point for future investigations into the conceptual overlaps and differences between culture and governance processes in GAM – an ideal topic for theoretical extension. Researchers could use the Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) theory, which investigates the costs of economic exchanges, to study the effects of cultural elements on governance structures in multinational B2B collaborations. In addition, the Resource-based view may provide a perspective to study how cultural knowledge and abilities function as strategic resources in GAM. Such investigations would not only overcome the limits of the current study but would also contribute to a better scholarly understanding of the interdependence of culture and the governance mechanisms in B2B connections on a global scale.

As we progress from examining cultural factors in GAM to Study III "Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis Approach to GAM Performance," let us be guided by Geert Hofstede's wisdom: "Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster." This perspective emphasizes the crucial necessity of our next study, which aims to unravel the causal configurations of GA performance.

## 5 Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis Approach to GAM Performance

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### 5.1 Abstract

This study analyzes GAM using complexity theory, with the goal of understanding the complex causal pathways that shape GA performance. The study employs the FsQCA approach to examine 130 survey responses, with 64 from India and 66 from Germany. The aim is to determine the key combinations of factors that lead to optimal GA performance, within these specific cultural and operational settings. This analysis reveals five distinct configurations for each country that are crucial in attaining optimal GA performance. In Germany, the key variables that identified as crucial are “product quality and pricing, cultural fit, and strategic alignment.” On the other hand, in India, the focus is on “relationship, product quality and pricing, as well as the support received from internal and external networks.” The study supports the notion that obtaining optimal performance in GAM is not just dependent on individual conditions, but rather arises from the combined effect of various conditions interacting together. The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is used to confirm the findings of FsQCA, relying on statistically significant p-values for analysis. This research expands the existing body of knowledge on GAM by enhancing the understanding of GA performance and demonstrating an advanced, context-specific analytical methodology. From a managerial standpoint, the results emphasize the crucial requirement for customized GAM strategies that are in line with the specific cultural and operational complexities of the Indian and German markets. Nevertheless, the study acknowledges its limitations, suggesting the need for additional research to expand upon these foundational findings.

**Keywords:** Global account performance, India, Germany, Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis

## 5.2 Introduction

GAM research, both theoretical and practical, investigates GAM overall performance in a brief but in a significant way. However, a gap remains in understanding how these factors interact within specific cultural contexts. This study analyses the unique landscapes of Germany and India, examining how cultural factor contributes to optimal GA performance. Previous research from Shi et al. (2010) has shed light on ideal GAM configurations, yet often overlooks the cultural nuances shaping them. Others like Wendt (2015) and Lautenschläger (2020) have looked into influence of cultural factor on GAM utilizing qualitative and quantitative approaches. Despite these valuable contributions, a clear gap exists in examining the detailed impact of content-specific cultural aspects on GA performance within culturally diverse environments.

This study aims to bridge this gap by identifying and comprehending the configurations that lead to optimal GA performance in both German and Indian settings. The study addresses “Research Question 3”, exploring how distinct Indian and German business practices shape stakeholder relationships and decision-making in GAM, and identifying the causal pathways that lead to optimal performance in these diverse cultural settings.

To achieve this, the following objectives are defined:

**Objective 1:** Through an extensive analysis of existing research, the primary conditions impacting GA performance will be identified.

**Objective 2:** A targeted survey designed for executives and staff actively involved in GAM programs in both India and Germany will be developed and administered.

**Objective 3:** Using FsQCA analysis, specific configurations of conditions that result in optimal GA performance within each country will be identified.

This research offers practical implications for multinational firms seeking to tailor their GAM strategies to cultural complexities. By analyzing the cultural nuances of India and Germany, the study not only identifies optimal configurations for GA performance but also interprets them through the lens of cultural variations. That offers valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners in the realm of GAM and culture.

## **5.3 Theoretical background**

This section examines the theoretical background, focusing on the various aspects that contribute to overall GAM performance. It also emphasizes the crucial factors or conditions that impact GA performance.

### **5.3.1 GAM performance as a multifaceted dimension**

The concept of GAM performance transcends singular financial metrics, instead constituting a complex and multifaceted construct with various interlinked dimensions. Evaluating the effectiveness of a company's interactions with its GAs necessitates a nuanced understanding of this multidimensional notion.

Several scholars have explored the various facets of GAM performance. Montgomery et al. (2000) emphasize the significance of customer satisfaction alongside revenue and profit, grounding GAM performance in quantifiable outcomes aligned with traditional business metrics. Birkinshaw et al. (2001), however, advocate for a broader perspective, urging consideration of both internal efficiency and external collaboration in GAM performance evaluation. This highlights the critical balance between optimizing internal operations and customer relationships.

Homburg et al. (2002) offer another viewpoint, incorporating GAM efficacy, market performance, and profitability as universal metrics. This approach integrates internal and external aspects, providing a more complete understanding of GAM effectiveness. Further, differentiating the relational and financial components, Atanasova (2007) employs both qualitative and quantitative methods to underscore the unique yet interconnected nature of these dimensions. This aligns with Shi and Fang's (2011) emphasis on evaluating both financial and relational measures for effective GAM assessment.

Wendt (2015) describes the concept of alignment, suggesting that strategic, structural, and cultural coherence between a supplier and their GAs significantly impacts overall GAM performance. This highlights the importance of consistency across various organizational aspects to achieve optimal outcomes. Shifting focus to key configurations for successful GAM, Shi et al. (2010) identify crucial factors such as strategic priority, globalization, cross-national and cross-organizational coordination, standardized marketing operations, and global integration. Their view highlights the intricate relationship between strategic and operational

elements in determining GAM effectiveness. Finally, Hui Shi et al. (2004) argue that three key capabilities are instrumental in enhancing GAM performance: a supportive corporate culture, aligned supplier-customer strategies, and a well-designed GAM program. This highlights the importance of both internal competencies (culture of GAM organization) and external alignment (customer strategy) for effective GAM.

In conclusion, GAM performance is a heterogeneous construct composed of financial, relational, strategic, structural, and cultural dimensions. Recognizing and effectively managing these interconnected elements is crucial for organizations seeking to leverage GA relationships for sustained competitive advantage and an overall GAM success.

### 5.3.2 Factors influencing GA performance

In the competitive landscape of multinational corporations, the success or failure of GAs carries immense weight, directly impacting global market share and profitability (Yip and Madsen 1996). Optimizing GA performance, however, necessitates navigating a complex web of interconnected factors, each playing a unique and critical role. This analysis provides a deep dive into these key elements, supported by an extensive literature review, detailed in Table IX.

**Table IX:** GA performance constructs and their corresponding literature sources

Source: Created by the author, based on original research and analysis.

Constructs	Operational definition	Sources
Relationship with GA	The degree and quality of the interaction and collaboration between the supplier and GA	(Hui Shi, Zou, and Cavusgil 2004; Yip and Madsen 1996)
Product quality and pricing	The competitiveness of the supplier’s pricing and the perceived quality of their products or services.	(Narayandas, Quelch, and Swartz 2000; Shi et al. 2010)
Cultural fit between supplier and GA	The level of congruence and harmony in values, beliefs, and practices between the supplier and GA.	(Kadam, Niersbach, and Ivens 2023; Wendt 2015)
Internal and external support system	The accessible support methods and resources made available by the supplier organization and external partners or stakeholders.	(Birkinshaw, Toulan, and Arnold 2001; Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002)
Dependency of GA	The level of reliance or necessity that GA has on the supplier for products, services, or support.	(Montgomery, Yip, and Villalonga 1999; Swoboda et al. 2012a)
Strategic alignment between supplier and GA	The alignment of long-term goals, objectives, and strategies between the supplier and the GA.	(Storbacka 2012; Wilson and Weilbaker 2004)

## **1. Relationship with GA**

At the core of successful GA partnerships lies a robust and trusting relationship, characterized by open communication, collaborative problem-solving, and a genuine willingness to engage in mutually beneficial activities (Palmatier, Dant, and Grewal 2007). This fosters deeper understanding, strengthens loyalty, and cultivates long-lasting partnerships which are crucial ingredients for sustained success. According to Yip and Madsen (1996), the extent of this relationship directly impacts the GA's willingness to cooperate and commit resources to joint ventures, significantly influencing GAM outcomes. Companies such as IBM and Microsoft exemplify this principle, demonstrating the power of strong GA relationships through collaborative product development and integrated go-to-market strategies (Das, Sen, and Sengupta 2003). These partnerships go beyond immediate needs, anticipation of future demands and joint innovation to maintain market competitiveness. Building trust requires consistent and transparent communication, exceeding the GA's expectations, and going the extra mile to resolve issues effectively. Additionally, strengthening personal relationships between key individuals within both organizations can strengthen the bond and encourage open dialogue.

## **2. Product quality and pricing**

In the competitive arena of GAs, both the quality of offerings and their pricing play a pivotal role in success. A survey of GAM senior executives revealed a growing demand for consistency across various aspects, including service quality and performance, global contracts, uniform terms of trade, and global pricing (Yip 2018; Yip and Bink 2007). This highlights the importance of standardization and meeting global expectations.

Shi et al. (2010) further reinforce this by demonstrating a positive correlation between standardized marketing activities and improved GAM performance. High-quality products that meet global standards and customer expectations, coupled with value-based pricing strategies are essential ingredients for GAM success. Apple's consistent dedication to product quality and premium pricing across markets exemplifies this strategic approach, cultivating customer satisfaction and loyalty (Montgomerie and Roscoe 2013). Understanding the GA's specific needs and tailoring offerings accordingly is crucial. Moreover, effective communication of the value proposition and its demonstrable impact can justify premium pricing compared to competitors.

### **3. Cultural fit between supplier and GA**

Cultural fit goes beyond mere geographic proximity. It represents an alignment of values, business practices, and organizational behaviors. Wendt (2015) suggests that shared cultural bases strengthen the GA relationship, expanding its scope and enhancing performance. This shared background facilitates smoother interactions, deeper understanding of each other's business principles, and fosters trust more readily. Toyota, for instance, effectively coordinates its GAs by aligning its corporate culture with its customers, promoting shared values such as respect and continuous improvement (Jumreorn and Promprasit 2009). This congruence strengthens communication, expedites conflict resolution, and fosters stronger teamwork, eventually leading to improved performance. Cultural fit is not a static element, but it is a continuous process of adaptation. Recognizing cultural nuances, respecting differences, and demonstrating cultural sensitivity are key to building stronger relationships.

### **4. Internal and external support system**

The strength and effectiveness of support systems, both internally within the supplier's organization and externally in the business environment, heavily influence GA success. Internally, key elements include securing senior management support, allocating adequate resources, and cultivating a corporate culture that recognizes the value of GAs. The role of the GA manager is crucial in facilitating communication and collaboration across different internal divisions. This necessitates prioritizing effective employee communication and close engagement with human resource departments to ensure alignment and understanding of GAM goals across the organization (Ivens et al. 2016; Millman and Wilson 1996; Niersbach 2016). Internal seminars and events foster knowledge exchange and strengthen ties between departments, creating a shared awareness of GAM goals and strategies. Millman (1996) describes that GA manager is a customer's advocate, promoting GAM within their organization and ensuring GA priorities are recognized and fulfilled. This internal advocacy is crucial for delivering on sales promises and maintaining efficient information flow, both directly impacting GA performance (Shi et al. 2010; Toulan, Birkinshaw, and Arnold 2006).

Externally, establishing and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders such as distributors, marketing partners, regulatory organizations, and even the GA's internal divisions prove critical. These connections are essential for understanding and meeting the GA's specific needs and expectations. Siemens AG exemplifies this effectively, with GA managers serving

as bridges between the organization and its GAs, ensuring the company can adapt to the unique and complex requirements of its customers (Senn 2006). Building internal support systems involves not only securing resources but also creating a culture of accountability and control. Also, leveraging technology to facilitate communication and collaboration between internal and external stakeholders can significantly enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

## **5. Dependency of GA**

The degree to which a GA relies on a supplier significantly impacts relationship behaviors. Studies suggest that increased dependence on a supplier translates to greater business opportunities for both buyer and supplier (Birkinshaw, Toulan, and Arnold 2001; Harvey, Myers, and Novicevic 2003). Pharmaceutical companies like Pfizer and Roche have successfully built robust dependencies by providing cutting-edge products and solutions that are difficult to replicate (Wang 2024). This reliance not only guarantees a consistent flow of business but also creates opportunities for collaborative research and development initiatives, further strengthening the partnership. Building mutually beneficial dependencies goes beyond simply offering unique products or services involves joint planning, information sharing, and a commitment to long-term growth together.

## **6. Strategic alignment between supplier and GA**

Strategic alignment refers to ensuring that the supplier's goals, objectives, and strategies are congruent with those of their GAs. Establishing this alignment is essential for the long-term success of the GAM program (Wilson and Weilbaker 2004). In this sense, Microsoft's alliances with its key corporate customers are noteworthy. By strategically aligning its support services and technological advancements with those of its GAs, Microsoft has effectively developed mutually beneficial collaborations that nurture growth and success. Maintaining strategic alignment is an ongoing process requiring continuous communication, adaptation to changing market conditions, and a willingness to adjust strategies as needed.

## **5.4 Conceptual model and research propositions**

This study embraces complexity theory, particularly the principle of equifinality, in order to comprehend the GA performance. Equifinality posits that multiple pathways, not just one, that can lead to the same outcome (Fiss 2011; Woodside 2014). Applied to GAM, this translates to the understanding that there is no single "silver bullet" for success. Instead, diverse combinations of factors such as relationship quality, product quality & pricing, cultural fit,

support systems, dependency level, and strategic alignment, may all contribute to achieving optimal outcomes.

**Figure XVIII:** Conceptual model

Source: Designed by the author. Illustration idea inspired by Leischnig, Ivens and Henneberg (2015).

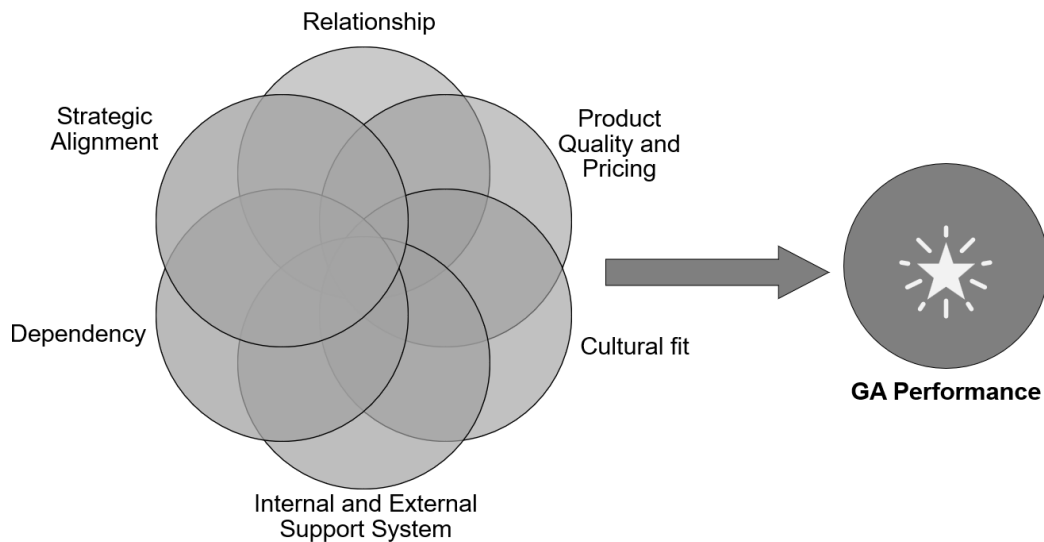


Figure XVIII visually depicts this multifaceted nature. It highlights the combinations of these six factors, emphasizing their potential to interact and influence GA performance in various configurations. Drawing upon the conceptual model and insights from existing literature, the following three research propositions guide this study:

**Proposition 1:** There is not a single, universally optimal configuration of GAM factors guaranteeing success. Instead, several equally effective configurations of these factors could lead to high GA performance.

**Proposition 2:** The presence or absence of specific factors within each configuration significantly impacts overall GA performance. This influence is highly dependent on how these elements interact and combine with other conditions.

**Proposition 3:** The cultural context plays a crucial role in shaping GAM. It leads to unique configurations that reflect the distinct cultural characteristics within country-specific contexts.

Building on this conceptual framework and research propositions, the subsequent section discusses the methodology used in this study.

## 5.5 Research methodology

At its core, fsQCA rests upon a firm foundation of mathematical principles, drawing upon set-theory and Boolean algebra. This method ensures rigor and clarity in the analysis, helping towards uncovering the hidden configurations that shape success (Rihoux and Ragin 2008). Moreover, fsQCA possesses an inherent flexibility, adapting readily to diverse research settings. Whether grappling with small sample sizes or larger datasets, fsQCA remains a valuable tool, particularly relevant in domains like GAM where extensive data collection could be challenging (Pappas and Woodside 2021).

Nevertheless, fsQCA's strength lies in its ability to seamlessly integrate qualitative and quantitative data. This distinctive feature enables researchers to construct a more detailed portrayal of complex phenomena, uncovering nuances that might otherwise remain obscured (Huang, Rey-Martí, and Miquel-Romero 2018). By embracing both quantitative measurements and qualitative insights, fsQCA offers a rigorous understanding of the forces shaping GA performance.

The effectiveness of fsQCA is not merely theoretical, but it has demonstrated successful in various fields, including e-commerce, social media, education, entrepreneurship, and so forth (Beynon, Jones, and Pickernell 2016; Capatina et al. 2018; Pappas et al. 2016; Sánchez-Mena, Martí-Parreño, and Miquel-Romero 2019). Its relevance to particularly GAM is further underscored by the work of Shi et al. (2010) where, they were able to pinpoint critical factors like global strategic priority and globalization, revealing their significant impact on GAM performance.

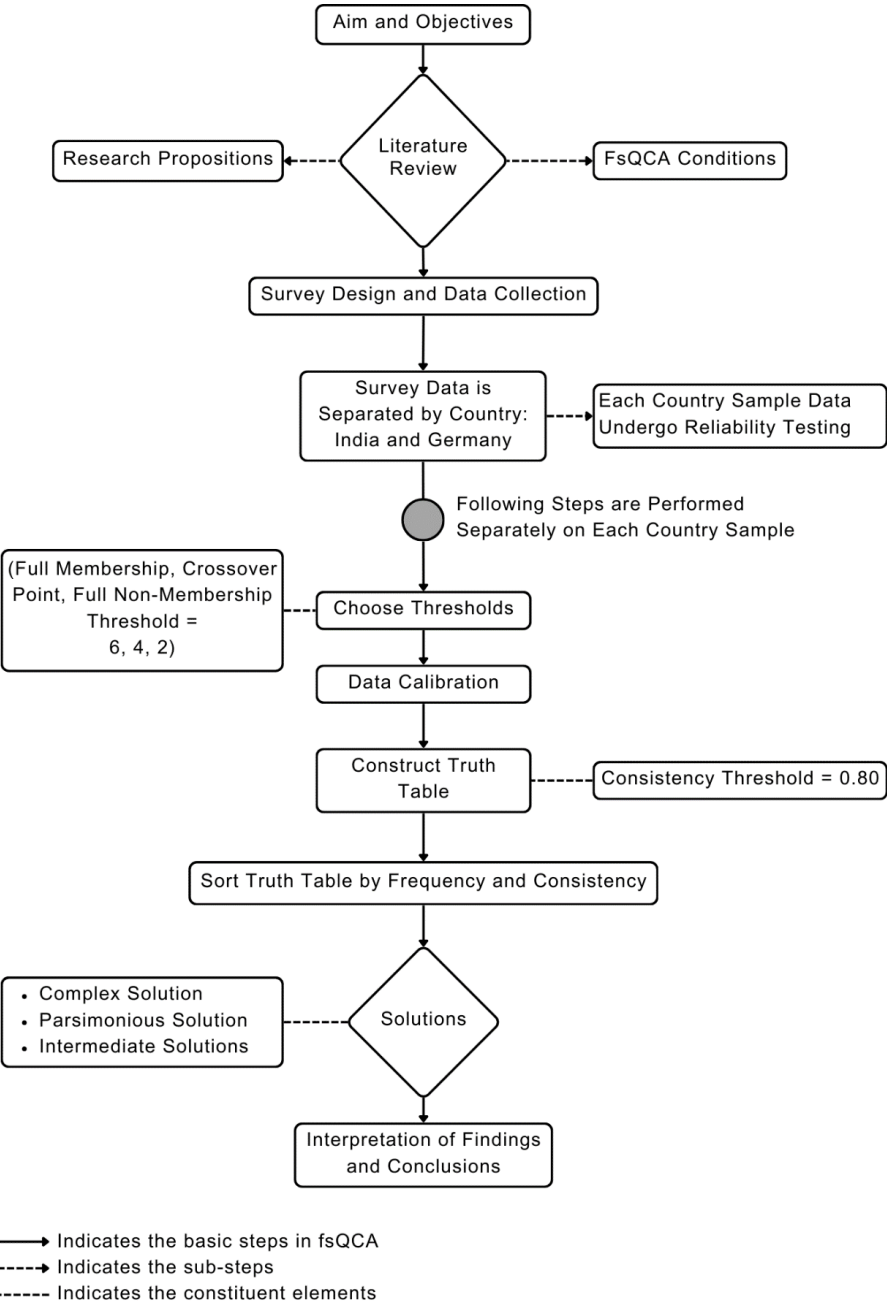
In this study, the fsQCA framework outlined by Pappas and Woodside (2021) in their insightful article, "Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA): Guidelines for research practice in Information Systems and marketing" is followed. Each stage of the analysis adheres to their recommendations, ensuring methodological rigor and transparency. By using fsQCA approach, the interlinks between factors such as relationship quality, product offerings, cultural fit, support systems, dependency levels, and strategic alignment are analyzed. This exploration promises to unveil the previously hidden configurations that pave the path for successful GAM, empowering organizations to unlock their full potential for growth and competitive advantage.

The fsQCA study begins by setting its aims and objectives. Next, a literature review and insights from previous fsQCA studies on GAM helped to identify key GA performance conditions.

Surveys are then conducted in India and Germany, collecting data for fsQCA analysis. This data is divided into two parts: one for India and one for Germany. The fsQCA software analyzed each country’s data separately and identified unique configurations that optimize GA performance. These findings are detailed and interpreted. The process is illustrated in Figure XIX, with each step clearly explained.

**Figure XIX:** Sequential steps adopted in the FsQCA method for this study

Source: Developed by the author based on the fsQCA approach suggested by Pappas and Woodside (2021).



## **5.6 Data collection**

This section examines the detailed data collection process used in this fsQCA study, breaking down the three key components: survey design, respondent demographics, and the data collection approach.

### **5.6.1 Structured enquiry in survey designing**

The survey instrument serves as the cornerstone of data collection, meticulously constructed using Google Forms (detailed in the appendix section). The introductory page of the survey aims to set the stage by providing a clear overview of the study's objectives while simultaneously gathering crucial demographic information. This includes the respondents' geographical location, industry affiliation, current organizational position, and company size.

The core of the survey lies in its following seven core factors, each one is aligned with a distinct aspect of the study: relationship with GA; product quality and pricing; cultural fit; internal and external support systems; dependency of GA; strategic alignment; GA performance. Each factor is operationalized into five distinct questions measured on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from "completely disagree" (1) to "completely agree" (7). This scale selection, validated by Boone and Boone (2012), facilitates precise capture of participant opinions while offering a nuanced spectrum for response. It aligns with similar fsQCA studies where complex constructs are assessed through scaled questions (Pappas and Woodside 2021; Wang et al. 2021). Beyond pre-determined inquiries, the survey incorporates an open-ended section for qualitative insights that the Likert scale may not fully capture. This allows for deeper exploration of perspectives beyond what structured responses can reveal. Finally, the survey concludes by providing the author's contact details, encouraging participants to reach out for further clarification or information if needed. This not only strengthens research credibility but also fosters ongoing dialogue and potential collaboration.

Operational definitions for each condition are presented in Table IX. To determine the weights of each condition in the analysis, the average value of each is calculated, providing a robust basis for interpreting results while maintaining rigorous investigation standards.

### **5.6.2 Respondent demographics**

This study employed a targeted sampling approach to recruit participants actively involved in GAM across India and Germany. A total of 130 individuals contributed to the study, with an

even distribution between the two countries (64 from India and 66 from Germany). This sample size aligns with the flexibility of fsQCA methodology, as highlighted by Pappas and Woodside (2021), who advocate for its applicability to diverse sample sizes ranging from very small (around 50) to extremely large (thousands). This claim finds additional support in studies conducted by Kraus et al. (2018) and Leischnig et al. (2015), demonstrating the methodology's adaptability to various research contexts.

Beyond geographic diversity, the study sought to capture insights from a range of industry backgrounds. Notably, participants from the technology, electronics, and telecommunication sector constituted a significant portion (47%), reflecting the rapid adoption of GAM programs in these industries. This trend can be attributed to two key factors: (1) the inherent need for high customization in their products and services in these business sectors, demanding complex and personalized GAM strategies (Yip and Bink 2007); and (2) the rapid pace of technological advancement, necessitating a flexible and responsive customer management approach that GAM programs can effectively provide (Buttle and Maklan 2019).

Organizational size also played a role in participant demographics. A significant 61% responses are from either major global corporations (employing 5,001 – 20,000 individuals) or global enterprises (over 20,000 individuals), demonstrating the ability to provide substantial resources and financial investment typically required for successful GAM program implementation and maintenance (Guesalaga et al. 2018; Yip and Bink 2007). However, the study deliberately incorporated a broader industry landscape, including representatives from the automotive (19%), pharmaceutical (16%), and logistics & supply chain (5%) sectors, alongside a diverse category consisting various other businesses (13%). This multi-faceted industry landscape enriches the understanding of GAM applicability across diverse market segments.

In terms of professional roles, global and KA managers formed the largest group (63%), reflecting the core focus of GAM programs. The presence of senior management positions (CEO, CFO, CMO, and similar) at 5% indicates involvement from high-level decision-makers. Sales and marketing roles contributed 13%, highlighting the crucial role of customer-facing functions in GAM success. Technical support or service roles followed with 13%, demonstrating the importance of technical expertise in building strong relationships with GAs. The remaining 6% contains various other functional areas.

While the study did not collect gender data due to its specific focus, future investigations could research the inclusion of gender diversity to offer a more detailed understanding of participant profiles and potential influences on GA performance. By delving into these diverse demographic details, the study paints a clear picture of the valuable expertise and varied backgrounds that contributed to its findings. This enriched understanding strengthens the generalizability of the results and lays the foundation for future research endeavors.

### **5.6.3 Data collection approach**

The data collection process in this fsQCA study involved a targeted approach to reach professionals actively engaged in GAM. Social networking platforms like LinkedIn and Xing, recognized hubs for professional connections, played a crucial role in participant outreach, echoing the successful methodology employed by Rihoux and Ragin (2008) for their effectiveness in reaching specific professional groups. To expand the study's reach, participating managers were encouraged to distribute the survey within their professional networks, potentially reaching individuals with valuable insights. Additionally, managers from a previous study were directly invited via email, resulting in a remarkable participation rate and further dissemination through their own networks. The email template used for this recruitment is included in the appendix section.

Recognizing the diverse preferences of participants, the survey was offered in both digital and printed formats, ensuring broader participation and catering to individual needs. This flexibility was further evident in the small number of participants who opted for the physical paper version. To acknowledge and incentivize participation, a random draw offered a 20 Euro Amazon eGift Voucher to 10 lucky participants. Additionally, all participants were promised access to the finalized study results upon publication. This not only served as an incentive but also fostered a sense of contribution and involvement among participants. By employing these outreach methods, the study successfully gathered valuable data from a diverse pool of GAM professionals.

## **5.7 Data analysis**

This data analysis section covers three critical topics: data screening and reliability testing, data calibration, and truth table construction. Initially, data screening and reliability testing are carried out to confirm the data sets integrity and consistency, which is a critical stage in laying the groundwork for subsequent research. This is followed by data calibration, an essential

procedure that converts raw data into a fsQCA-compatible format, facilitating interpretation and analysis within the set-theoretic framework. Finally, the truth table is created, reflecting every possible set of causative factors versus the outcome and refined using specific frequency and consistency criteria.

### 5.7.1 Data screening and reliability test

In this fsQCA study, survey data was initially divided into two separate groups based on national demographics: India and Germany. This division was necessary to enable independent assessments of fsQCA configurations for each country. A detailed review of the entire sample was carried out during the data screening stage. As a result, four situations that were invalid were identified and then eliminated. As an example, in a noticeable incident, a participant gave the highest possible score (7 out of 7) to every question on the survey. In a similar vein another participant consistently assigned a rating of 4 out of 7 to all questions. Uniform responses in the context of GAM are very rare. It is important to note that the survey was structured in a way that required participants to answer all questions, which prevented the submission of incomplete responses.

The reliability of the samples was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha (CA), as suggested by Pappas and Woodside (2021). CA, an instrument developed by Lee Cronbach in 1951, serves as an indicator of the internal consistency of a test or scale, with scores ranging from 0 to 1 (Cronbach 1951). As previously noted, this research study demonstrates that fsQCA can also be conducted with a sample size of around 50 cases. Therefore, in accordance with the suggestion, the reliability of the sample is assessed using CA. The CA is calculated using the formula provided below:

$$\alpha = \frac{N}{N - 1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum \text{Variances of each item}}{\text{Variance of total score}} \right)$$

Where  $\alpha$  represents CA and N is the number of items (in this case, N=7).

The commonly accepted threshold for CA in fsQCA investigations is 0.7, as supported by work from Pappas and Woodside (2021) and Leischnig, Ivens, and Henneberg (2015). The CA values for both samples in this study surpassed the threshold, with the German sample achieving a CA value 0.84 and the Indian sample scoring 0.74. This indicates that the survey data demonstrated satisfactory reliability.

### 5.7.2 Data calibration

Data calibration in social science research refers to the process of converting raw data into a format that is suitable for analysis, particularly in studies that employ qualitative comparative methods like fsQCA. According to Schneider and Wagemann (2012, p. 32), calibration is “the process of using empirical information on cases for assigning set membership to them.” The data is calibrated using fsQCA software version 4.1. In fsQCA, the calibration process involves choosing three qualitative anchors: the threshold for complete membership, the threshold for full non-membership, and the threshold for the crossover point. The thresholds are crucial in establishing the extent to which cases belong to a set or its opposite. In the framework of this study, a 7-point Likert scale was employed, with values ranging from 1 (representing “not at all”) to 7 (showing “very much”). The calibration thresholds adopted are: The full membership threshold ( $n_1$  in fsQCA application=6), the crossover point ( $n_2=4$ ) and the full non-membership threshold ( $n_3=2$ ). The calibration thresholds were determined based on suggestions from Pappas and Woodside (2021) for such study.

### 5.7.3 Truth table

After the calibration process is complete, the fsQCA algorithm produces a truth table that consists of  $2^k$  rows. Here, “k” represents the number of outcome predictors. Each row in the truth table represents a unique combination of these predictors. The truth table is subsequently revised. Frequency refers to the number of observations that correspond to each combination, while consistency, as described by Fiss (2011), quantifies the degree to which cases fit to the set-theoretic relationships in a solution. In order to evaluate subgroup relationships effectively, a frequency cut-off point is specified to ensure a sufficient number of empirical observations. For this study, a threshold of one is considered suitable, in accordance with Rihoux and Ragin (2008) suggestion for samples of small and medium sizes. Nevertheless, when dealing with bigger samples, such as 150 or more cases, it is recommended to choose a higher cut-off value. Furthermore, this study uses a consistency threshold of 0.8. In the context of fsQCA, this value indicates that a causal combination is considered adequately aligned with the outcome if it appears in 80% of the cases. This criterion was purposefully chosen to allow for an extensive investigation yet reflecting the inherent complexity of social phenomena.

## 5.8 Research findings

This section uncovers the of the key findings, revealing the configurations identified through fsQCA analysis.

### 5.8.1 FsQCA configurations

FsQCA reveals three distinct solutions, each providing a unique perspective on the factors influencing GA performance (Pappas et al. 2016). These solutions are as follows:

**Complex solution:** This includes all logically possible combinations of causal factors, offering an all-inclusive yet potentially complex explanation (Pappas and Woodside 2021). For instance, high motivation + good communication + strong leadership lead to high productivity. It represents the most detailed explanation, including all nuances.

**Parsimonious solution:** Here, the focus shifts to identifying the bare essentials, the core conditions necessary for achieving the desired outcome (Ragin 2009). For example, high motivation leads to high productivity, suggesting motivation is the key driver, even if other conditions vary.

**Intermediate solution:** Balancing complexity and simplicity, this solution includes both essential elements and relevant additional factors, creating a more comprehensive understanding (Rihoux and Ragin 2008). For example, it might indicate that high motivation + good communication (but not necessarily strong leadership) lead to high productivity, combining essential and contextually relevant conditions.

Within these solutions, we encounter the concept of “peripheral conditions.” These factors, while deemed relevant through theoretical lenses, are not considered strictly necessary in the most basic model of causal relationships. These are the secondary roads that may offer alternative routes but are not always crucial for reaching the destination (Pappas and Woodside 2021). In contrast, “core conditions” stand tall as the primary highways, directly and demonstrably connected to the outcome.

The fsQCA analysis examines data from both India and Germany, uncovering configuration patterns specific to each region. These nuances are discussed in greater detail in the following sections. Notably, short forms are used for conditions and the outcome variable (For example, R for relationship with GA, P for GA performance). The suffixes “i” and “g” indicate whether

they pertain to India or Germany, respectively. By exploring these configurations, this study illuminates the unique pathways leading to successful GA performance in different contexts.

### 5.8.1.1 FsQCA configurations in the Indian context

This section dives deep into the fsQCA findings for the Indian context, illuminating the distinct configurations, as depicted in Table X and visualized in Table XI, that pave the way for optimal GA performance. By understanding these pathways, organizations can tailor their strategies to achieve success in such a market.

Moving beyond the traditional quest for a singular key to success, the fsQCA analysis unveils a captivating reality within the realm of GA performance. There is no universal solution. Rather, a diversified array of complicated patterns arises, each indicating a distinct set of conditions favorable to high GA performance.

**Table X:** Intermediate solution in the Indian context

Source: Created by the author, based on data analysis conducted with FsQCA software.

Configurations	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
$R_i * IES_i * \sim D_i$	0.416344	0.0590834	0.975421
$R_i * PQP_i * C_i * IES_i$	0.657096	0.052089	0.998322
$R_i * C_i * IES_i * SA_i$	0.571876	0.00773054	1
$R_i * PQP_i * D_i * SA_i$	0.579975	0.0473035	1
$R_i * \sim PQP_i * \sim C_i * IES_i * \sim SA_i$	0.153874	0.00920296	0.975496
Solution Coverage: 0.82367			
Solution Consistency: 0.983084			

The investigation brings to light several key configurations that pave the way towards GA performance:

**Solution 1:** Autonomy, support, and independence

This pathway features a robust relationship with GA ( $R_i$ ), a well-developed Internal and external support system ( $IES_i$ ), and the absence of dependency of GA ( $D_i$ ). With a raw coverage of 0.416344, it signifies a moderately common route to success, further solidified by its high consistency of 0.975421. This configuration highlights the importance of strong relational ties while granting GAs autonomy. Additionally, a reliable support system proves vital for smooth operations, demonstrating the effectiveness of this balanced approach.

**Solution 2:** A multifaceted approach to performance

This configuration combines strong  $R_i$  with high product quality and pricing ( $PQP_i$ ), cultural fit between supplier and GA ( $C_i$ ), and a robust  $IES_i$ . Its highest raw coverage (0.657096) emphasizes its prevalence as a primary pathway, further reflected by near-perfect consistency (0.998322). This finding underscores the power of a multifaceted approach, aligning relational, operational, and cultural dimensions. Consider a scenario where a supplier offers excellent products at competitive prices, fosters strong relationships with the GA, and demonstrates cultural sensitivity, all underpinned by a dependable support system.

**Solution 3:** Strategic alignment and collaboration

This configuration emphasizes the potent synergy between collaboration and strategic alignment. Similar to the previous pathway, it includes strong  $R_i$ ,  $C_i$ ,  $IES_i$ , and strategic alignment ( $SA_i$ ) between supplier and GA. Notably, it shows perfect consistency (1.0), indicating an unfailing link to high performance. Its slightly lower raw coverage (0.571876) suggests it might be less frequent than the multifaceted approach, but no less significant. This configuration highlights the value of aligning strategic goals with those of the GA, fostering a collaborative environment conducive to success.

**Solution 4:** Managing dependency wisely

This pathway demonstrates the ability to turn dependency into an advantage. Combining  $D_i$  with  $PQP$ ,  $SA_i$ , and strong  $R_i$  results in a configuration with high raw coverage (0.579975) and perfect consistency (1.0). This underscores the importance of effectively managing dependencies. Even when a GA relies on the supplier, high-quality products, competitive pricing, strategic alignment, and strong relationships can transform this dependency into a positive force driving performance.

**Solution 5:** The power of relationships and support

Even without other factors like  $PQP$  or  $C_i$ , a solid foundation of strong  $R_i$  and robust  $IES_i$  can pave the way to success. This less frequent (0.153874) but consistent (0.975496) configuration emphasizes the power of nurturing relationships and building a reliable support system. Consider a scenario where a supplier prioritizes building strong ties with the GA and establishes a support structure, even if their product offerings or cultural alignment are not perfect. This dedication to relationships and support can still lead to positive outcomes.

**Table XI:** Configurations for achieving high GA performance in the Indian context

Source: Created by the author, based on data analysis conducted with FsQCA software.

	Solutions				
	1	2	3	4	5
Relationship (Ri)	●	●	●	●	●
Product quality and pricing (PQP <sub>i</sub> )		●		●	⊗
Cultural fit (C <sub>i</sub> )		●	●		⊗
Internal and external support System (IES <sub>i</sub> )	●	●	●		●
Dependency (D <sub>i</sub> )	⊗			●	
Strategic Alignment (SA <sub>i</sub> )			●	●	⊗
Raw coverage	0.416344	0.657096	0.571876	0.579975	0.153874
Unique coverage	0.0590834	0.052089	0.00773054	0.0473035	0.00920296
Consistency	0.975421	0.998322	1	1	0.975496
Overall solution coverage	0.82367				
Overall solution consistency	0.983084				

Remarks:

Black circles (●) indicate the presence of a condition, and circles with “x” (⊗) indicate its absence. Large circle (●); core condition, Small circle (●); peripheral condition, Blank space; “don’t care” condition.

**Table XII:** Consistency and coverage of each condition in the Indian context

Source: Created by the author, based on data analysis conducted with FsQCA software.

Condition	Consistency	Coverage
Ri	0.988588	0.918277
PQP <sub>i</sub>	0.901528	0.965313
IES <sub>i</sub>	0.871526	0.975283
C <sub>i</sub>	0.702006	0.978953
D <sub>i</sub>	0.698878	0.964685
SA <sub>i</sub>	0.690411	0.947940

The fsQCA analysis elucidates the individual conditions influencing high performance within the Indian market, utilizing two key metrics: consistency and coverage, as shown in Table XII. These measures illuminate the relevance and impact of each condition.

Relationship with GA (**Ri**) is identified as the top predictor of success, achieving a near-perfect consistency score of 0.988588. This means that strong relationships are almost certain to lead to high GA performance. Additionally, its high coverage scores of 0.918277 shows that strong relationships are common in successful cases in India, emphasizing the importance of robust partnerships in this market.

Product quality and pricing (**PQPi**) rank as significant predictors of success, marked by a consistency score of 0.901528. This showcases their strong reliability, just a notch below the predictor power of relationships with GAs (Ri). With the high coverage score of 0.965313, it's clear that superior product quality and competitive pricing are critical for the majority of successful cases in India, underscoring their importance in the market.

Internal and external support system (**IESi**) shows a consistency score of 0.871526, suggesting a positive, though marginally less strong, connection to high performance than both Ri and PQPi. Yet, its higher coverage scores of 0.975283 underline the widespread impact of robust support systems in successful instances. This finding focusses on operational efficiency and effective communication in the Indian business landscape.

Cultural fit (**Ci**) demonstrates a lower consistency score of 0.702006 compared to previously mentioned factors, indicating it is a less reliable predictor on its own. Despite this, Ci has the highest coverage score of 0.978953, pointing to its commonality among the cases studied. This suggests that while cultural fit alone may not strongly predict success, its impact is significantly enhanced when combined with other factors

Dependency of GA (**Di**) has a consistency score of 0.698878, showing it has a weaker capability to independently predict success, indicating that reliance on GA alone does not strongly forecast success in the Indian context. Nevertheless, its high coverage scores of 0.964685 reveal its frequent presence in the dataset. This underscores the importance of managing dependency effectively while leveraging other strengths

Strategic alignment (**SAi**) shows the lowest consistency score of 0.690411, hinting that its effectiveness in contributing to high performance may depend on the presence of other factors. Although it has a relatively high coverage score of 0.947940, its ability to independently predict

success is less definitive. This observation aligns with the growing recognition of the interaction between global and local strategies as a key to success in emerging markets.

In conclusion, the fsQCA analysis highlights that in the Indian market, “relationships” and “product quality and prices” are the most consistently associated with high performance. “Support systems” are frequent in the majority of successful cases. Although cultural fit and dependency on GAs have lower consistency scores, they still play a significant role when combined with other factors. Strategic alignment, despite being the least consistent predictor, remains important within certain contexts. This mix of factors underscores the complexity of the Indian market, indicating that success relies on a sophisticated combination of global best practices and local adjustments.

### 5.8.1.2 FsQCA configurations in the German context

The fsQCA analysis examines the combination of conditions present in successful organizations within the German market, described in Table XIII and visualized in Table XIV. It moves beyond simplistic explanations, revealing a spectrum of configurations, each representing a distinct pathway to high performance.

**Table XIII:** Intermediate solution in the German context

Source: Created by the author, based on data analysis conducted with FsQCA software.

Configurations	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
PQPg * Cg * SAg	0.799249	0.218216	0.981097
PQPg * IESg * Dg * SAg	0.599624	0.0261033	0.975558
~Rg * ~PQPg * ~IESg * ~Dg * ~SAg	0.104413	0.0052582	0.852761
Rg * PQPg * IESg * ~Dg * ~SAg	0.220094	0.0253522	0.965404
Rg * ~PQPg * ~Cg * IESg * ~Dg * SAg	0.13277	0.0078873	0.961905
Solution Coverage: 0.874178			
Solution Consistency: 0.951359			

#### Solution 1: Synergy of excellence

This configuration, boasting the highest raw coverage (0.799249), emerges as the most common route to success. It underscores the combination of product quality and pricing (PQPg), cultural fit (Cg), and strategic alignment (SAg). The unique coverage (0.218216) signifies its distinct impact on performance, while the highest consistency (0.981097) confirms its reliability in driving success. This synergy between product excellence, cultural understanding, and strategic congruence stands as a fundamental pillar of success in the German market.

**Solution 2:** Leveraging support systems

Another prominent player is the configuration comprising PQPg, internal and external support system (IESg), dependency of GA (Dg), and SAg. With a moderate raw coverage (0.599624), it represents a common, yet slightly less prevalent, pathway. Its unique coverage is relatively low (0.0261033), suggesting it often operates in conjunction with other conditions. However, the high consistency (0.975558) emphasizes its importance, indicating that while this combination is powerful, it might thrive alongside additional factors.

**Solution 3:** Unconventional success

Less frequent, but no less noteworthy, is the configuration characterized by the absence of strong relationships, product quality, support systems, dependency, and strategic alignment. Although its raw coverage (0.104413) and unique coverage (0.0052582) are lower, its presence highlights the possibility of success through unidentified conditions. The lowest consistency (0.852761) suggests this pathway is less reliable and may require specific, yet-to-be-identified factors to flourish.

**Solution 4:** Relationship-driven performance

This configuration demonstrates the enduring importance of strong relationships. The presence of Rg, PQPg, IESg, and the absence of Dg and SAg reveals that even without dependency or strategic alignment, success can be achieved through strong partnerships, quality products, and robust support systems. Its raw coverage (0.220094) and high consistency (0.965404) confirm the reliability of this path.

**Solution 5:** Strategic alignment without the traditional approach

Finally, a unique but reliable pathway emerges strong Rg, absence of PQPg and Cg, presence of IESg, absence of Dg, and presence of SAg. With a raw coverage of 0.13277 and consistency of 0.961905, it emphasizes the strategic alignment's potential even in the absence of typically influential factors. It highlights the ability of strong relationships and strategic alignment to pave the way to success, even when other elements are not present.

The fsQCA analysis reveals diverse paths to success in the German market, with no single route dominating. The configurations identified explain a large share of high-performance instances, evidenced by a solution coverage of 0.874178. With an overall solution consistency of 0.951359, the reliability of these configurations in forecasting success is highlighted. This

analysis sheds light on the complex nature of achieving success in Germany, emphasizing that strategic combinations are crucial for high performance.

**Table XIV:** Configurations for achieving high GA performance in the German context

Source: Created by the author, based on data analysis conducted with FsQCA software.

	Solutions				
	1	2	3	4	5
Relationship (Rg)			⊗	●	●
Product quality and pricing (PQPg)	●	●	⊗	●	⊗
Cultural fit (Cg)	●				⊗
Internal and external support system (IESg)		●	⊗	●	●
Dependency (Dg)		●	⊗	⊗	⊗
Strategic alignment (SAg)	●	●	⊗	⊗	●
Raw coverage	0.799249	0.599624	0.104413	0.220094	0.13277
Unique coverage	0.218216	0.0261033	0.0052582	0.0253522	0.0078873
Consistency	0.981097	0.975558	0.852761	0.965404	0.961905
Overall solution coverage	0.874178				
Overall solution consistency	0.951359				

Remarks:

Black circles (●) indicate the presence of a condition, and circles with “x” (⊗) indicate its absence. Large circle (●); core condition, Small circle (●); peripheral condition, Blank space; “don’t care” condition.

**Table XV:** Consistency and coverage of each condition in the German context

Source: Created by the author, based on data analysis conducted with FsQCA software.

Condition	Consistency	Coverage
Rg	0.844132	0.922051
PQPg	0.948357	0.941988
Cg	0.897465	0.943348
IESg	0.720376	0.911164
Dg	0.784601	0.965565
SAg	0.869671	0.955437

Product quality and pricing (**PQPg**) stand out as the top predictor in the German market, with a consistency score of 0.948357. This indicates that offering high-quality products at competitive prices is nearly a sure path to success, mirroring Germany's deep-rooted value in engineering excellence and cost efficiency. The high coverage scores of 0.941988 reinforce this, showing that this factor is common among most successful cases, further underlining its importance in the market.

Cultural fit (**Cg**) is also a significant predictor in the German market, with a consistency score of 0.897465 and a high coverage of 0.943348. This underscores the importance of aligning with the cultural values and business practices in Germany. The strong correlation and broad coverage demonstrate that success is greatly dependent on an understanding of and integration into the German cultural landscape.

Strategic alignment (**SAg**) shows a strong connection to success in the German market, with a consistency score of 0.869671 and the higher coverage of 0.955437 among all conditions. This emphasizes the importance of aligning an organization's strategy with the objectives of GA and the wider market requirements. It indicates that adapting strategies to suit the specific German context is crucial for achieving success.

Relationship with GA (**Rg**) shows a consistency score of 0.844132, which is slightly lower than other factors, but it has the high coverage at 0.922051. Although not as consistent, strong relationships are still a significant factor in explaining successful cases. This suggests that maintaining positive relationships with GAs is vital in the German business environment.

Dependency (**Dg**) presents an intriguing result, with a consistency score of 0.784601, which is lower than other factors, but it has the highest coverage at 0.965565. This indicates that although dependency on GAs may not consistently be a strong predictor on its own, when it does correlate with success, it accounts for a large number of cases. This could suggest that in the German context, dependent relationships with GAs are frequently managed in a way that leads to successful outcomes, highlighting the effectiveness of such collaborations.

Internal and external support system (**IESg**) records the lowest consistency score of 0.720376, yet it still shows significant coverage at 0.911164. This suggests that support systems do play a role in achieving success, but their impact varies across the German market. It indicates that while some organizations may depend greatly on these support systems, others might find

success through alternative strategies, pointing to a diverse range of successful approaches within the market.

In conclusion, the fsQCA analysis presents a complex landscape of success factors in the German market. “Product quality and prices,” “cultural fit,” and “strategic alignment” are identified as the most consistent predictors, underscoring their essential role. Although “relationships” and “dependency” show slightly lower consistency, they still offer considerable explanatory power, proving their practical importance. Moreover, while “support systems” exhibit the least consistency, they are still important for achieving success. This analysis underscores the need to focus on a variety of factors including product quality, cultural alignment, strategic planning, and effective relationship management to navigate the complexities of the German market successfully.

### **5.8.2 FsQCA correlations between GA performance and cultural factor**

The FsQCA analysis provides an in-depth look at how GA performance is influenced by cultural factors, with specific attention to the cultural contexts of India and Germany. The unique business cultures of each country shape different strategic priorities, which are uncovered in the fsQCA findings, highlighting the importance of understanding these cultural nuances to tailor strategies effectively.

In India, the fsQCA outcomes underscore the pivotal role of relationship (Ri), product quality and pricing (PQP<sub>i</sub>), and the internal and external support system (IES<sub>i</sub>) in determining GA performance. This resonates with India’s relational business environment where personal connections and networks are foundational to business success, echoing the societal value on community and interdependence (Teklemariam 2021). The emphasis on PQP<sub>i</sub> and IES<sub>i</sub> aligns with the Indian tendency for delivering quality products at competitive prices while leveraging extensive support networks, characteristic of India’s multifaceted business landscape (Sethi and Kumar 2013).

Turning to the German context, the fsQCA analysis reveals a strong emphasis on product quality and pricing (PQP<sub>g</sub>), cultural fit (C<sub>g</sub>), and strategic alignment (SAG). These factors reflect Germany’s structured and quality-centric business ethos. The fsQCA findings support the notion that German business culture prioritizes meticulousness in product quality, competitive pricing, and a strategic business orientation that adheres to well-defined processes and long-term planning (House et al. 2002). The consistency and coverage associated with these

factors in the fsQCA results reinforce the German commitment to precision, cultural congruence, and thorough strategic alignment, all of which are ingrained in its low-context communication and business practices (Hofstede 2011).

The fsQCA configurations highlight a contrast in business approaches between India and Germany. India's business landscape is marked by high-context communication, a strong focus on relationships, and flexibility in business practices. In contrast, Germany's approach is characterized by low-context communication, an emphasis on efficiency, and strategic rigor. These cultural tendencies are not just theoretical concepts but are proven by the fsQCA analysis to be vital for the success of GA management in these different cultural contexts. Recognizing and adapting business strategies to align with these cultural nuances is crucial for successfully navigating the global marketplace and achieving business success in varied environments.

### **5.8.3 Testing FsQCA configurations**

The configurations derived from fsQCA require empirical validation to ascertain their reliability and generalizability. The application of SmartPLS4 for analyzing the fsQCA configurations within the German and Indian context provides a quantitative method to understand the relationships between factors impacting GA performance. The software utilizes Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which is well-suited for exploratory studies and complex models (Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2011). This approach allows for the estimation of path coefficients, which indicate the strength and direction of the relationships, and the computation of p-values, which test for the statistical significance of these relationships. A p-value is a measure of the probability that an observed difference could have occurred just by random chance. In social sciences, a p-value of less than 0.05 is commonly accepted as indicating statistical significance, meaning the relationship observed is likely not due to chance (Cohen 1992).

#### **5.8.3.1 Testing FsQCA configurations for Germany**

Analyzing the fsQCA configurations through PLS-SEM provides valuable insights into the factors shaping successful GA performance in the German market, depicted in Figure XX. The breakdown of the key findings are as follows.

**PQP appears dominant:**

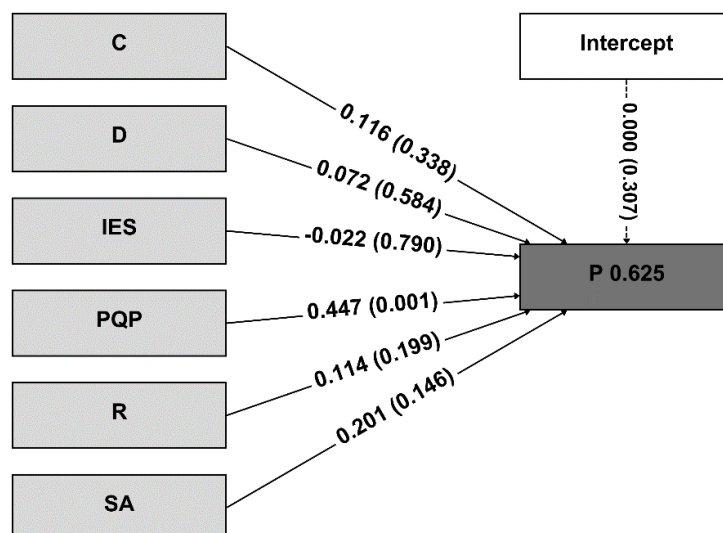
Product Quality and Pricing (PQP) is identified as the leading factor positively influencing GA performance, underscored by a path coefficient of 0.447 and a highly significant p-value of 0.001. This statistical certainty, exceeding 99% confidence, unequivocally confirms that the relationship observed is not random. German customers distinctly value quality and competitive pricing in selecting global partners. This insight strongly supports the fsQCA configurations, highlighting the paramount importance of PQP in the German market.

**A dilemma regarding alignment and fit:**

Cultural fit and strategic alignment present interesting yet not definitively conclusive impacts. They display positive path coefficients (0.116 and 0.201, respectively), hinting at a possible positive effect on GA performance. However, their p-values (0.338 and 0.146) do not meet the standard benchmark for statistical significance. Although this does not offer concrete evidence of their direct influence, their consistency with fsQCA configurations indicates potential significance. To ascertain their impact, further research with larger sample sizes or different analytical methods may be required to uncover how exactly they contribute to GA success.

**Figure XX:** PLS-SEM path coefficients testing indicating p-values for Germany

Source: Created by the author, based on p-value test results from SmartPLS4 application.



### **Unclear impact of IES:**

The path coefficient for the IES is negative and dependency is positive. Their statistical significance is not confirmed, as indicated by p-values exceeding 0.05. This outcome suggests that further investigation is warranted. It's crucial to note that p-values merely reflect the likelihood of the observed results occurring by chance, and results that are not statistically significant do not automatically mean there is no effect. A closer look at the characteristics of these systems and how they interact with other factors might offer important insights. Furthermore, gaining a deeper understanding of how cultural elements and business practices affect the efficiency of support systems and the nature of dependency relationships could be key to a more comprehensive analysis.

### **The paradoxical nature of relationships:**

The Relationship variable offers a perplexing scenario. Its p-value indicates a lack of statistically significant effect on GA performance, challenging the anticipated positive impact of strong relationships. Although the findings lack statistical significance, it would be premature to disregard them completely. A more thorough investigation, taking into account cultural subtleties and the possible mediating or moderating roles of relationships, might explain this surprising result. It's conceivable that, within the German context, certain kinds of relationships or specific strategies for managing relationships are crucial for achieving positive outcomes.

This analysis emphasizes the pivotal importance of PQP in the German market, while also pointing out the need for additional research into the interplay of other factors. Investigating with larger sample sizes, applying different modeling methods, and including qualitative studies could offer deeper insights into the determinants of GA performance in Germany, thereby enhancing our understanding of what drives success in this context.

### **5.8.3.2 Testing FsQCA configurations for India**

Analyzing the fsQCA configurations with PLS-SEM provides fascinating insights into the determinants of successful GA performance in the Indian market, as illustrated in Figure XXI.

### **A perpetually dominant nature of IES:**

The internal and external support system plays a crucial role in India, demonstrated by a positive path coefficient (0.429) and a significant p-value (0.004), highlighting its significant impact on GA performance. This result aligns with the fsQCA configurations, underlining the importance

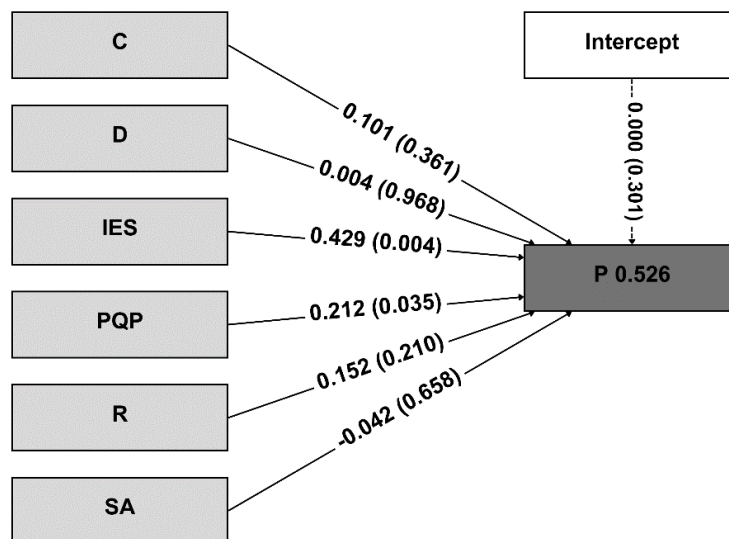
of internal and external relationships in the relationship-oriented Indian market, where a deep understanding of value is essential.

**The importance of PQP:**

An insight into the product quality and pricing in the Indian market highlights the significance of providing good product quality at affordable prices, evidenced by a positive path coefficient of 0.212 and a p-value of 0.035. This indicates that German suppliers may need to adjust their global pricing strategies and develop innovative methods to balance their offerings and pricing to meet the standards of the Indian market.

**Figure XXI:** PLS-SEM path coefficients testing indicating p-values for India

Source: Created by the author, based on p-value test results from SmartPLS4 application.



**The unusual characteristics of R:**

While the relationship factor has a positive path coefficient, its statistical insignificance (p-value 0.210) could initially suggest it's not crucial. Yet, the fsQCA analysis demonstrates, showing high consistency (0.988588) and significant coverage (0.918277) for the R factor, implying it could still be influential despite what the PLS-SEM results indicate. This contrast calls for a more detailed examination of the role relationships play in performance within the Indian context. It also becomes evident that merely having good relationships is insufficient for achieving favorable GAM outcomes in the Indian market, pointing towards the need for a multifaceted approach.

**Other potential elements for further exploration:**

Cultural fit and dependency exhibit positive trends in their path coefficients, hinting at possible beneficial effects on GA performance. Yet, their non-significant p-values (cultural fit at 0.361, dependency at 0.968) highlight the necessity for additional research. Exploring these factors with larger sample sizes or employing alternative analytical models could illuminate their actual influence and uncover the precise ways they contribute to GA success in India.

This analysis underscores the significance of IES and reveals interesting insights concerning the PQP and R conditions. The implications of these findings will be thoroughly discussed in the following section.

## **5.9 Research implications**

This study, employing fsQCA to investigate causal configurations impacting GA performance across cultural contexts (India and Germany), yields significant theoretical and managerial implications that contribute to the existing discourse on KAM and GAM.

### **5.9.1 Theoretical implications**

The fsQCA study, investigating causal configurations impacting GA performance across distinct cultural contexts (India and Germany), yields profound theoretical implications that enhance our understanding of KAM and GAM.

First, the study underscores the necessity for country-specific approach in GAM, aligning with Cho, Moon, and Kim's (2009) call for detailed, context-driven methodologies. This is evident in the contrasting results between India and Germany, particularly concerning the relationship factor. This reinforces the need to move beyond universal models and embrace cultural nuances when developing effective GAM strategies.

Second, the findings from the Indian case challenge the traditional, linear understanding of relationships in GAM. The non-significant relationship component in the PLS-SEM model, despite its high fsQCA consistency, suggests the potential for non-linear and threshold effects within relational dynamics. The Indian context serves as a compelling example of the non-linear and culturally contingent nature of RM, urging scholars to re-evaluate models across diverse settings.

Third, the German results unveil the interlinks between PQP, cultural fit, and strategic alignment. While not statistically significant individually, their potential as “hygiene factors” should not be disregarded (Terho et al. 2015). This adds to the existing research that often examines direct effects, providing empirical evidence for Fiss’ (2011) configurational theory in international business. It highlights the multi-dimensional nature of GAM tactics and underscores the importance of considering interactions between factors instead of focusing solely on independent effects.

Fourth, the study demonstrates the value of integrating cultural aspects into GAM analysis. It enriches the body of knowledge in strategic management, particularly B2B marketing, by illustrating the link between cultural nuances and strategic requirements. This study bridges the gap between cultural studies and strategic management, emphasizing the significance of cultural knowledge in developing and executing effective GAM strategies. Further research exploring the nuanced interactions between cultural factors and various GAM components offers promising avenues for advancing our understanding of cross-cultural business relationships.

Finally, this study offers valuable insights, but continued research is crucial to refine our understanding of the complex and nuanced nature of GAM success across diverse cultural contexts. Future research employing larger samples, alternative modeling techniques, and qualitative inquiries can examine specific mechanisms underlying the observed relationships. Such efforts will contribute to the development of more contextually nuanced and theoretically robust models for effective GAM strategy formulation in a globalized business landscape.

### **5.9.2 Managerial implications**

The fsQCA study offers valuable insights for GA managers navigating the complexities of culturally diverse markets, particularly India and Germany.

First, for Indian markets, the study underscores the crucial role of Product Quality and Pricing (PQP). Prioritizing both high-quality offerings and competitive pricing strategies is key to success in this highly competitive environment, aligning with Sheth’s (2011) perspective on emerging markets. However, the study highlights a potential caveat: overinvesting in complex support systems. GAMs should carefully optimize resource allocation to avoid draining funds from areas with a higher impact on performance.

Furthermore, building relationships in India requires a nuanced approach. While relationships remain important, their impact might be non-linear and context dependent. Shifting the focus from quantity to quality of interactions and strategically integrating relationships into operations, as suggested by Sharma (2006), proves to be a more effective strategy.

Second, as expected, PQP remains critical for success in Germany, reinforcing the country's emphasis on quality and value. Managers must ensure their products and services meet the demanding high-quality standards of the German market.

Aligning with Germany's preference for careful planning and cultural sensitivity (Zupancic 2008), these factors should be considered foundational elements for long-term success. Although they might not directly influence performance, they create a favorable environment for establishing trust and sustainable relationships.

Finally, the study emphasizes the importance of customizing GAM strategies to the specific cultural and operational characteristics of each target market. fsQCA serves as a valuable tool, guiding managers towards specific factor combinations that optimize performance in diverse contexts. This encourages a culturally aware approach to GAM, recognizing how various factors collectively impact success across different cultures.

By implementing these insights, GAMs can develop targeted strategies that cater to the unique needs and preferences of GAs in different cultural settings. Remember, this is an ongoing process. Continuous adaptation and leveraging new research findings are crucial for navigating the ever-evolving landscape of GAM.

## **5.10 Limitations and directions for future research**

The fsQCA study offers valuable insights into GAM in India and Germany, but it's crucial to acknowledge its limitations and potential avenues for future research. This examination will help us refine our understanding of GAM and develop more effective strategies for managing GAs in diverse cultural settings.

While the study used surveys, this widely adopted method introduces potential biases like social desirability and recall distortions, impacting data accuracy (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Additionally, cross-cultural surveys raise concerns about measurement comparability across varying settings, potentially compromising study validity (Janet A. Harkness 2008). The fsQCA approach, while effective in uncovering complex causal relationships, doesn't quantify their

strength, potentially oversimplifying GAM processes (Rihoux and Ragin 2008). Furthermore, its reliance on Boolean algebra restricts its ability to capture nuances beyond the presence or absence of specific conditions (Fiss 2011). The sample size, although sufficient for fsQCA analysis, might not fully represent the diverse GAM practices across these vast regions (Schneider and Wagemann 2012). This is because fsQCA builds configurations based on the included cases. Finally, representing diverse industries with unique GAM challenges, the data potentially misses industry-specific nuances. For example, the technology and automotive industries likely face distinct challenges compared to pharmaceuticals.

Future research could investigate advanced quantitative methods to gain deeper insights. Segmented regression analysis suggested by Hansen (2017), could evaluate GAM strategies' performance across market segments or organizational phases, providing valuable insights into their application in specific contexts. Hierarchical linear multilevel modeling described by Raudenbush and Bryk (2002) could investigate the interaction between individual competencies and organizational strategies in GAM, shedding light on the complex GAM framework. Network analysis suggested by Borgatti and Halgin (2011) could examine the network of relationships within GAM, moving beyond individual interactions to a broader, network-focused perspective. Deepening our understanding of how cultural differences influence GAM practices in various global markets should be emphasized. Comparative cross-cultural studies can achieve this by analyzing and comparing GAM practices across diverse cultural contexts. While quantitative methods offer valuable insights, future research can also benefit from qualitative methods like interviews or focus groups. These methods can capture richer data and look into specific nuances that might be missed by surveys. Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches could provide a better understanding of GAM across cultures. Longitudinal studies examining how GAM practices evolve over time and across cultures could provide valuable insights. This approach would allow researchers to track changes and identify trends in GAM practices across different cultural contexts.

By acknowledging these limitations and pursuing the suggested future research directions, we can continue to refine our understanding of GAM and develop more effective strategies for managing GAs in diverse cultural settings. This will ultimately lead to improved performance and stronger relationships between global companies and their key accounts worldwide.

## 6 Discussions and conclusions

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Culminating the journey undertaken in this dissertation, this section presents the key findings, their implications, and their contribution to the field. We revisit the research objectives, reflect on their fulfillment, and offer concluding remarks that shed light on the broader meaning and future applications of this work.

### 6.1 Summary of key findings

This section presents a summary of the key findings from three pivotal studies conducted as part of this dissertation, each focusing on different facets of GAM and culture.

#### **Study 1:** Analyzing the structure of GAM

The first study establishes a foundational framework for understanding GAM through the lens of cultural distance. This concept acts as an invisible conductor, influencing the network of internal and external connections that underpin supplier-GA interactions. Technology plays a crucial role in enhancing operational efficiency and facilitating collaborative decision-making within these networks. Notably, GAM emerges as a central bridge, integrating actors, resources, and activities for long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships. Navigating this complex web of relationships effectively requires GA managers to possess cross-network strategic coordination skills that bridge organizational boundaries.

#### **Study 2:** Exploring the depths of Indian business culture

Shifting the focus to Indian business culture, Study 2 reveals both the visible and less apparent cultural aspects that influence GAM practices. German GA managers initially encounter distinct behaviors and beliefs related to communication styles, emotional expression, and the emphasis on respect and harmony. As GAM progresses, deeper cultural dimensions like corporate values, decision-making processes, trust-building, leadership styles, and networking practices come to light, highlighting the importance of moving beyond first impressions and engaging deeply with the underlying cultural norms. The study emphasizes the use of consensus analysis as a tool for gaining clarity and reliability in capturing cultural consensus. Identified key challenges include language and communication style differences, organizational structures, the primacy of trust and relationships, conflict avoidance tendencies, and contrasting time perceptions. Cultural sensitivity, relationship-building, and flexibility are identified as essential aspects for successfully navigating the Indian GAM landscape.

### **Study 3: Mapping the pathways to optimal performance**

The third study seeks the configurations that lead to high GA performance in both India and Germany. In the Indian context, multiple configurations are identified, with a strong relationship with GA and support systems playing a key role in several successful pathways. Interestingly, a configuration emphasizing cultural fit alongside relational and operational dimensions emerges as the most impactful. This underscores the interconnectedness of various factors in achieving high performance. Similarly, in the German context, product quality, cultural fit, and strategic alignment are significant components of high-performing configurations. Statistical testing further refines the understanding of individual conditions like product quality, relationship quality, and support systems in each cultural context.

To conclude, this doctoral research significantly contributes to the understanding of how organizational culture shapes and interacts with GAM practices. By illuminating the varying impacts of cultural dimensions on business practices in two distinct markets, the research offers a valuable analytical framework for guiding multinational companies in their strategic planning and operational execution. Finally, the success of GAs depends on the seamless integration of cultural knowledge, strategic expertise, and lively relationships. This research serves as a conductor's baton, guiding practitioners in composing a successful symphony of collaboration across diverse cultural landscapes.

## **6.2 Reflections on research aims and objectives**

In this section, we will discuss the reflections on the aims and objectives defined at the beginning of this dissertation, exploring the interlinks between GAM and cultural diversity, focusing on India and Germany.

### **Objective 1: Examining the depth and diversity of literature**

The first objective, laying the foundation for the investigation, demanded an extensive dive into the existing literature. Key areas like KAM, GAM, national culture, and organizational culture were investigated in detail. This rigorous review served as a vital compass, highlighting the current knowledge base and pinpointing crucial gaps in our understanding. For instance, while previous research had examined cultural influences on KAM, there remained a dearth of studies specifically focusing on the nuances of GAM, particularly in emerging markets like India. Identifying these gaps prompted more inquiry, guiding the research into new and important areas while addressing contemporary limitations.

**Objective 2:** Developing the conceptual framework as a bridging perspective

Based on information gathered from the literature review, Objective 2 focused on developing a robust conceptual framework. The framework at the core of the study combined crucial components of GAM such as relationship management and collaborative decision-making with important cultural aspects like cultural distance. The framework provided a systematic perspective for analyzing how cultural landscapes impact and guide GAM practices. It provided a clear plan for the following inquiry, offering that it would be systematic and in line with the overall research aim.

**Objective 3:** A qualitative case study of German suppliers and Indian GAs

To truly understand the complexities of culture's influence on GAM, Objective 3 aimed to conduct a qualitative case study focused on the Indian context. This exploration, employing semi-structured interviews with GA managers and industry experts, shed light on the unique cultural factors shaping Indian GAM practices. For instance, the study revealed the prominent role of trust and relationship-building consistent with Hofstede (2016), often taking precedence over purely contractual agreements. This finding resonated with previous research but went further by showcasing its specific manifestations within the GAM context. Additionally, the study yielded a valuable by-product – a specialized framework for achieving cultural performance in Indian business settings. This framework, based on the identified cultural nuances, offers practical tools for organizations navigating the complexities of Indian GAM partnerships.

**Objective 4:** Identifying the configurations for GA success

Objective 4 expanded the research scope by employing a quantitative approach using fsQCA methodology (Rihoux and Ragin 2008). This method enabled the identification of distinct configurations of GAM conditions leading to optimal performance in both Indian and German contexts. Curiously, the study revealed contrasting configurations – in Germany, product quality and cultural fit played key roles aligned with Hofstede (2011), while in India, strong relationships and internal support systems emerged as crucial factors, which is aligned with Teklemariam (2021). These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of cultural influences, requiring nuanced adaptations based on specific contexts.

This reflective analysis highlights the fulfillment of our initial goals and objectives and setting the groundwork for future research in this field.

### **6.3 Concluding remarks**

Each individual is influenced by both the national culture in which they grew up and the culture of the organization that they belong to. National culture influences a person's underlying values, means of communication, and relationship-building approaches, whereas organizational culture influences professional behavior, work ethics, and strategic coordination. This research proposes using these cultural influences to develop authentic, interpersonal relationships that drive both personal and corporate success. Knowing about and incentivizing both national and organizational cultural characteristics can result in more fruitful and impactful business connections. This dissertation examines GAM in Indo-German cultural contexts, underlining the crucial role of cultural factors in establishing successful collaborations. It provides helpful guidance that can be applied to different situations.

The dissertation emphasizes the critical role of relationship building, cultural sensitivity, and strategic alignment in the GAM field. These qualities are especially important in India, which is known for its high-context communication and deeply relationship-oriented trust-centric approach. German businesses, renowned for their structured and efficiency-driven processes, stand to benefit significantly from identifying and harmonizing with their Indian counterparts' cultural nuances. Study 2 revealed the initial difficulties encountered by German GA managers due to divergent approaches to conducting tasks. However, adapting to these peculiarities was discovered to develop greater trust and deepen relationships, which eventually contributed to successful collaborations.

This dissertation shows that GAM methods must be tailored according to each country's distinct cultural and political contexts. By acknowledging and harnessing the distinctive historical connections, cultural values, and political frameworks of India and Germany, it is possible to set the path towards greater and enduring corporate collaborations. For example, Study 3 discovered a configuration in the Indian environment in which strong relationships and internal support systems were critical for high GA performance. This emphasizes the need of German companies investing in building trust with their Indian counterparts and offering robust local support.

In today's geopolitical landscape, the world frequently appears divided between two key global powers: the United States and China. Amidst this division, India emerges as a third, powerful force – the “IndoSphere.” With its distinct soft powers and diplomatic capabilities, India has

the capacity to influence global power dynamics and economics. Understanding Indian cognitive processes and cultural backgrounds is essential for constructing successful relationship-building methods.

Furthermore, the investigation is beyond cultural barriers to evaluate the impact of geopolitical conditions on GAM strategy. India's peaceful proactive neutrality stance in the recent Russia-Ukraine geopolitical conflict may possibly derived from its historical non-alignment policy. This example illustrates how cultural and political ideologies can impact economic interactions, and the use of dialogue and diplomacy could be a viable approach to resolving the conflict. This strategy of non-alignment potentially originates from India's colonial heritage, which established a preference for an independent foreign policy that avoids involvement in big power disputes. To align successfully with India, it is necessary for leaders to understand its culture, which has been shaped by a long history of striving for autonomy and non-alignment. Recognizing and acting on the complexity of India's historical, cultural, and political context can provide important insights for global companies seeking to create or strengthen partnerships in the Indian market.

Culture has a fundamental function in GAM, much like the roots of a tree. Although not immediately visible, it is crucial for providing stability and facilitating growth. While having a deep awareness of cultural nuances does not ensure immediate success in the complex field of GAM, disregarding these differences most certainly leads to failure. This dissertation serves as an extensive guide for future research on Indo-German GAM, specifically focusing on the process of intercultural adaptation in the field of international business. This call to action encourages individuals who are seeking to explore the cultural dynamics that shape the global economic landscape, hence opening the doors to deeper understanding and more meaningful global collaboration.

## 7 References

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## 8 Appendices

### 8.1 KAM and GAM literature summary

Author (s)	Year	Title of the article	Journal
<b>KAM Literature Overview (1979-2024)</b>			
Stevenson & Page	1979	The adoption of national account marketing by industrial firms	IMM
Shapiro & Moriarty	1982	National account management: emerging insights	MSI
Barrett	1986	Why Major Account Selling Works	IMM
Millman & Wilson	1995	From key account selling to key account management	JMP
Millman & Wilson	1996	Developing key account management competences	JMP
Senguputa, Krapfel & Pusateri	1997	Switching costs in key account relationships	JPSSM
Pardo	1997	Key account management in the business-to-business field: The key account's point of view	JPSSM
Sharma	1997	Who prefers key account management programs? An investigation of business buying behavior and buying firm characteristics	JPSSM
Wong	1998	Key to key account management: relationship (guanxi) model	IMR
Ojasalo	2001	Key account management at company and individual levels in business-to-business relationships	JBIM
Homburg, Workman & Jensen	2002	A configurational perspective on key account management	JOM
Abratt & Kelly	2002	Customer-supplier partnerships: Perceptions of a successful key account management program	IMM
Workman, Homburg & Jensen	2003	Intra-organizational determinants of key account management effectiveness	JAMS
Ryals	2005	Making customer relationship management work: the measurement and profitable management of customer relationships	JOM
Ivens & Pardo	2007	Are key account relationships different? Empirical results on supplier strategies and customer reactions	IMM
Madill, Haines & Riding	2007	Managing customer relationships: Account manager turnover and effective account management	IMM
Ivens & Pardo	2008	Key-account-management in business markets: an empirical test of common assumptions	JBIM
Guenzi, Georges & Pardo	2009	The impact of strategic account managers' behaviors on relational outcomes: An empirical study	IMM
Davies, Ryals, Holt	2010	Relationship management: A sales role, or a state of mind? An investigation of functions and attitudes across a business-to-business sales force	IMM

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Ming-Huei, Wen-Chiung	2011	Managing Key Account Portfolios across the Process of Relationship Development	JB2BM
Tzempelikos, Gounaris	2013	Approaching Key Account Management from a long-term perspective	JSM
AlHussan, AL-Husan, FletcherChen	2014	Environmental factors influencing the management of key accounts in an Arab Middle Eastern context	IMM
Friend, Johnson	2014	Key account relationships: An exploratory inquiry of customer-based evaluation	IMM
Davies, Ryals	2014	The effectiveness of Key Account Management practices	IMM
Gounaris, Tzempelikos	2014	Relational key account management: Building key account management effectiveness through structural reformations and relationship management skills	IMM
Tzempelikos	2015	Top management commitment and involvement and their link to key account management effectiveness	JBIM
Ivens, Pardo, Niersbach	2016	Firm-internal key account management networks: Framework, case study, avenues for future research	IMM
Leischnig, Ivens, Niersbach, Pardo	2018	Mind the gap: A process model for diagnosing barriers to key account management implementation	IMM
Ivens, Leischnig, Pardo, Niersbach	2018	Key account management as a firm capability	IMM
Guesalaga, Gabrielsson, Rogers, Ryals	2018	Which resources and capabilities underpin strategic key account management?	IMM
Kumar, Sharma, Salo	2019	A bibliometric analysis of extended key account management literature	IMM
Mahlamäki, Rintamäki, Rajah	2019	The role of personality and motivation on key account manager job performance	IMM
Pardo, Ivens, Niersbach	2020	An identity perspective of key account managers as paradoxical relationship managers	IMM
Peters, Ivens, Pardo	2020	Identification as a challenge in key account management: Conceptual foundations and a qualitative study	IMM
Badawi, Battor	2020	Do social capital and relationship quality matter to the key account management effectiveness?	JBIM
McGowan, Simms, Pickernell, Zisakis	2020	The dark side of effectuation in a key account management relationship	JBIM
Leone, Francesco, Simoni.	2021	Key account management and value co-creation in multi-stakeholder ecosystems. A “market access” mix	JBIM
Lautenschläger, Nektarios	2021	Innovation in Key Account Management: Identification of Research Trends and Knowledge Gaps	JB2BM
Badawi, Battor, Badghish	2021	Relational key account management: insights from the Middle Eastern context	JBIM

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Peters, Ivens, Pardo	2022	Key account managers' identification profiles and effectiveness: A fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis	IMM
Hengstebeck, Kassemeyer, Wieseke,	2022	What comprises a successful key account manager? Differences in the drivers of sales performance between key account managers and regular salespeople	IMM
Ivens	2023	Gender issues in key account management research: A systematic literature review and avenues for future research	IMM
Spoor	2023	Improving customer segmentation via classification of key accounts as outliers	JMA
Sadasivan Pillai, Paul,	2023	Key account management in B2B marketing: A systematic literature review and research agenda	JBR
<b>GAM Literature Overview (1996-2024)</b>			
Yip & Madsen	1996	Global account management: The new frontier in relationship marketing	IMR
Millman	1996	Global key account management and systems selling	IBR
Millman, Wilson	1996	Developing key account management competences	JMPAMS
Montgomery, Yip	2000	The challenge of global customer management	MM
Birkinshaw, Toulan, Arnold	2001	Global account management in multinational corporations: Theory and evidence	JIBS
Harvey, Novicevic, Hench, Myers	2003	Global account management: a supply-side managerial view	IMM
Wilson, Millman	2003	The global account manager as political entrepreneur	IMM
Shi, Zou, Cavusgil	2004	A conceptual framework of global account management capabilities and firm performance	IBR
Wilson, Weilbaker	2004	Global Account Management: A Literature Based Conceptual Model	AJB
Atanasova	2007	High-Performance Global Account Management Teams: Design Dimensions, Processes and Outcomes	Dissertation
Zupancic, Müllner	2008	International key account management in manufacturing companies: An exploratory approach of situate differentiation	JB2BM
Shi, White, Zou, Cavusgil	2010	Global account management strategies: Drivers and outcomes	JIBS
Hanna, Saarenketo	2013	The effect of teams on customer knowledge processing, esprit de corps, and account performance in international key account management	EJM
Sinkovics Kim, Lew	2015	Drivers and performance implications of international key account management capability	IBR
Wendt	2015	An Evaluation of Structural, Strategic and Cultural Dimensions in Global Account Management Relationships	Dissertation
Ellis, Iwasaki	2018	Making sense of global key account management (GAM): a case study from Japan	JBIM

Lautenschläger	2020	The impact of cross-cultural factors on global key account management	Dissertation
Forret	2022	Centering the client organization in global account management practice: A phenomenological study.	Dissertation
Kadam, Ivens, Niersbach	2023	The cultural factors in global account management: the case of Indian buyers and German suppliers	JBIM

## 8.2 National and organizational culture literature summary

Author (s)	Year	Title of the article	Journal or Publisher
<b>National Culture Literature Overview (19-2024)</b>			
Hall	1960	The Silent Language in Overseas Business	HBR
Hofstede	1980	Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values	ASQ
Hofstede	1984	Cultural Dimensions in Management and Planning	APJM
Hofstede	1986	Mapping and Interpreting Cultural Differences Around the World	MIR
Kogut, Singh	1988	The effect of national culture on the choice of entry mode	JIBS
Schneider	1988	National vs. corporate culture: Implications for human resource management	HRM
Schneider	1989	Strategy formulation: The impact of national culture	OS
Nakata, Sivakumar	1996	National culture and new product development: An integrative review	JM
Done, Cannon, Mullen	1998	Understanding the influence of national culture on the development of trust	AMR
Schwartz	1999	A Theory of Cultural Values and Some Implications for Work	AP
Morden	1999	Models of national culture—a management review	IJ
Jones, Davis	2000	National culture and innovation: Implications for locating global R& D operations	MIR
Schoenberg	2000	The influence of cultural compatibility within cross-border acquisitions: A review	AIMA
Hofstede	2001	Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations	SAGE
Schwartz	2002	Beyond Individualism/Collectivism: New Cultural Dimensions of Values	JCCP
House et al.	2004	Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies	SAGE
Gupta, Hanges, Dorfman	2004	Dimensions of National Culture: The Hofstede Model of National Culture, GLOBE, and the Schwartz Value Survey	JIBS

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McCrae et al.	2005	Refining the Relationship Between Personality and National Culture	JPSP
Latham, Pinder	2005	Work motivation theory and research at the dawn of the twenty-first century	ARP
Javidan et al.	2006	Conceptualizing and measuring cultures and their consequences: a comparative review of GLOBE's and Hofstede's approaches	JBS
Leidner, Kayworth	2006	A review of culture in information systems research: Toward a theory of information technology culture conflict	JSTOR
Taylor, Wilson	2012	Does culture still matter? The effects of individualism on national innovation rates	JBV
Schneider, Mark, William	2013	Organizational climate and culture	ARP
Patterson	2014	Making sense of culture	ARS
Khlif, Hussainey, Achek	2015	The effect of national culture on the association between profitability and corporate social and environmental disclosure: A meta-analysis	MAR
López-Duarte, Marta, Belén	2016	International business and national culture: A literature review and research agenda	IJMR
López-Duarte et al.	2016	International strategic alliances and national culture: Mapping the field and developing a research agenda	JWB
Prim et al.	2017	The relationship between national culture dimensions and degree of innovation	IJIM
Adedeji, Popoola, San	2017	National culture and sustainability disclosure practices: A literature review	IPJAF
Erthal, Leonardo	2018	National culture and organizational culture in lean organizations: a systematic review	PPC
Boscari, Bortolotti, Netland, Rich	2018	National culture and operations management: a structured literature review	IJPR
Udin	2019	National Culture, Affective Commitment, and Employee Performance: An Integrated Review and Call for Future Research Agenda	JRO
Mansaray, Mansaray Jnr.	2020	The Connection between national culture and organizational culture: A literature review	BIHSS
Goswami, Agrawal, Goswami	2021	Influence of national culture on knowledge management process: literature review and research agenda	IJ
Mitter et al.	2023	Does national culture impact management control systems? A systematic literature review	RMS
Ferreira, Dinis	2024	Linking national culture and entrepreneurship: a systematic literature review	MD
<b>Organizational Culture Literature Overview (1976-2024)</b>			
Handy	1976	So, you want to change your organization? Then first identify its culture	MED

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Hofstede	1980	Culture and organizations	ISMO
Ouchi, Wilkins.	1985	Organizational culture	ARS
Hall	1989	Beyond culture	Anchor
Schein	1990	Organizational culture	APA
Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, Sanders,	1990	Measuring organizational cultures: A qualitative and quantitative study across twenty cases	ASQ
Deshpande, Farley, Webster	1993	Corporate culture, customer orientation, and innovativeness in Japanese firms: a quadratic analysis	JOM
House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, Gupta	2004	Culture, leadership, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies	SAGE
Cameron, Quinn	2011	Diagnosing and changing organizational culture: Based on the competing values framework	John Wiley & Sons
Shahzad, Luqman, Khan, Shabbir	2012	Impact of organizational culture on organizational performance: An overview	IJCRB
Belias, Koustelios	2014	Organizational culture and job satisfaction: A review	IRMM
Putthiwanit	2015	Exploring the impact of organizational culture on employees in multinational enterprise: A qualitative approach	PSBS
Chatman, O'Reilly	2016	Paradigm lost: Reinvigorating the study of organizational culture	ROB
Tan	2019	In search of the link between organizational culture and performance: A review from the conclusion validity perspective	LODJ
Munir, Arifin	2021	Organizational Culture and Impact on Improving Employee Performance	JSSS
Khan, Mishra, Ansari	2021	Role of organizational culture in promoting employee development: a review of literature	LCR
Akpa, Asikhia, Nneji	2021	Organizational culture and organizational performance: A review of literature	IJAEM
Azeem, Ahmed, Haider, Sajjad	2021	Expanding competitive advantage through organizational culture, knowledge sharing and organizational innovation	TIS
Naveed, Alhaidan, Al Halbusi, Al- Swidi	2022	Do organizations really evolve? The critical link between organizational culture and organizational innovation toward organizational effectiveness: Pivotal role of organizational resistance	JIK

Grover, Tseng, Pu	2022	A theoretical perspective on organizational culture and digitalization	IM
Assoratgoon, Kantabutra	2023	Toward a sustainability organizational culture model	JCP
Batool, Ibrahim, Adeel	2024	How responsible leadership pays off: Role of organizational identification and organizational culture for creative idea sharing	STE

### 8.3 Theoretical models and frameworks on national culture

Author (s)	Year	Model or Framework	Research Method	Key Findings
Hall	1976	Context Culture Model	Theoretical, descriptive	Distinguished between high-context and low-context cultures
Hofstede	1980	Cultural Dimensions Theory	Quantitative, survey data	Introduced the concept of cultural dimensions
Schwartz	1992	Cultural Values Theory	Quantitative, survey data	Introduced seven cultural value orientations
Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner	1997	Model of National Culture Differences	Mixed methods, survey data	Identified seven dimensions of culture
Inglehart, Baker	2000	World Values Survey	Quantitative, survey data	Developed two dimensions of cross-cultural variation
Nisbett	2003	Geography of Thought	Experimental and observational	Proposed differences in cognitive processes between East Asians and Westerners
House et al.	2004	The GLOBE Study	Quantitative, survey data	Presented nine cultural dimensions
Kashima et al.	2004	Self and Identity across Cultures	Experimental	Identified cross-cultural differences in self-concept
Leung, Bond	2004	Social Axioms Survey	Quantitative, survey data	Identified five general beliefs that vary across cultures
Earley	2006	Self-Construal Theory	Theory-based	Identified two types of self-construal
Brewer, Venaik	2011	Critique of Hofstede & GLOBE	Literature review and critique	Questioned the dimensionality and measurement of uncertainty avoidance in Hofstede and GLOBE
Taras, Steel, Kirkman	2012	Update and Critique of Hofstede	Meta-analysis and critique	Updated Hofstede's data and questioned the continued validity of Hofstede's dimensions

Minkov	2013	Expansion of Hofstede's Work	Survey data analysis	Proposed a seventh Hofstede dimension
Meyer	2014	The Culture Map	Mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative	Developed eight scales representing cultural differences
Chua, Roth, Lemoine	2015	The Impact of Culture on Creativity	Meta-analysis	Explored how national culture impacts individual creativity
Taras et al.	2016	Integrative Relative Deprivation Model	Theoretical proposition	Proposes that feelings of relative deprivation can predict behavior towards immigrants
Beugelsdijk, Kostova, Roth	2017	Integration of Institutional Theory & Cultural Perspectives	Literature review and synthesis	Proposed a multi-level framework integrating institutional theory and cultural perspectives
Westwood et al.	2017	Cultural Intelligence Model	Survey, structural equation modeling	Offers an integrated framework for understanding the relationship between cultural intelligence, expatriate adjustment and job performance
Caprar et al.	2018	Cultural Identity Integration	Empirical study	Proposes a construct to represent the degree to which an individual's multiple cultural identities are perceived as compatible
Miao et al.	2020	Cross-Cultural Entrepreneurship Model	Empirical study	Proposes that national culture impacts entrepreneurship
Javidan et al.	2022	Cross-Cultural Leadership	Empirical study	Expands on the GLOBE study to provide further insights into cross-cultural leadership styles

### 8.4 Theoretical models and frameworks on organizational culture

Author (s)	Year	Model or Framework	Research Method	Key Findings
Deal, Kennedy	1982	Deal and Kennedy's Cultural Framework	Descriptive	Defined culture based on risk and feedback speed
Schein	1985	Organizational Culture Model	Theoretical	Three levels of culture: artifacts, values, basic assumptions
Cooke, Lafferty	1987	Organizational Culture Inventory	Empirical	Measures behavioral norms and expectations
Cameron, Quinn	1999	Competing Values Framework	Empirical	Identified four types of organizational culture

## Appendices

Goffee, Jones	1998	Double S Cube	Theoretical, Descriptive	Sociability and solidarity as dimensions of corporate culture
Meyer, Allen	1991	Three-component Model of Commitment	Empirical	Affective, continuance, and normative commitment
O'Reilly, Chatman, Caldwell	1991	Organizational Culture Profile	Empirical	Identified seven core values and norms in organizations
Handy	1993	Handy's Cultural Typology	Theoretical	Four types of organizational culture
Kotter, Heskett	1992	Corporate Culture and Performance	Empirical	Relationship between culture and long-term economic performance
Denison	1990	Denison Organizational Culture Model	Empirical	Four traits of culture: involvement, consistency, adaptability, mission
Charles, Handy	1996	Gods of Management	Theoretical, Descriptive	Four types of corporate culture likened to Greek gods
Cooke, Lafferty	1987	Organizational Culture Inventory	Empirical	Measures behavioral norms and expectations
Schein	2004	Organizational Culture and Leadership	Theoretical	Expanded on his earlier model, emphasizing leadership's role
Cameron, Quinn	2006	Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture	Empirical, Theoretical	Update to Competing Values Framework
Laloux	2014	Reinventing Organizations	Theoretical, Case Studies	Describes evolution of organizational culture and consciousness
Earley	2006	Self-Construal Theory	Theory-based	Identified two types of self-construal
Brewer, Venaik	2011	Critique of Hofstede & GLOBE	Literature review and critique	Questioned the dimensionality and measurement of uncertainty avoidance
Taras, Steel, Kirkman	2012	Update and Critique of Hofstede	Meta-analysis and critique	Updated Hofstede's data and questioned the continued validity of his dimensions
Minkov	2013	Expansion of Hofstede's Work	Survey data analysis	Proposed a seventh Hofstede dimension
Chua, Roth, Lemoine	2015	The Impact of Culture on Creativity	Meta-analysis	Explored how national culture impacts individual creativity
Taras et al.	2016	Integrative Relative Deprivation Model	Theoretical proposition	Proposes that feelings of relative deprivation can predict behavior towards immigrants
Ipinazar et al.	2021	Organizational Culture Transformation Model	Theoretical, Empirical	Organizational Culture Transformation Model (OCTM) prototype is developed in order to enable a High-Performance Organization (HPO)

## 8.5 Qualitative interview questionnaire

### Part 1: Fundamentals of GAM

1. Can you describe the importance of Global Account Management (GAM) within your organization?
2. How does GAM differ from Key Account Management (KAM) in your company?
3. Are there distinctions between the roles of a global account manager and a global sales manager in your organization?
4. How is the GAM program structured and integrated within your organization? Is it a separate unit or part of a larger structure? Did you implement KAM before GAM?
5. How many global key accounts does your company have, and what criteria are used for their selection?
6. What is the ratio of global key account managers to key accounts?
7. Who holds the profit and loss responsibility for these global accounts, and how involved is top management?
8. What percentage of your company's total sales is generated by key accounts?

### Part 2: Cultural Factor in GAM

1. How do aspects of national culture (e.g., hierarchy, communication style, time punctuality, negotiating attitude, etc.) influence your GAM practices?
  2. How do elements of corporate culture (e.g., organizational history, strategy, leadership, decision-making hierarchy, etc.) impact your GAM practices?
  3. Have you encountered any cultural clashes with global accounts from India? Please share your experiences.
  4. Have you noticed any specific differences in working with Indian customers compared to others?
  5. At what stage does culture most significantly influence your relationships with international clients (e.g., beginning, middle, after partnership formation, all the time)?
  6. Do you believe the national culture of a country affects the corporate culture of a company, and how do these cultures overlap or diverge?
  7. How is your company addressing cultural issues in GAM? Are there intercultural training programs available for global account managers?
- 

## 8.6 Informed consent for qualitative interviews

### Subject:

Invitation for the expert's interview – Global Account Management and Corporate culture

### Message:

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

I hope you are doing well in the pandemic. I am a PhD student at Otto-Friedrich-University Bamberg. My research attempts to better understand the intercultural barriers that global account managers encounter while managing global major accounts.

You were chosen as an expert because your work and experience are relevant to the topic of Global Account Management. I firmly believe your contributions are critical to this research. As a result, I am asking you for an online semi-structured interview and would like to discuss your experience managing global key accounts.

The interview recordings and participant information will be kept fully anonymous, and upon conclusion of this research project, you will be provided with a detailed report of the results as well as the opportunity to win one of ten 20-Euro Amazon gift vouchers.

I am looking forward to our interview soon.

Sincerely,

Nayan Kadam

The interview consent form is as follows:

### **§1 Purpose of the interview**

This research is being undertaken as part of a PhD dissertation project at Otto-Friedrich-University in Bamberg, Germany. The goal of this study is to identify the GAM organizational construct and cultural elements that influence Global Account Management processes and relationships.

### **§2 Procedure**

Your involvement in this project is entirely voluntary. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. During the interview, you may decline to answer any question(s) for any reason. The qualitative interview will be recorded, and all of the data collected will be used solely for research purposes.

### **§3 Anonymity**

The researcher ensures that no conclusions can be formed based on the participant's identity or personal information, and that all interview recordings will be kept fully anonymous. The findings of this investigation may be published anonymously in an academic journal or book.

### **§4 Benefits for participation**

I anticipate that the findings of this study will provide deeper insights into global account management and company culture, which will certainly help the research community in this area. Following data analysis, each participant will be given a complete summary of the findings. Aside from that, after completing this research project, you will have the opportunity to win one of ten 20-Euro Amazon gift cards.

### **§5 Agreement to participate**

I \_\_\_\_\_, agree to be interviewed for Nayan Kadam's PhD dissertation research "Global Account Management and Culture" at Otto-Friedrich-University Bamberg in Germany. I am aware of the anonymity and confidentiality of the information collected for this project, and I agree that any information received from this research may be used in any manner deemed appropriate for this study.

## 8.7 FsQCA survey guidelines

### Introduction Page

Dear Colleagues,

I am a doctoral candidate researching Global Account Management at the University of Bamberg in Germany. The goals of this survey are to:

1. Determine various combinations of factors that may contribute to a Global Account's high level of performance.
2. Examine the potential differences between India and Germany in managing Global Accounts, focusing on the impact of cultural contexts.

#### Key Points:

- **Duration:** The survey will take approximately five minutes of your time.
- **Privacy:** No login information is necessary. Your responses will be completely confidential and anonymous.
- **Feedback & Inquiries:** If you have any comments or would like more information about this study, please contact me at [nayan-tukaram.kadam@stud.uni-bamberg.de](mailto:nayan-tukaram.kadam@stud.uni-bamberg.de)

Your opinions and insights are valuable for this research. THANK YOU for your time and for your contribution to this scholarly work.

Best wishes,  
Nayan Kadam

### Demographic Questions

#### Where are you located geographically?

**Options:** Germany, India.

#### Select your business sector:

**Options:** Aerospace and Defense, Automotive, Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG), Financial Services, Logistics and Supply Chain, Oil and Gas, Pharmaceuticals, Professional Services, Technology and Electronic, Telecommunications, Other.

#### Choose your current or former role in the organization:

**Options:** Global Account Manager, Key Account Manager, Senior Management/Executive (CEO, CFO, CMO, etc.), Sales and Marketing Team Member, Technical Support/Service Team Member, Finance and Contracting Professional, Other.

#### Select your company size:

**Options:** Small-scale Global Operations: 1-100 employees, Medium-scale Global Operations: 101-500 employees, Large-scale Global Operations: 501-5,000 employees, Major Global Corporation: 5,001-20,000 employees, Global Enterprise: 20,001+ employees.

### GAM Conditions and Outcome Variable

“completely disagree”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	“completely agree”
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#### Factor 1/7: Relationship with Global Account

1. How would you rate the strength of your relationship with the Global Account?
2. Evaluate the consistency of your communication with Global Account.
3. To what extent does Global Account participate in decision-making processes?

4. How available is the Global Account for meetings and discussions?
  5. Please rate your satisfaction with your overall relationship with the Global Account.
- 

**Factor 2/7: Product Quality and Pricing**

1. In your opinion, how satisfied is Global Account with the quality of your products or services?
  2. How often does Global Account raise concerns about the quality of your products or services?
  3. How well do you align your products, services, or prices to meet the specific needs of the Global Account?
  4. Does Global Account expect identical contracts and pricing globally?
  5. How often do pricing disagreements occur with Global Account?
- 

**Factor 3/7: Cultural Fit**

1. How similar are the cultural backgrounds of your teams and Global Accounts?
  2. How well does your decision-making process align with the organizational structure and decision-making practices of Global Account?
  3. How cooperative is Global Account during pricing negotiations?
  4. How transparent are the operational processes of Global Account?
  5. How would you rate the level of trust between your organization and the Global Account?
- 

**Factor 4/7: Internal and External Support System**

1. To what extent does your senior management allocate sufficient financial resources for managing the Global Account?
  2. Does your senior management give your team the authority to make decisions regarding the Global Account?
  3. How prepared are various groups inside your organization, such as internal departments, country leads, and sales units, to collaborate and share information for managing Global Accounts?
  4. How would you rate the level of support you receive from your external partners (e.g., vendors, strategic partners, etc.) in managing global accounts?
  5. How well do you feel supported by the organization in terms of tools and training to effectively manage global accounts?
- 

**Factor 5/7: Dependency of Global Account**

1. How dependent is the Global Account on your products or services?
  2. How important is your company as a supplier to the Global Account?
  3. Do you believe that Global Account views your organization as one of their most important partners?
  4. How significant would the impact be on the Global Account if your company ended the relationship?
  5. How difficult would it be for Global Account to replace you as a supplier?
- 

**Factor 6/7: Strategic Alignment**

1. How well do your products or services align with the strategic objectives of the Global Account?
  2. Do you believe that Global Account views your products or services as an essential part of their success?
  3. How frequently do you engage in strategic planning discussions with Global Account?
  4. To what extent do you tailor your products or services to the requirements of the Global Account?
  5. Are you involved in Global Account's strategic decision-making process?
- 

**Outcome Factor 7/7: Global Account Performance**

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1. Have your global sales to the Global Account increased?
2. Have you succeeded in cross-selling additional products or services to the Global Account?
3. Have your profits from the Global Account increased?
4. Do you expect a long-term relationship with Global Account?
5. Has your overall business performance improved as a result of your partnership with Global Account?

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**Survey Ends**

This Survey has come to an end now. Click the Submit (Senden) button.

If you would like to provide short feedback, please leave your comments below.

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## **8.8 E-Mail invitation for fsQCA survey**

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

I hope you are doing well. We had an expert interview with you for the research project on global account management a few years ago. The research has been published and enclosed is the full article for you. As part of my ongoing study, we aim to find various combinations of factors (customer relationships, product or service, culture, organizational support, dependency, and strategic relevance) that could provide high performance for managing global accounts.

Could you please fill out this 10 minutes survey: <https://forms.gle/VThKJwTgVdtFe6716>

All questions are close-ended and completely anonymous.

Please do not hesitate to share the Survey link with your colleagues who may be interested in participating in this research work.

Many thanks for your continuing support. Please feel free to contact me via phone or email if you have further questions.

Best wishes from Weingarten,

Nayan Kadam