

Cultural Advantage as a Resistance from Hyperglobalization

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ABSTRACT

Despite the economics jargon on 'rational choice', nowadays the entire world has nothing else to choose except to succumb under the spell of magic words of modern economics, i.e. 'neoliberalism', 'financial liberalization', 'free market' (*laissez-faire*), and 'globalization'. All of these can be shown to be part of a preconception, called "utility maximization" (cf. Milton Friedmann), i.e. far beyond the 'neutral' idea of natural sciences. In Fritjof Capra's book *'Turning Point'* (Bantam Books, 1982) these phenomena are summarized as follows: economics thinking have started by assuming that in economics sciences one can achieve the same generality and universality that physicists enjoy in doing Natural Sciences. In other words, economists try through their work to become 'hard science' rather than recognizing that in economics the subject of their study is human/people which is far from being predictable, either as individual or as society. As an alternative path way and in accordance with Edward Said's *"Culture and Imperialism"*, it has become more obvious that culture is a vehicle of imperialism all over the world through globalization. In this paper, this writer argues that the term of Cultural Advantage which I and Prof. Florentin Smarandache coined back then 2008, can be a postcolonial resistance, i.e. a method which can be used by developing and under-developing countries (especially in Asia) to resist the globalization of culture brought by the First World Countries. In this paper, this writer will discuss why Postcolonialism study matters.

KEYWORDS: Culture and Imperialism, Cultural Advantage, Cultural Resistance, Beyond Competitive Advantage.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In Fritjof Capra's book *'Turning Point'* (Bantam Books, 1982) these phenomena are summarized as follows: economics thinking have started by assuming that in economics sciences one can achieve the same generality and universality that physicists enjoy in doing Natural Sciences. In other words, economists through their work try to become 'hard science' rather than recognizing that in economics the subject of their study is

human/people which is far from being predictable, either as individual or as society. The above logic of thinking is the starting point to submit a new idea, under the heading of 'Cultural Advantage.'

That is a theme of our first book in the series with title: *Cultural Advantage for Cities: An alternative for Developing Countries*, published back then in 2008. This presentation summarizes its basic ideas, with a hope that these ideas may be found interesting to develop further.

For clarity the readers are referred to the book. [1] In this paper, this writer argues that the term of Cultural Advantage which I and Prof. Florentin Smarandache coined back in 2008, an alternative route of postcolonial resistance, i.e. a method which can be used by developing and under-developing countries (especially in Asia-Africa) to resist the globalization of culture brought by the First World Countries. In this paper, this author first discusses why Postcolonialism study matters.

2. A SHORT HISTORY OF ECONOMICS PREMISES

In simple words, the entire history of economics as 'science' can be summarized as systematic methods to give reasonable explanation of human behavior in order to fulfill their needs, at given resource constraints. Furthermore, the progress was inspired by the remarkable success of Newtonian mechanics in describing the 'world' [2]. In the same way, economists since Adam Smith strived so hard to bring 'order' into the apparently chaotic phenomena with respect to human responses to various variables (government taxation rules, market competition, etc.). In conclusion, the strange history of Economics can be summarized as follows: "These days people like to call neoclassical economics "mainstream economics" because most universities offer nothing else. The name also backhandedly stigmatizes as odd-ball, flaky, deviant, disreputable, perhaps un-American those economists who venture beyond the narrow confines of the neoclassical axioms. To understand the powerful attraction of those axioms one must know a little about their origins. They are not what an outsider might think. Although today neoclassical economics cavorts with neoliberalism, it began as an honest intellectual and would-be scientific endeavor. Its patron saint was neither an ideologue nor a political philosopher nor even an economist, but Sir Isaac Newton. The founding fathers of neoclassical economics hoped to achieve, and their descendants living today believe they had, for the economic universe, what Newton had achieved for the physical universe." With this new insight, we try to look again to human as human, not only as

'measure' of economics textbook, or just an object in the annual economic progress report. Despite all the jargon surrounding those development theories, it is recognized that the development via industrialization method has not been useful so far, in other words most countries remain in the same problems as before: "This development is, unfortunately, often more symbolic than real for many countries and actually helps these societies very little. Industrialization is not the solution for many countries seeking to improve conditions for their citizens." In other words the development theory is quite similar to an 'ideology' rather than a science; it is full of premises based on perception or interpretation of history in the so-called First World countries. In an attempt to make a connection between economics as hard science and economics as soft science we propose a new theoretical framework, called "cultural advantages."

3. WHY DOES POSTCOLONIALISM STUDY MATTER?

According to the established modern society, history moves from East to West, leaving behind Africa as *non-history*. But is that true? As a matter of fact, early church history noted several church fathers from Africa, including St. Augustine from Hippo, Africa. Similarly, there was a treasurer from Ethiopia to whom St. Philip spoke about Jesus Christ, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles 8:27-36. It seems from the text that the treasurer then returned to his country and brought the Gospel back to his homeland. History also recorded that Ethiopia became a fertile ground for early church. Such a study which takes into account the difference between assumptions made by the so-called First World scholars and the actual history is called Postcolonial studies. Over time, the postcolonialism has moved beyond the confines of both history and literature to become a "general" theory about what Ania Loomba et al. call "the shifting and often interrelated forms of dominance and resistance; about the constitution of the colonial archive; about the interdependent play of class;...; and about the ethnographic translation of cultures." Now it seems we are ready to answer the question raised above: Why does it

matter? There are some reasons, including: Firstly, it matters because it is a matter of one's identity. Secondly, Postcolonialism matters because Africa has become a postcolonial space is made up not of one coherent 'public space'. Thirdly, Postcolonialism matters because colonialism has morphed into new forms. Fourthly, Postcolonialism matters because it fosters the otherness and difference, which finds their source in the revelation of the Trinity. For example, the West has tended to focus on oneness of the Trinity, while the East, following Cappadocian Fathers, focuses on the threeness within the Trinity. These two perspectives yield different *worldviews*. Where the oneness is emphasized, sameness is fostered as virtue and universality as ideal. Yet, even where the threeness is not emphasized, one discovered that the Trinity is ultimately about "being in communion (fellowship)". Fifthly, Postcolonialism matters because it is in keeping with the spirit of Pentecost.

4. CULTURAL ADVANTAGE AS RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

According to Mabiala Justin-Robert Kenzo from Congo, the ideal of Babel of one language, one thought, and one project echoes the ideal of the project of the Enlightenment of one humanity adhering to a set of universal truths and engaged in the one project of technological progress [5]. Similarly, the very concept of 'competitiveness' coined by Michael Porter around 1980s takes technological progress as a key for survival, both for companies and also for nations. It is assumed that every company or nation compete each other in order to become the most cost efficient, top quality or different over the others. In a sense, it sounds more like social darwinism in marketplace and international economy. But is it true that competing is the only way to survive? As some readers already knew there are other modes to play, which are called cooperation and coopetition, from the mathematics of game theory. Therefore, in the context of postcolonialism studies, competition is the language of First World nations because they want to maintain their hegemony over the world. Their vehicle is globalization of culture that is the culture

of competition. In harsh word: you should compete with everyone until you die! Nonetheless, the Third World has different language to keep alive, they put family first, they cooperate and they have cultural diversities, much more than KFCism, MacDism and so on. That is why I believe that the key for survival for the Third World countries is more likely by developing and growing based on their Cultural Advantages. I know this language is quite strange, but Third World companies and nations as well should learn how to keep their cultural diversity not being beaten by the globalization of culture. By doing so, there is hope to argue in favor of 'culture as resistance'. [17] In accordance with Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* [3], it has become more obvious that culture is a vehicle of imperialism all over the world through globalization. Or, in the context of postcolonial studies, there are dominance and resistance movement around everything in this world's history [16]. Similarly, there are cultural dominance and cultural resistance. Therefore, in this paper, this writer argues that the term of that the term of Cultural Advantage which me and Prof. Florentin Smarandache coined back then in 2008 [1][2], can be a postcolonial resistance, i.e. a method which can be used by developing and under-developing countries (especially Asia and Africa regions) to resist the globalization of culture brought by the First World Countries.

5. COMMENTS ON RECENT TREND OF SEVERAL BIG STARTUPS GOING BANKRUPT

Although massive advertising with massive vouchers may have been one of the factors behind the startup's downfall, of course that doesn't mean that's the only problem, but the authors observe that there are more basic things to be observed. That is, let's try to see what things need to be addressed, and then think of an effective solution. Some basic premises: One thing that needs to be underlined is, although economics intends to gain legitimacy like science / natural science, and that is why it is called "economics science," but the fact is that many things are related such as the interests of powerful parties, such as oligarchy, and also other aspects such as

cultural anthropology. Alright, let's put aside the oligarchy aspect first, and we assume that the competition is fair enough (in football it is often called: the leveled playing field).

From the aspect of cultural anthropology alone, there are many things that have changed from several decades ago, for example the following premises which are now quite worthy of review:

- Generations X and Y tend to be goods-collectors: it is well known that generation X and Y seem to like to collect things, such as collections of art objects, collections of gadgets and so on. Meanwhile, generation Z and millennials seem to prefer enriching experiences, therefore the experience economy seems to be now one of the drivers of the economy, although of course it should be noted that tourism has also been affected quite deeply as a result of the pandemic in the last 2 years. Even reportedly many big hotels are offered on sale during these bad times. What's the solution? We try to offer a mindset that bridges the red sea and blue ocean in the Blue Ocean Strategy paradigm, in the form of: "brue ocean." Alias the transition between the red sea to the blue ocean, among which the advice that the author can give is that it is better to become a service provider whether it's in the food sector or the hospitality sector, must develop services that offer customer delight. The author believes that customer delight, although often considered old school wisdom, has the potential to guarantee a client/customer will experience pleasant things, and that does not always mean a sharp increase in costs.
- efficiency is everything: the second premise is that efficiency is everything, be it a matter of time and interaction etc. While this is important, it is not always a pleasant aspect for customers. Imagine that you walk into a government service office and are greeted with a gray computer screen: "Please type your name and reason for coming here?" Doesn't this make the service boring? That's why there's a great book that Naisbitt has written: *High Tech High Touch*, there's even a new book with a

controversial title: "Touch." In some ways, it is the interactions between people that make us experience more meaningful life. Returning to the assumptions of cultural anthropology, in our article on NPTRS, the author proposes the indivi-group model, meaning that humans are both personal/individual but also groupy creatures. Especially in Asia, and this is something that needs attention.

- *Mass and fully automated industry is the future: although this is the assumption of many planning technocrats, it may not always be the future. What if people preferred to drive themselves, because the driving experience was exciting for them? And precisely with non-driver vehicles actually rob them of their freedom to drive? Indeed, sometimes a car or bus without a driver is needed, but at best only on predetermined routes, such as the athlete's route from the athlete's dormitory to the training ground, or certain areas with routine routes. However, driverless-vehicles are not necessarily suitable for inter-city driving routes, for example.
- The best modern business must have a disruptive impact. Many other authors have argued that Clayton Christensen's premise seems to lack solid economics (see, for example, Jack Trout's comments on the disruption method). Because not all disruptions have a good impact on the macro economy. Instead, the author will show old school wisdom: that a business, both SME scale and medium scale, must rely on how to answer the real market gap and also how to develop services or products that can delight customers.

Here are some of the anthropological assumptions that need to be taken into consideration. Of course there are many more. Here is the key to thriving in today's increasingly competitive market: market gap analysis, then develop your product/service to achieve customer delight. And customer delight here, goes beyond just TQM or customer satisfaction.

Market needs/gap analysis.

I found that to start building a successful business, you have to provide value.

"Providing value" may sound vague until you realize that they do this by filling in gaps. Doing so makes life easier, solves problems, or provides service to their customers. People will pay for convenience; it doesn't matter if what you're selling is available for free elsewhere. If you can present the information in an easy-to-follow and time-saving manner you can benefit. This fills the customer gap you have to spend time gathering all the information from several sources.

Customer delight is a proven method to get repeat customers

It is well known that the cost of acquiring new customers is much greater than retaining existing customers, including in various industrial fields even in the service sector such as the food sector. Although it is known that there are 6 ways to achieve competitive advantage with a customer satisfaction pattern, what is more important is actually customer delight.

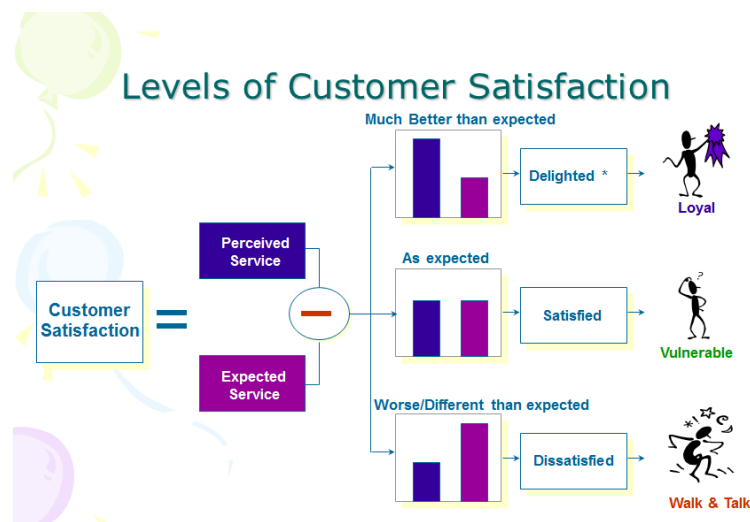


Figure 1: Levels of customer satisfaction

Table 1: Examples of services that delight customers

Airline Feature	Airline Passenger Expectation
On-Time Flights	Basic
Fast Baggage Claim Delivery	Basic
Snack and Drink Option	Satisfy
Low Fees for Checked Baggage	Satisfy
Free Wi-Fi	Delight
Occasional Seat Upgrades	Delight

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In accordance with Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, it has become more obvious that culture is a vehicle of imperialism all over the world through globalization. Or, in the context of postcolonial studies, there are dominance and resistance movement around everything in this world's history. Similarly, there are cultural dominance and cultural resistance. Therefore, allow us to argue as follows: The third world companies and nations as well should

learn how to keep their cultural diversity not being beaten by the globalization of culture. By doing so, there is hope to argue in favor of 'culture as resistance.' In this paper, we argue that the term of Cultural Advantage which me and Prof. Florentin Smarandache coined back in 2008 [1][2], can be a resistance movement. As Bob Marley says in his song: "Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery; *none but ourselves can free our minds.*" (cf. Redemption Song. url: <https://www.bola.com/ragam/read/4361556/lirik-lagu-redemption-song-bob-marley>.)

7. AN EXAMPLE OF CULTURAL ACTION FOR FREEDOM EXPRESSION

A recent painting exhibition with took theme: Indonesia Independent offers an international perspective on the struggle for independence of Indonesia from the Dutch Colonial Empire during the 1945-1949 period. More than 200 objects on

display - from privately-owned keepsakes to paintings loaned out for the first time by Indonesian art collections –provide insight into this important moment of world history. Venue: 11 Feb. to 5 June 2022, Philips wing. Source: <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/whats-on/exhibitions/revolusi>



Figure 3: Rijks Museum.

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