

# Article

# Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions as a Moderator of the Relationship between Ambidextrous Learning and Corporate Sustainability in Born Global Firms

Diana Escandon-Barbosa <sup>1,\*</sup> , Jairo Salas-Paramo <sup>1</sup> and Josep Rialp-Criado <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Departamento de Gestión de Organizaciones, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Administrativas, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana Seccional Cali, Santiago de Cali 760001, Colombia; jasalas@javerianacali.edu.co

<sup>2</sup> Facultat d'Economia i Empresa, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Cerdanyola del Vallès, 08193 Barcelona, Spain; josep.rialp@uab.cat

\* Correspondence: dmescandon@javerianacali.edu.co

**Abstract:** This research analyzes the moderation effects of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance and Indulgence) in the relationship between Ambidextrous learning and corporate sustainability in born global firms. The data were collected from exporting firms characterized by beginning international operations in the first three years and were thus classified as Born Global. A panel Dynamic Structural Equation Model (DSEM) was used to test the research hypothesis. One of the methodological contributions is the exploration of dynamic social behaviors that are difficult to study, specifically over time. Here, DSEM becomes in a data analysis technique that allows us to analyze this type of phenomena. The research results show that the relationship between Ambidextrous learning (AL) and Corporate Sustainability (CS) is positive in the short- and long-term. The cultural dimension's Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance moderates the relation between (AL) and (CS) and this dimension can predict their inertia. However, while Uncertainty Avoidance has a moderating effect, it does not predict future behaviors. Published literature on the Born Global company. that includes the moderation of Hofstede's dimensions (Power distance, Avoidance of uncertainty, and Indulgence) from a company perspective that study the relationship between Ambidextrous Learning and Corporate Sustainability is scarce.

**Keywords:** ambidextrous learning; corporate sustainability; power distance; uncertainty avoidance; indulgence; born global firms



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## 1. Introduction

Born global firms are also characterized by their commitment to innovation, technology and the design of products according to market specificities. They are also immersed in international networks that become an important element of their success. However, information on how their surrounding cultural contexts influence their performance is scarce and biased [1–3] (some studies carried out in the field show a significant amount of analysis by country, but with particular cultural dimensions). The above reveals an image that is just emerging in terms of our understanding of how these dimensions influence industrial dynamics. According to Taras et al. (2012) [4], there are two important results to highlight cultural studies, the first is related to the variations in relation to Hofstede's postulates, the second is the outdated of the results over time [1,5]

Most of the research on culture in the field of Born Global is firms' part of internal and analyzes of the company's culture, focusing on employee behavior and its impact on performance. A cultural system can be defined as a social system, since it introduces a dimension of social life. It is precisely in the cultural system where the similarities and differences are determined in how the way of thinking of individuals is configured and

how it differs from other societies. One of the main exponents of the analysis of culture and its influence on company dynamics has been Hofstede. His studies have focused on identifying a series of dimensions that allow us to study how cultural aspects influence business practices [6]. These cultural aspects can be condensed into six dimensions: Power Distance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance and Indulgence [7,8]. His research is helpful to explain the national cultural aspects on a national level, but there are different criticisms surrounding the research, which assumes cultural homogeneity (as opposed to subcultures, not sub-cultures) [9,10], there are not interactions between cultural levels [11] and asserts that the operational process does not include behaviors and attitudes among social groups [12]. Finally, assumes that national culture is established over time [4].

It should be mentioned that despite the large number of measurements of culture that have appeared in the literature [13–15], none of these studies have achieved the impact that Hofstede's research has level of importance that the dimensions of Hofstede has had. Hofstede's measurement model has allowed the quantification of culture to find differences between countries. In this way, he has been able to build a frame of reference from information collected in surveys conducted in IBM subsidiaries in 72 countries between 1967 and 1973.

Regarding the critical focus on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, it should be noted that scholars such as Beugelsdijk, Maseland and Van Hoorn (2015) [15], proved that the scores of the cultural dimensions have changed over time, thus giving a possible invalidation of the continuous use of the dimensions of Hofstede. Additionally, the studies carried out found that the average increases in the dimensions of individualism and Indulgence versus Restraint, and a decrease in the Power Distance is observed. Despite the above, it was found that the changes had not been altered in the relative positions of the countries. Although the values change, the relative positions remain stable. In this way, the scholars conclude that despite the existence of an outdated scores by country, this approach to research in the field of global strategy research continues to be useful. Finally, the Hofstede dimension continues to be the most pertinent approach for studies related to national culture and its influence on the company—market relationship.

In relation to the processes of adaptation of the company to the demands of the market, the literature suggests that through a flexible and innovative culture, the results of companies can be improved. This approach integrates goals that are adapted to the needs of the market, including internal aspects of the company and sustainable production; this is known as Corporate Sustainability [14–16]. According to Mazur and Walczyna (2020) [17], the concept of Corporate Sustainability is related to sustainable development, which refers to the satisfaction of current needs without compromising the needs of future generations. This definition is the one that has been transferred to the field of management and is known as Corporate Sustainability [14,15]. In the management field, it is defined as a process in which the current needs of the stakeholders are satisfied without compromising the ability to satisfy future needs [15].

This concept assumes a focus on the preservation, regeneration and development of the ecological, economic and social resources of a system. Likewise, it can be considered as a process related to organizational change, in such a way that sustainability generates change. Thus, the focus of the change will be to move the organization toward a state of fair distribution of economic, social and environmental aspects included in the corporate strategy [15].

This research considers, as motivations of the study, the different changes in environments that put pressure on organizations to be more efficient, smarter and with an orientation toward sustainability [18]. This requires organizations to seek alternatives that allow them to be increasingly sustainable, but at the same time find alternatives to improve their economic performance. Other motivations are related to learning to be Ambidextrous and how this may have influence on innovation processes, not only in business models, but also in reducing impact on the environment.

Among the difficulties encountered, a large number of studies focus on study cases or synchronous analysis [12–14]. However, the present research tries to overcome this gap by emphasizing behaviors over time. In this way, this research has its main improvement in the analysis not only of Corporate Sustainability over time, but the way in which cultural variables can vary. Regarding the method used in this study, DSEM is a technique that has received great attention at present due to its ability to analyze the behavior of latent variables as a system of structural equations over time. This analysis is mainly composed of an analysis of longitudinal information where observations can be made from multiple individuals at different points in time [19].

The second contribution is related to the methodology. Most of the literature focuses on synchronous analyses in which the importance of internal factors in responding to market demands is highlighted [19]. However, there are few longitudinal studies that allow us to see this relationship over time. Studies that focus on a vision of the market toward the company are even more scarce. Thus, we try to integrate the vision of the internal dynamics of the company (exploitation and exploration) with Corporate Sustainability [14,15]. The above is based on the scarcity of research that relates the cultural aspects of the markets and companies' performance using longitudinal analysis [20].

The third contribution is related to the relationship between Ambidextrous Learning and Corporate Sustainability [19]. An important point to highlight is that the literature on Ambidextrous sustainability considers that companies must strike a balance between exploitation and exploration approaches to guarantee success in the market. However, although the context in which such strategies are developed is left aside, there are still few studies where the cultural context determines the behavior of the same companies. The fourth contribution is related to the moderating effects of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance and Indulgence). Although much of Hofstede's studies of cultural dimensions have focused on internal aspects of company, there is a need to investigate how the cultural context of the markets they serve influences the response capacity of Born Global firms to the demands of the market where approaches to sustainability strategies are favored.

Finally, this work takes into consideration three dimensions of Hofstede that allowed us to analyze the dynamics of Born Global Firms according to the destination countries of their activity. From 2011 to 2019, exports to Mexico increased by 34% in comparison with other destination countries. Mexico is an important commercial ally for Colombia, and being close culturally to it, presents very strong dynamics in the dimensions studied. According to the Hofstede Insight (2010) [8] Mexico has a strong dynamic in three dimensions: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance and Indulgence.

### *1.1. Theoretical Framework*

#### *Ambidextrous Learning and Corporate Sustainability*

Ambidextrous learning is a concept derived from organizational learning [21]. This concept includes the processes of organizational adaptation and the development of exploitative learning and exploratory learning. Exploratory learning refers to a dynamic of trial and error, and a constant verification activity that emphasizes both internal and external resources aimed at generating innovation processes. For its part, exploitative learning refers to existing knowledge [21]. This considers the organization as an entity that acquires knowledge to ensure its survival. From the Born Global Firms, it is considered as an entrepreneurial learning behavior because it is continuously seen in the need to create and accumulate knowledge for its growth and development [22].

According to resource-based view perspective, knowledge is an insufficient resource that requires skills to turn it into results. For this reason, Ambidextrous Learning becomes a fundamental element that allows it to be transformed. In the same way, these elements are aimed at identifying opportunities to take advantage of market advantages [23]. Considering the above, organizations characterized by strong dynamic capabilities have a

greater opportunity to design and manage business models that allow them to adapt to markets [24].

Most of the studies on Ambidextrous Learning consider it to be an independent variable and related to performance. It is precisely in the analysis of the impact on result variables that this research contributes to the study of Corporate Sustainability [25]. For authors such as Xie & Zhu (2020) [26], Learning Ambidextrous is directly related to aspects positively related to Corporate Sustainability. This relationship is increasingly positive as Learning Ambidexterity becomes Ambidextrous learning greater. In this way, to the extent that Born Global firms have a greater capacity to adapt to the conditions of their environment, their performance through strategies with a sustainable approach will be greater. In this way, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** *Ambidextrous Learning influences Corporate Sustainability.*

In the field of sustainability there are two important theories that support it. The first is the resource-based view. This theory states that the performance of the company is based on critical internal resources and competencies that allow to take advantage of the conditions of the industry [27]. In this way, it is proposed that sustainability is an internal factor of the company that allows it to gain a competitive advantage in its business models [28].

The second theory is the Stakeholder theory. This theory states that the search for profitability is a perfect excuse to engage in strategic activities that allow them to be legally exploited [29]. Despite this, consumers will begin to get angry about sustainability issues for themselves and for the following generations, therefore they will be verifying the efforts of the companies in relation to sustainability. Due to this pressure, companies must focus on such activities to survive in the markets they serve [25–30].

Corporate sustainability has been considered as a mechanism that allows the organization to generate capacities that allow it to face economic, social and environmental dynamics from a strategic point of view [15]. The organization is conceived as an agent of change that focuses its role on being a facilitator and support for the change processes that are generated within the company. Similarly, it is possible to evidence in the literature an interest in studying the principles of sustainability in corporate governance [26]. This is also aligned with the efforts of companies to generate innovation processes and to focus on environmental factors that influence the dynamics of the sector.

The way in which consumers pay for the services offered by the company, which is then transferred to the profitability of the company, is the essence of business models [30,31]. These business models include elements related to product innovation, consumer relations, and infrastructure management. They also involve other types of innovations in services and processes with the aim of offering greater value to their consumers [32]. For authors such as Geissdoerfer, Vladimirova & Evans (2018) [30], Battaglia, Testa, Bianchi, Iraldo, & Frey (2014) [33] & Mendibil, Hernandez, Espinach, Garriga & Macgregor (2007) [34], the sustainability component becomes a methodology that allows for the generation of new market opportunities through innovation processes.

The literature in the field of Corporate Sustainability explores the relationships between values and business models [30,35]. Here, organizational values would be composed of multiple dimensions that would be aimed at exploiting the company's abilities more effectively to develop innovation and sustainability processes [30]. Despite the above, there is still not enough clarity on how the cultural dimensions of the company influence business models in Corporate Sustainability [14]. Similarly, authors such as Thanetsunthorn (2015) [36], suggest that Corporate Sustainability does seem to be influenced by the culture of society and especially by the sector in which the company operates.

Corporate sustainability emerges from an external need that becomes in pressure to adapt corporate operations to a context with specific demands [30]. These pressures define a context where companies respond to ecological, social, and economic concerns. This vision integrates a set of needs that are embedded in the culture that surrounds the company's

operations. Additionally, this context forces companies to consider developing strategies that allow them to achieve a balance between their capabilities and resources as well as the demands of the environment [34]. Similarly, Corporate Sustainability is considered to be a result of innovation in business models [36]. Many of the theories on sustainability state that a business is profitable when it includes within its objective's sustainability. This condition determines an environment with open and flexible characteristics, especially when they are derived from the country's culture [14], respectively.

In the field of Corporate Sustainability, the central aspects that have surrounded the development of different studies can be seen summarized in the pros and cons list below (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** Summary Corporate Sustainability (pros and cons).

	Pros (Integration of Organizational Concerns)	Cons (Gaps)
Corporate sustainability	Ecological Concern	Impact of external cultural dimensions
-	Social responsibility	Organizational intern aspects
-	Corporate economic activities	A multi-layered concept that requires changes in different levels
-	Point of view about to minimize the usage of air, water, energy, minerals.	External and intern process like a Blackbox.
-	-	Industries studies

According to Table 1, we can observe that Corporate Sustainability has been a concept of great importance due to environmental changes that have lead companies to consider strategies that reduce environmental impact. We can also see great concern given to social responsibility, the impact on performance, and a need to focus on improving activities for the proper use of resources. Additionally, two topics which are the subject of studies, as well as in the present one, is innovation and organizational culture from an internal perspective of companies. Despite the above, it is also possible to find gaps in the literature and a need to develop studies related to the impact of the performance of cultural aspects on the environment. Similarly, with analysis of internal processes of the company, aspects may be uncovered that for some authors are still under-explored in the literature [36].

### 1.2. Hofstede Cultural Dimensions and Born Global Firms

The first dimension is called Power Distance, which aims to describe the social hierarchy. This includes the members of the organizations within a culture and is accepted by the members of a group. This acceptance is also accompanied by an inequity that will be based on the level of social contribution. Some research shows that cultures with a high-Power Distance between subordinates and manager are broad and legitimate. In the same way, when this distancing is higher, it gives the possibility of establishing social classes according to several established criteria [37]. Power Distance influences sustainability through the existence of Ambidextrous Learning with the exploitation activities such as innovation [38]. An important aspect to highlight is that the present study makes use of a longitudinal study that allows us to analyze possible changes in the future. For scholars such as Taras, Steel, Kirkman (2012) [4], culture changes over time, especially over decades. The results found showed that the dimensions fluctuated over long periods of time, making it possible to adjust to the dynamics of the environment. This changes the operating environment as this dimension can improve or sharpen over time, making the potential for inequality more likely.

The above allows us to directly take advantage of the current conditions in which the Born Global firm finds itself, but also allows it to explore new market opportunities. In conditions of a high-Power Distance, priority will be given to establishing mechanisms to eliminate barriers to innovation in products and production processes. Some studies have shown that power influences the market, and the way companies are managed [39]. In this way, government policies and their opinion regarding the development of certain industries



has a strong influence on organizational behavior and their commercial development. According to the above, firms that maintain political relationships with the government will benefit from such relationships in terms of cost and efficiency. Additionally, contexts with a high-Power Distance will positively impact the Born Global's ability to face the challenges of its market and at the same time benefit potential for organizational sustainability. In this way, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** *Power distance influences the relationship between Ambidextrous Learning and Corporate Sustainability.*

According to Hofstede, (2010) [8], Indulgence is related to the degree to which a person is inclined to express emotions and enjoy momentary pleasures; it also extends to the suppression of emotional impulses and the need for strict codes of conduct. In the same way, Indulgence is considered to be gratification of basic human desires where it tends to be synonymous with the enjoyment of pleasures and fun. Indulgence also applies to those societies that allow high levels of gratification, where its members consider fun and individual happiness to be more important than hard work. On the contrary, the opposite of Indulgence is the restriction of the norms that suppress gratification. Members of these societies are characterized by seeking to acquire skills, advancements and promotions. The existence of Indulgence or its absence determines the capacity to control, and the ability to face pressure calmly. The foregoing assumes that people in these contexts have the power to encourage or penalize actions [4]. It is necessary to point out that although it has been found that changes in cultural dimensions occur over time, specifically across decades, the dimension of Indulgence still does not present clarity in the results found [40].

For authors such as Jiraporn, Charinsarn, Sheridan (2016) [41], consumers in certain geographical locations will privilege certain characteristics of products according to the type of cultural preferences they have. These preferences will determine how companies can adapt to markets, defining target consumers and developing consumer loyalty. Similarly, despite the scarcity of this type of study, the results obtained so far show an interest in healthy lifestyles and sustainability. The above is called (LOHAS), a market segment that is valued at around USD 290 billion annually, characteristic of markets in western and Asian cultures. The above is related to the inclination of consumers to obtain products for stimuli of pleasure and enjoyment in the markets they serve. On the contrary, in markets where the degree of Indulgence is lower, people tend to develop behaviors based more on compliance with the norm. Consequently, the consumer will be less permissive of the companies' actions to enter the market. That is, the market will be less permissive of a non-compliance with sustainability standards and will therefore affect the performance of the company, as it must adapt to the demands of the market it serves. Considering the above, the following hypothesis 3 is proposed:

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** *Indulgence negatively influences the relationship between Ambidextrous learning and Corporate Sustainability.*

Avoiding uncertainty is considered an ambiguous situation in which an individual may feel threatened and as a reaction they will prefer the rules and an already defined order. Societies with high levels of Uncertainty Avoidance will impose more rules and regulations on people, which will cause less propensity for change and innovation [42]. In cultures in which higher Uncertainty Avoidance is given, people tend to feel more anxious, taking positions to reduce ambiguity. In exploration activities particularly, they tend to be decentralized and with low formalization of both practices and policies. Due to the high uncertainty, this type of exploratory practice will require that company employees have a greater tolerance for risk and failure [41]. According to Taras, et al. (2012) [4], Uncertainty Avoidance is one of the most dynamic dimensions. This is due to the fact that it clearly presents more accurately the rapid changes generated by economic conditions and political stability. It should be noted that the literature determines that born global

firms tend to take risks when entering new markets and designing innovative products (Nummela, Saarenketo, Jokela, 2014) [43]. This condition goes hand-in-hand with the fact that when entering countries with a high level of Uncertainty Avoidance, they tend to establish strategies that allow them to easily adapt to market demands (Escandon-Barbosa, Rialp-Criado, Fuerst, Rodriguez-Orejuela, Castro-Aristizabal (2019) [44].

Conversely, organizations located in countries with a greater tendency to avoid uncertainty will be less innovative than other countries. In cultures with high uncertainty, they will avoid risk aversion, the above creates the right conditions for the generation of new ideas and innovative activities. According to Kafetzopoulos (2020) [45], in environments with high uncertainty due to a high tension in business dynamics, instability and rapid changes make organizational Ambidextrous generate the need for the firm to improve its performance. In accordance with the above, an environment characterized by high uncertainty will directly influence the way firms to devise strategies that are consistent with the dynamics of the market and that in turn contribute to performance [26]. However, there will be standards and regulations aimed at reducing the uncertainty that influences market adaptation. The foregoing considers the establishment of strategies that consider exploitative and exploratory learning and that, in turn, consider environmental impacts in the long-term which use the interest of consumers, employees, and shareholders (Escandon-Barbosa, et al., 2019) as a reference [46]. These contexts, that are characterized by scarce resources, compel the firms to develop strategies guided to sustainable performances. Considering the above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 4 (H4).** *Uncertainty avoidance influences the relationship between Ambidextrous learning and Corporate Sustainability.*

In the development of our conceptual model presented in Figure 1, this research aims to contribute in four aspects to the existing literature. First, it seeks to include the results of the existing literature in the field of cultural analysis and its impact on the performance of the born global firms. This contribution is given more from the perspective of Hofstede Cultural Dimensions' than from the internal aspects of the company, as the latter is widely studied in the field of Ambidextrous Learning.

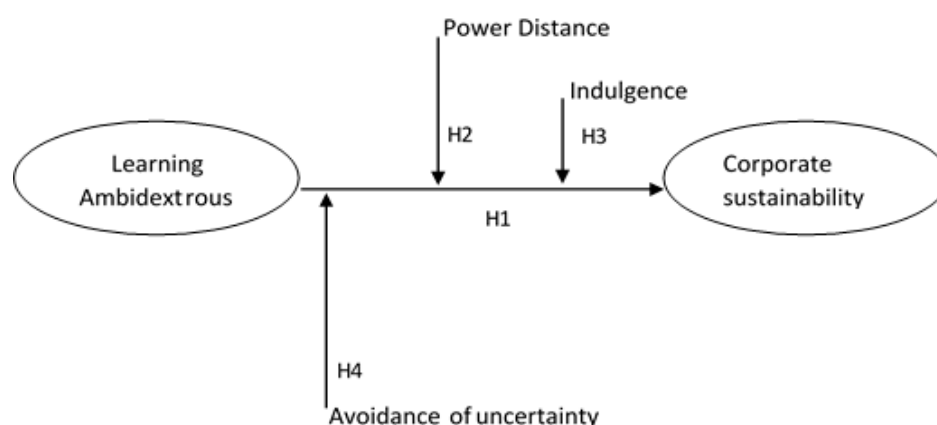


Figure 1. Theoretical Model.

## 2. Materials and Methods

In this study, we focused on the influence of Hofstede's three cultural dimensions (Power Distance, avoidance of uncertainty, and Indulgence) on the relationship between ambidextrousness of learning and organizational sustainability, specifically in born global firms. We used a Polling Firm to collect information through structured questionnaires with personal interviews to Born Global Firms in four main cities: Cali, Bogota, Medellin, and Barranquilla. Almost 80% of the industry and exports are concentrated in these cities.

Additionally, Born Global firms were defined like international firms with three conditions:

- Firms that have begun their international operation in the first five years since their founding year [47].
- Firms with more than 25% of annual international operation [44].
- Subsidiaries does not include.

Therefore, our data base identifies approximately 400 Born Global companies each year between 2011 and 2019. Those firms were asked to participate in our study, and they accepted the invitation to give annual information about their international operations. The original population of Born Global companies in this data base was 400 firms, however 30 of these stopped exports or stopped trading during this study. Additionally, 20 Born global firms were removed from our data because they did not answer questions more than twice.

The Born Global companies in this sample mostly belong to the agroindustrial sector (63%), with more than four destination countries receiving exports (42%) and led mostly by women (57%). This Born Global was created in Bogota and Medellin, accounting for more than 73% of the total exports value. Medellin and Cali reported the most significant investment in strategic learning, and provided more positive answers regarding sustainability (68%). Additionally, in the last five years, Barranquilla showed exponential development in these kinds of firms (with an economic growth of around 7% per year).

## 2.1. Models Variables

### 2.1.1. Learning Ambidexterity

Ambidextrous Learning is the central variable, incorporating exploratory and exploitative learning. This scale is based on the scale used by Huang et al. (2020) [47] and inspired by Atuahene-Gima and Murray (2007) [48] and Liu et al. (2019) [49] with five points in Likert Scale to evaluate each item (1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree).

Exploratory Learning has four items related to acquiring, obtaining and using organizational skills and resources. Results show a good reliability (Alfa-Cronbach = 0.86).

Exploitative learning has five items related to strengthening, accumulating and creating solutions through organizational resources. According to the results, the Cronbach  $\alpha$  of Exploitative learning is 0.83, showing a good reliability.

### 2.1.2. Corporate Sustainability

According to Al-Atwi et al. (2020) [50], Corporate Sustainability is related to three main aspects and uses five points in the Likert Scale (1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree): productive organizational energy, creativity and resilience. Creativity has five items to measure internal capabilities about how firms create ideas to develop services or products. This scale is inspired by Lee and Choi (2003) [51] and showed a good reliability (0,89). Resilience: This scale is measured with six items, and is inspired by Mallak (1998), [52] and Al-Atwi et al. (2020) [50]. Resilience was based on the ability to assume risk, understanding environmental changes, access and confidence in information system, and organizational goal focus. The results show a good adjustment for all items in this scale (Cronbach's alpha: 0,91). Productive organizational energy: According to Al-Atwi et al. (2020) [50] this scale has three dimensions (cognitive, behavioral and emotional). This scale obtained the Cronbach's alpha associated with an adequate level (0.89).

### 2.1.3. Cultural Orientation Index (Hofstede's Model)

All the measures used in the questionnaire were adopted from previous research. For the personal cultural orientation scale or the individual cultural values scale (CVSCALE), the measure was taken from Yoo and Donthu (2005) [53], which originated from Hofstede's (1983, 2010) [6,8] dimensions. This is consistent with Hofstede's scale, but extends it from cultural values at work to cultural values in consumer behavior. The difference between Hofstede's scale and Yoo and Donthu's [53] scale is that the former measures cultural orientation at the national level, whereas the latter measures it at the individual level. This scale has six dimensions, and all items was evaluated with Likert Scale between 1 and 5 (1:



strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree): Power distance, collectivism and individualism, uncertainty and avoidance index, femininity and masculinity, short-term and long-term orientation, restraint and Indulgence index. In this paper, we included three dimensions which are more related to company vision and that would directly affect the relationship between Ambidextrous Learning and Corporate Sustainability such as: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Indulgence.

- Power distance. This scale had five items: 1. People in higher positions who make most decisions without consulting other inside BG company; 2. People in higher positions who ask opinions of people in lower positions; 3. People in higher positions who avoid social interaction; 4. People in lower positions who disagree with decisions made by people in higher positions; 5. People in higher positions who delegate important tasks.
- Uncertainty Avoidance: In this scale, there are five items: 1. It is important to have instructions spelled out in detail; 2. It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures; 3. Rules and regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me; 4. Standardized work procedures are helpful; 5. Instructions for operations are important.
- Indulgence: In this scale, there are four items: Freely satisfy basic needs and behavior; motivation with material reward; enjoys the moment, non-necessity of status.

## 2.2. Model

### Dynamic Structural Equation Model (DSEM)

A dynamic structural equation model (DSEM) was run to evaluate the Ambidextrous learning predicted differences in Born Global companies' Corporate Sustainability with different level in their cultural dimensions. According to Hamaker et al. (2018) [54], DSEM model is appropriate in data base with repeated measures in the same group of participants (Born Global Firms) and had had the scales as strategy of the measurement.

In social science, use of models in time series is not usual because the recompilation of the data is difficult in the same participants, and it is expensive to create studies or research across many time periods. For this reason, there are gaps in the analysis of social behaviors and strategies over time and it may allow us to confirm results that are analyzed in cross-sectional models. However, there are many techniques to obtain results when data are obtained by time series, which have quantitative (panel data) or variable categories (DAR (Dynamic Autoregressive Regression)). While these are adequate, variables in the data base did not meet that requirement [51,55]. Other kinds of techniques in time series include the use of a latent construct but their structure will need to be changed by Factorial Confirmatory Analysis (FCA) (Hair, 2011) [55] which generated problems with precision in measurement of the study subject. Other aspects of our data and model are related to whether there is a path model with structural relations (latent constructs, residual variances of latent constructs, matrices of the residual of observed and unobserved variable) that are necessary to our aim, but which have been observed each year in similar subjects. For this kind of structure and based the aforementioned reasons, DSEM is the model more adequate to evaluate our relationship with our data structure. DSEM include different techniques to model time series with Bayesian statistic like time series modeling, time-varying effects modeling, multilevel time series and structural equation modeling [45]. Additionally, research recommends that our sample size and relationship to measure are adequate to acquire a good estimate in our theoretical model [56].

DSEM perspective for databases with information about the same subjects across a long time period has a substantial contribution to cultural research due to its inclusion of panel data and single-subject time series information (trends, time effects and residual analysis). Additionally, Bayesian statistics have more efficiency when there is high level of data than frequency of view, and there is previous knowledge or theories about the relationships [56].

We include parameters based on a theoretical model and calculated some parameters such as a product or combination of the two parameters that formed our moderation effects. This allows us to explore these indirect effects and create their subsequent distributions by Bayesian inference [57].

The model specified is defined in the Equations (1)–(3). Level 1 is represented in Equation (1) and Level 2 represented in Equations (2) and (3). The data panel includes 9-time observations and 350 cases. Equation (1) shows the relationship between Ambidextrous learning (AL) and Corporate Sustainability (CS) across all periods. The second Level includes: means of both parameters (Equation (2)), relationships with moderation effects of everyone's parameters (Equation (2)), their fixed effects, variability in subjects (variances of  $u$ ) and magnitudes of fluctuations over time (Equation (3)).

Level<sup>1</sup> Model:

$$CSti = \beta 0i + \beta 1iTti + eti \quad (1)$$

Level<sup>2</sup> Model:

$$\beta 0i = \delta 10 + u1i \quad (2)$$

$$\beta 1i = \delta 10 + u1i \quad (3)$$

$CSti$  is companies'  $i$ 's observation at measurement  $t$  ( $t$ : 1–9).  $Tti$  is time of measurement  $t$  for born global firms  $i$ . In this model,  $\beta 0i$  and  $\beta 1i$  represent born global firms  $i$ 's intercept and linear growth rate.  $g00$  and  $g10$  represent the mean intercept and linear growth rate in all BG firms with their effects. There are variances that show: deviations between firms and variance of  $u$  (deviation along the period between firms level and firms' trend, etc.). Additionally, residual ( $ui$ ) is the deviation between BG Firm  $i$ 's trend in every one of these groups.

### 2.3. Model Evaluation

In inferential statistics, there are two ways to analyze the results of a model: fit indices and test results. However, in DSEM, there are different aspects to confirm our results. Deviance information criterion (DIC) is the most popular indicator in Bayesian theory when it uses maximum likelihood. The optimal level of DIC is when this is close to 0 but it may be sensible in models with many latent variables or parameters. In our model, this indicator is useful because we worked with two latent variables and three moderation variables. Other indicators are  $X^2$  (Chi squares), but it is only reported in a small amount of software, and null hypotheses' significance are not available with Bayesian Models [56]. Another indicator used to determine and examine the convergence results is PSR (Potential Scale Reduction), which shows how each parameter has a variation over the chain of residuals (a chain is created as consequence of multiple Markov method to show the level of residuals). Its level should be around one value to show that the residual chain variation is small, and the iteration of the Model is adequate to the number of parameters and observations.

True Value is the distribution obtained after iteration by Bayesian approaches and it must be close to the estimate in posterior distributions according to the learning curve that has this statistic method through iterations. Another indicator is Estimates and SD (Standard Deviation) that show the values that will be obtained in posterior distribution per each relationship. Credibility intervals are the confidence values between each variable reported up to 95%. In this parameter, we allow for confirmation or rejection of the Null hypothesis, due to each interval which must not contain the number zero, to confirm that hypotheses are non-null.

In general, we present the most recommended indicators to analyze the results of DSEM model [54,56] because, while there are few papers that have used this technique, all reported the next five (5) indicators to show the results: DIC, PSR, True Value, Estimates,  $p$  Value and credibility intervals.

### 3. Results

Potential Scale Reduction (PSR) criterion is so close to one for all parameters, and DIC criterion is close to 0, that we can infer that the model and its iteration are adequate [45]. Additionally, small autocorrelations are obtained in each level for all parameters. We see similar results in the autocorrelation level of parameters in our model. Convergence and normality are demonstrated in each parameter with analysis of original distribution and subsequences created with Bayesian statistics.

In Table 2, additional distributions that were created show a positive cross relationship between Ambidextrous Learning and Corporate Sustainability (in the second distribution, the highest point was at 0.705, and the interval of creditability is between 0.613 and 0.735 ( $P_i$  Value: 0.70, 95% CI = [0.613, 0.735])). In general, these values and the information reported in Table 2 shows that DSEM captured the true value of population.

Table 2. Results.

	True Value	Estimate (Median) SE	Posterior	
			$p$	95% Credibility Interval
Within-Firm level (level I)		—	—	—
AL	1.987	0.049	0.04	1.166, 2.365
CS	0.002	−0.065	0.038	−0.145, 0.009
$AL_{t-1}$	0.398	0.510	0.007	0.495, 0.525
$CS_{t-1}$	0.397	0.400	0.008	0.385, 0.420
$AL_t$	0.705	0.018	0.006	0.612, 0.735
log(I residual variance of $AL_t$ )	−1.417	−1.697	0.075	−1.796, −1.497
log(I residual variance of $CS_t$ )	−1.987	−2.210	0.074	−2.362, −2.063
log(-covariance between $AL_t$ and $CS_t$ )	−3.986	−3.572	0.100	−3.751, −3.369
Effect of Power Distance on:				
Mean PD	0.296	0.028	0.010	0.192, 0.460
$AL_t$	0.28	0.018	0.010	0.010, 0.30
log(I residual variance of $AL_t$ )	1.812	0.200	0.104	0.000, 0.420
log(I residual variance of $CS_t$ )	−1.932	−0.410	0.100	−0.620, −0.210
Over Time $AL_t$ and $CS_t$ )	0.687	0.20	0.01	0.195, 0.726
Effect of Indulgence				
Mean I	0.498	0.549	0.01	0.479, 0.630
$AL_{t-1}$	−0.311	0.526	0.010	−0.028, −0.381
Over Time $AL_t$ and $CS_t$ )	0.061	−0.030	0.030	−0.010, 0.030
Effect of Uncertainty Avoidance				
Mean UA	0.368	0.442	0.025	0.219, 0.530
$AL_{t-1}$	0.15	0.016	0.01	0.028, 0.166
log(I residual variance of $AL_t$ )	0.499	0.010	0.040	−0.120, 0.450
log(I residual variance of $CS_t$ )	0.001	0.006	0.020	−0.020, 0.045
Over time $AL_t$ and $CS_t$ )	0.031	0.030	0.010	0.010, 0.041

AL: Ambidextrous Learning; CS: Corporate Sustainability; PD: Power Distance; I: Indulgence; UA: Uncertainty Avoidance; L-I;  $t-1$ : one year previously.  $t$ : current year. Notes: Unstandardized effects are included. Bolded number is signal of effects that are non-null (0) not being within the 95% credible interval.

### 4. Discussion

#### 4.1. Within—Born Global Firms

The first LA predicted the slope of change in AL over time (coefficient = 1.987, SE = 0.049,  $p$  = 0.04, 95% CI [1.116, 2.36]). Therefore, AL strategy is related to its levels in previous years and its effects can be cumulatively seen in corporate Sustainability, therefore, Hypothesis 1 was confirmed.

The Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance is an established characteristic trait, and their variation is low in the time, but the influence is significant (PD = 0.296, SE = 0.028,  $p$  = 0.01, 95% CI [0.192, 0.460]), (UA = 0.368, SE = 0.442,  $p$  = 0.025, 95% CI [0.219, 0.53]). In general, PD and UA dimensions are relevant to organizational results but theirs

levels did not change significantly, since because they are aspects immersed in the cultural construction carried out by society and adopted by the development of internal processes inherent to Born Global Firms.

However, Indulgence may change in time, and its influence may have a negative correlation with Corporate Sustainability corporate sustainability (0.498, SE = 0.549,  $p = 0.01$ , 95% CI [0.479, 0.630]), in this case, Indulgence influences negatively on Corporate Sustainability from the beginning of the period, but as the time passes, its effect is more negative due to Indulgence. Societies, if they continue to develop this dimension, could be more passive and relaxed and its effect would therefore be more evident on Corporate Sustainability.

#### 4.2. Moderators of the within—Born Global between Learning Ambidextrous (LA) and Corporate Sustainability (CS)

Concerning Hofstede dimensions, these were included in the Level 2 as Moderation for the relationship between AL and CS. Strong levels of Hofstede Dimensions increased the slope of  $AL^{it} \rightarrow CS$  prediction. The interaction is related to a high level of PD and high level of LA, or low values of both, because the slopes test was included one Sd (standard deviation) maximum.

The moderations included in this model reached a significant level. In general, Hypothesis 2 was confirmed:  $PD \times LA \rightarrow CS$  (0.28, SE = 0.018,  $p = 0.01$ , 95% CI [0.010, 0.030]). Therefore, born global firms that use Learning Ambidextrous as strategy to create new products or manage their knowledge, as well as to and obtain Corporate Sustainability (if they enter with their products into societies with high level of Power Distance) may obtain more organizational results.

Over time, the Power Distance predicted inertia in the relationship between Ambidextrous learning and corporate sustainability (0.687, SE = 0.02,  $p = 0.01$ , 95% CI [−0.195, 0.726]). Therefore, the influence Power Distance is positive, but it does not offer the option of gradually increasing over time.

There is a moderating effect resulting from Indulgence, and thus Hypothesis 3 (Indulgence moderate negatively influences the relationship between Ambidextrous learning and Corporate Sustainability) was confirmed ( $I \times LA \rightarrow CS$  (−0.311, SE = 0.526,  $p = 0.10$ , 95% CI [−0.28, −0.381]). In general, societies with high level of Indulgence may be less suitable for born global firms because these societies are more relaxed with norms, and there are incentives to obtain results via unethical or illegal behavior, and thus, this factor may negatively influence on organizational dynamics, especially related to Learning Ambidextrous and its influence on Corporate Sustainability.

Over time, societies with measurable Indulgence did not predict the inertia of the relationship between Ambidextrous learning and corporate sustainability because its characteristic behavior is volatile, and its effects can be increasingly negative (0.061, SE = 0.03,  $p = 0.03$ , 95% CI [−0.010, 0.030]).

The Hypothesis 4 said that an Uncertainty Avoidance factor has a moderating effect on the relationship between Ambidextrous Learning and Corporate Sustainability, as is confirmed by the born global firms examined:  $UA \times LA \rightarrow CS$  (0.15, SE = 0.016,  $p = 0.01$ , 95% CI [0.028, 0.166]). In general, BG firms that enter into societies with high level of this cultural dimension may approach the rules and norms to increase their knowledge about this country and subsequently, implement the application of their Learning Ambidextrous strategically to obtain more Corporate Sustainability.

Over time, Uncertainty Avoidance did not change strongly because this is a structural characteristic of the societies, and its modification only occurs in the long-term. In its role as moderator, Uncertainty Avoidance can predict the inertia of the relationship between Learning Ambidextrous and Corporate Sustainability (0.031, SE = 0.03,  $p = 0.01$ , 95% CI [0.010, 0.041]).

## 5. Conclusions

This paper focused on organizational factors (such as the relationship between Ambidextrous Learning and Corporate Sustainability) and the Hofstede dimension of the

cultures found in Born Global firms over time. This aim allowed us to close the current gap in this field, since because previous research [43] analyzed the Learning Ambidexterity and Corporate Sustainability, but only across a specific period of the time. Additionally, another contribution is related to the context of Hofstede Cultural Dimensions, where cultural dimensions' context, in this case we have included three dimensions in our theoretical model that are more focused on the company aspects of the company: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance and Indulgence, because there are more researchers focused on the market than a company perspective [36].

The third contribution of this study was related to addressing to the gap of the relationship between Ambidextrous learning and Corporate Sustainability in specific cultural contexts such as Colombia Born Global firms. International firms develop learning processes in their workers to increase their sustainability toward the cultural dimension to link the internal dynamic with the social aspects listed in this article. Following the studies by Xie and Zue (2020) [26], we were able to confirm how the existence of Ambidextrous learning within a Born Global firm in Colombia allows it to better adapt to the conditions of its environment. This finding is relevant because it shows how the sustainable approach that different BG firms have been adopting is usually rewarded as their investment in LA increases over time. Considering the above, investment in dynamic capabilities is essential to stay in international markets and adapt to their sustainability requirements [47].

Finally, the fourth contribution was proving the moderation effects of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Power distance, Uncertainty Avoidance and Indulgence). Therefore, in this paper, we used 350 born global firms that contributed to our survey between 2011 and 2019. The model used was a DSEM (Dynamic System Equation Model) to show Within and Between effects of these relationships on Born Global firms in Colombia.

The result shows that the Hofstede cultural dimension provides a moderation role both in the short-term and long-term.

Born Global firms with high levels of Power Distance generated good conditions for new products or innovation processes because they assume new challenges supported by structured process provided by hierarchy [6]. Over the period between 2011 and 2019, the influence of Power Distance on the relationship between AL and CS shows a significant demonstration of what was analyzed by Vecchi, A., & Brennan (2009) [39] that Power Distance is a characteristic necessary to get better use of Ambidextrous Learning and their positive consequences as reflected in Corporate Sustainability.

Conversely, our model shows that cultures with high uncertainty influence the internal dynamics of Born Global firms, especially of the use of worker's knowledge to identify ways to obtain their sustainability. The Born Global businesses examined in this study are medium or small business with propensity to assume risks to obtain market quota or to obtain their sustainability through creation of learning processes (LA). These results are consistent with Huang et al. (2020) [47] who raised the point that organizations with explorational activities have more of a propensity to accept risk and our born global firms show this tendency.

Our data show that Indulgence's orientation factor was a moderating variable on the relationship between LA and Corporate Sustainability. This is due to born global firms in societies with low levels of this factor, who have motivation provided by products related to future-like, environmentally friendly or responsible consumption. These results are consistent with Jiraporn et al. (2016) [41] as our BG firms have a high tendency to incorporate codes of conduct from their destination countries, adapt their strategies and assimilate this external information to increase their possibilities of sustainability. These motivations may allow the Born Global firms adapt or develop their products to obtain more probabilities of sustainability. Additionally, Indulgence factor obtained a relevant role similar to moderation on the relationship of AL to Corporate Sustainability because consumers tend to invest in leisure, entertainment activities and other aspects related to their happiness. This panoramic view allows for the possibility that BG firms may design, develop, or



adapt products to this public and progressively increase their acknowledgment capability through Ambidextrous Learning strategy and its influence on Corporate Sustainability.

Societies with a higher level of Power Distance predict the inertia of Ambidextrous learning and Corporate Sustainability. This is because the countries where the born global firms detect a greater Power Distance, the operating conditions are positive and are maintained over time [6,8,33]. The above allows for better results in the implementation of strategies that consider Ambidextrous learning and its consequent effect on Corporate Sustainability [37].

In cases where opting into new conditions tends to be negative, and consumers make use of Indulgence, to the extent that Indulgence is greater, the influence on Ambidextrous and Corporate Sustainability tends to be negative. In the short-term, companies are trying to ensure their profitability; in the long-term, as society becomes more lenient, the Corporate Sustainability of born global firms may be affected more strongly. The literature indicates [40] that born global firms tend to take risks associated with the design of innovative products to achieve a position in international markets. In societies with a high degree of Uncertainty Avoidance, it will positively influence the relationship between Ambidextrous learning and corporate sustainability because these countries will have clear and explicit requirements for the operation of born global firms. In the long-term, uncertainty does not change much because inertia is maintained in the relationship between Ambidextrous learning and Corporate Sustainability [40]. As a consequence, Ambidextrous Learning allows for the strengthening of resources to assume a learning curve that responds more easily to the dynamics of the market. In the case of Corporate Sustainability that is considered to be an effect of the set of actions that are maintained over time, it allows for the expected results according to the conditions of the market in which it operates.

### 5.1. Academic Implications

For scholars, the main implications of this study are in the understanding of how the cultural aspects, in this case the Hofstede Dimensions of a higher degree for a country such as Mexico, have a direct impact on the way in which the born Global Firms face demands from the market. Additionally, from the efforts to develop the capacity of Ambidextrous Learning considering exploitation and exploration strategies, the cultural context will stimulate the approach of practices that are legally and socially accepted for the generation of profitability (Corporate Sustainability).

### 5.2. Managerial Implications

Born global firms have been characterized by having highly complex business dynamics when entering foreign markets. This dynamic shows the need to create business strategies that allow them to better adapt to market requirements considering cultural elements. According to the above, it is not only about creating capacities to manage the resources and capacities of the company, but also to monitor the cultural dynamics that surround the commercial operations of the company. In this case, understanding cultural differences allow us to consider combinations of offers in products and services. The above is related to the results of studies in the field of consumer behavior analysis [49].

### 5.3. Limitations

The present study raises two aspects as the main limitations. The first is related to the Hofstede Cultural Dimensions, because there is some criticism around avoiding subcultures inside national culture, standardization of each dimension, and methods used to collect the data. However, Hofstede's Model is useful to understand general aspects of national culture and their influences on Corporate Sustainability. In this way, future research will include quantitative and qualitative methods to improve knowledge in this field and it will detect differences in national culture in Colombia or other countries.

The other limitation is related to the countries used in this study, in this case another Latin American country of high commercial importance, Colombia. This is because its

proximity can create elements that facilitate commercial exchanges and the results expected by the company. The second aspect is the object of the study, born global firms. This is an important, but small percentage of SMEs can also have commercial exchanges in foreign markets, but due to their profile do not classify as global born company.

#### 5.4. Future Research Avenues

Considering the purpose and results of the research, it would be important to carry out the analysis of the other Hofstede Dimensions that have a low degree in country profiles. Despite not being an important country characteristic, they can provide interesting elements that help to better understand the behavior of born global firms in developing countries. Another element to explore at in the future lies in the possibility of making comparisons between born global firms and other companies that also have commercial activity with other countries.

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