

1 An Investigation of Ugandan Cultural Values and Implications 2 for Managerial Behavior

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6

7 **Abstract**

8 This paper represents an investigation into the classification of Ugandan culture using the five
9 dimensional model of Geert Hofstede. Uganda was not one of the countries included in
10 Hofstede's original studies, and no evidence of a subsequent study of Uganda has been found
11 in the literature. While Hofstede and others did study some countries in Africa, there is a lack
12 of empirically-based research on the cultural classification of Uganda. The results of this study
13 indicate that Uganda is a low power distance, masculine, collectivist culture that is relatively
14 high in uncertainty avoidance, whose people who have a short-term orientation towards time.
15 The paper compares Ugandan culture with those of other countries in Africa, as well as with
16 select cultures from other regions. It also explains how these cultural differences impact the
17 practice of management in Uganda.

18

19 **Index terms**— Ugandan culture, cultural classification

20 **1 Introduction**

21 As international business looks towards the future it has become clear that a very important part of the world for
22 further development is Africa. The African continent has experienced increased growth in recent years and the
23 prospects for further growth look promising. In order to do business in a country it is essential to understand
24 its culture, which implies understanding its peoples' values and beliefs. A theoretical framework is helpful to
25 facilitate such an understanding.

26 It can be argued that the most popular and farreaching cross-cultural research work is that of Geert Hofstede
27 and his associates. Hofstede, who was employed as an industrial psychologist by IBM during the late 1960s
28 and early 1970s administered a "values" survey to employees in the subsidiaries of the company. Based on the
29 data, Hofstede concluded that management theories were bound by culture. Management behavior appropriate
30 in one culture may be inappropriate in another (Hofstede, 1980a; Hofstede, 1980b; Hofstede, 1983; Hofstede,
31 1993; Hofstede, 1994; Hofstede, 2001). Hofstede's work has been widely cited in various academic studies (Kirkman,
32 Lowe & Gibson, 2006) and typically forms the basis for crosscultural analysis in university-level management
33 courses. Using data from the original 72 countries surveyed, Hofstede was able to profile 40 countries. Later
34 research provided for the classification of 10 more countries and three regions -East Africa, West Africa, and the
35 Arab world (www.geert-hofstede.com, 2013).

36 Hofstede identified four dimensions of culture: power distance, individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty
37 avoidance. Power distance (PDI) is the degree to which members of a society expect power to be unequally
38 shared. Individualism (IND) is the extent to which people look after their own interests. This is contrasted with
39 collectivism, which is the extent to which people identify more closely to a group and expect group membership
40 to protect them. Masculinity (MAS) is the extent to which people value assertiveness, competition, and the
41 acquisition of material goods. This is contrasted with femininity, which values nurturing, relationships, and a
42 concern for others. Uncertainty avoidance (UAI) is essentially a society's reliance on social norms and structures
43 to alleviate the unpredictability of future events (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). In essence, it is a measure of society's
44 collective tolerance for ambiguity.

5 RESULTS

45 Later research (Hofstede & Bond, 1988) added a fifth dimension now called long-term orientation (LTO).
46 That dimension reflects the extent to which a society encourages and rewards future-oriented behavior such as
47 planning, delaying gratification, and investing in the future. LTO refers to a preference for thrift, perseverance,
48 tradition, and a long term view of time (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). The original term, Confucian Dynamism,
49 grew out of a view that "Asian values" were unique to a specific region of the world.

50 Hofstede's popular work has attracted a number of critics. Some have expressed concerns about the
51 generalizability of his findings, the level of analysis, the equation of political boundaries of countries to culture, and
52 the validity of his survey instrument ??Mc Sweeney, 2002;Smith, 2002). Others have challenged the assumption
53 of the homogeneity of each culture studied (Sivakumar & Nakata, 2001). Directly related to this article, Jackson
54 (2011) expresses some concern about the theoretical validity of Hofstede's work when assessing African countries.
55 The fifth dimension -longterm orientation (LTO) -has been challenged on the ear () A Abstract -This paper
56 represents an investigation into the classification of Ugandan culture using the five dimensional model of Geert
57 Hofstede. Uganda was not one of the countries included in Hofstede's original studies, and no evidence of
58 a subsequent study of Uganda has been found in the literature. While Hofstede and others did study some
59 countries in Africa, there is a lack of empirically-based research on the cultural classification of Uganda. The
60 results of this study indicate that Uganda is a low power distance, masculine, collectivist culture that is relatively
61 high in uncertainty avoidance, whose people have a short-term orientation towards time. The paper compares
62 Ugandan culture with those of other countries in Africa, as well as with select cultures from other regions. It
63 also explains how these cultural differences impact the practice of management in Uganda.

64 grounds of conceptual validity (Fang, 2003). Grenness (2012) points out the inherent problem of the ecological
65 fallacy in Hofstede's work in which the predominant traits of a culture are generalized to individuals within that
66 cultural group. In 2010, the Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS) published a special edition issue
67 devoted to cross-cultural research. While there is some validity to many of the concerns raised by Hofstede's
68 critics, his research represents the most comprehensive analysis of cultural values to date, reflecting the fact
69 that no method of cultural assessment is flawless. In the opening article of the JIBS series, Tung and Verbeke
70 (2010) point out the "undeniable" impact of Hofstede's research on the theories and practice of management
71 and international business. His theory of cultural dimensions has evolved (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011) and
72 remains the most important and comprehensive work in the area of cross-cultural classification and understanding.
73 While Hofstede's approach may be "blunt" (Jackson, 2011), it nevertheless provides useful insight into an initial
74 understanding of important cultural values.

75 This paper provides a preliminary look into the cultural assessment of a country not included in Hofstede's
76 data set. Since Uganda gained its independence from Great Britain in 1962 it has, at times, experienced major
77 social instability. During the regime of Idi Amin, it suffered major atrocities and the struggle for power after his
78 failed rule resulted in a six year civil war (McDonough 2008). At one time Uganda had a more heterogeneous
79 population as a result of colonization and the importation of Indians to facilitate British rule. But in 1972 all
80 "Asians" were expelled from the country (Asiime 2012) and the population became more homogeneous.

81 2 II.

82 3 Method

83 The assessment of cultural values was made using a sample of 67 students at a midsize university in Uganda.
84 The sample was almost perfectly balanced between male and female respondents. The respondents were mixed
85 in terms of their living in urban and rural areas. The survey respondents were all young adults who volunteered
86 for participation in the study.

87 This study used Hofstede's Values Survey Module 1994 (VSM 94). The items measured Ugandan culture on
88 the five value dimensions: power distance (PDI), masculinity (MAS), individualism (IDV), uncertainty avoidance
89 (UAI), and long-term orientation (LTO). The results were determined by using the index method developed by
90 Hofstede. The scores for the value dimensions obtained in this study were compared to the scores obtained
91 by Hofstede (www.geert-hofstede.com, 2013). Comparisons were made to five select countries: China, Brazil,
92 Germany, Japan, and the USA. Scores for each value dimension from the current study were also compared
93 to those from respondents living in countries within the region for a more in-depth comparison. The countries
94 included in this comparative analysis included Hofstede's West and East Africa country groupings. West African
95 countries include Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. East African countries include Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania,
96 and Zambia.

97 4 III.

98 5 Results

99 The results of the survey indicate that, in general, Ugandan culture can be characterized as being low in power
100 distance, masculine, collectivist, and high in uncertainty avoidance. Uganda is also short-term in its orientation
101 toward time. These results indicate some differences in the value dimension scores for Uganda as opposed to
102 other countries in the region. Power distance scores, for example, are considerably lower for Uganda. Long-
103 term orientation offers fewer opportunities for comparison since this dimension was studied in only 23 countries

104 (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). In this study Uganda was compared to the select countries for a comparative assessment
105 of long-term orientation. Greater analysis can be conducted on the original four dimensions. Figure ?? shows
106 the scores for Uganda on all five cultural dimensions using the Hofstede-Bond model. The data indicate that
107 Uganda has a PDI score of 38. This score suggests that Ugandans have a low level of acceptance of inequality
108 among societal members. Figure ?? shows the PDI scores for Uganda and select other countries. The data reveal
109 that with respect to power distance, Uganda's culture is similar to Germany and the United States.

110 Figure ?? : Scores for power distance in Uganda and select countries Figure 3 shows that within Africa,
111 Uganda's PDI is quite low compared to countries such as Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and West and East
112 African country groups. The average PDI score for the region is much higher than that found in Uganda.

113 **6 PDI**

114 The data indicate that Uganda has a MAS score of 57. This score suggests that Ugandan culture is masculine
115 as opposed to feminine. Figure 4 shows the MAS scores for Uganda and select countries. The data reveal that
116 Uganda's culture is less masculine than Japan and Germany and somewhat similar to that of the United States.
117 The data indicate that Uganda has an IDV score of 30. This score suggests that Ugandans are collectivist in
118 nature. Figure 6 shows the IDV score for Uganda and select countries. With respect to individualism, Ugandan
119 culture is very collectivist compared to select countries, with the exception of China, which has the lowest IDV
120 score of the countries included in this analysis. Figure 7 shows that within the region, Uganda's IDV score is
121 high, but not significantly so, with other countries essentially being collectivist in nature. The data indicate
122 that Uganda has a UAI score of 56. This score suggests that Ugandan culture has a relatively low tolerance for
123 uncertainty, but not to an extreme extent. While technically classified as a high uncertainty avoidance culture,
124 Uganda's UAI score is not too far above that of the United States. Figure 8 shows the UAI scores for Uganda
125 and select other countries. Figure 9 shows that within the region, Uganda's UAI score is higher than all other
126 countries included in this analysis. However, the actual scores vary little from Uganda's high score of 56 to Sierra
127 Leone and Tanzania's low scores of 50. All countries in Figure 9 show relatively high uncertainty avoidance. The
128 data indicate that Uganda has an LTO score of 20. This score suggests that Ugandans have a culture that is
129 very short-term oriented. As stated earlier in this paper, since this dimension was added nearly a decade after
130 Hofstede's original study, we have comparative LTO data for relatively few countries. As such, comparisons with
131 the Ugandan data are more difficult. Figure 10 shows the LTO scores for Uganda and the five select countries
132 from which those data were collected. The data reveal that Uganda's long-term orientation is quite low, perhaps
133 not surprising given the uncertainty found in the country's recent past.

134 **7 b) Masculinity**

135 **8 IV. Discussion**

136 While this study is not unlike the original Hofstede work in terms of its sample heterogeneity, it is reasonable
137 to conclude that the somewhat unique characteristics of the sample are not fully representative of the greater
138 Ugandan population. The sample was balanced in terms of gender and represented a mix of individuals from
139 urban and rural population. However, the educational achievement of the sample was above the national average.
140 As with many investigations into cultural values, significant underreporting of less educated and more isolated
141 members of the culture can occur. In a recent article in the Academy of International A that there are significant
142 cultural differences between the two countries. However, the two countries (2012) using the values survey with
143 unmatched samples. The current study suffers from the same shortcoming because it does not use matched
144 samples for comparison. While we agree that using matched samples with the original data set would be ideal
145 for comparison, without some degree of generalizability of the original data set, the work of Professor Hofstede
146 has very limited application. The Values Survey Module (VSM) used by Hofstede and others can only act as a
147 "blunt instrument" in assessing national culture. Despite this limitation, it provides insights and understandings
148 of culture that would otherwise have been unavailable.

149 Based upon our assessment, Ugandan culture can be characterized as being low in power distance, masculine,
150 collectivist, moderately high in uncertainty avoidance, and short-term orientated. These cultural values would
151 dictate a certain style of management. People from cultures low in power distance prefer some form of power
152 sharing and participation in the workplace. The masculine nature of Ugandan culture would indicate that
153 aggression and competition would be valued in organizations. The collectivist nature of Ugandan culture indicates
154 that groups would serve a useful role in the organization of people and achievement of goals. High uncertainty
155 avoidance requires more direction and clear policies and procedures. The short term orientation would suggest
156 that a focus on the present and more immediately realizable results would be considered more appropriate than
157 organizational policies and procedures that emphasize the future and delayed gratification.

158 Olusoji, Oluwakemi and Uchechi (2012) point out in a qualitative study that African culture is enduring and
159 somewhat difficult to change. In a study of Nigeria, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, researchers found
160 that a common cultural characteristic called "ubuntu" was common with leadership behavior (Wanasika, Howell,
161 Littrell, & Dorfman, 2011). Paternalistic leadership, group solidarity, and a humane orientation were found in
162 the region. The appropriate management style in Uganda would follow a more power-sharing, paternalistic, and

8 IV. DISCUSSION

163 group oriented approach. International managers seeking to do business in Uganda must be sensitive to these
164 cultural values.

165 Frontier markets are becoming increasingly interesting to companies engaged in international business and
166 countries in Africa are seen as leaders in that market. In the international business. This claim was reinforced
167 and expanded in an article published in the Harvard Business Review (Chironga, Leke, Lund, & van Wamelen,
168 2012). Africa offers not only a desirable place to acquire abundant natural resources, but structural changes
169 and globalization make the continent an increasingly important market for exports and a potential area for
170 manufacturing operations. Having a greater understanding of the diverse cultures in Africa and managing in a
171 way that capitalizes on this knowledge are important factors for successful business engagement on the continent.
¹



Figure 1: 2 GlobalFigure 1 :

172

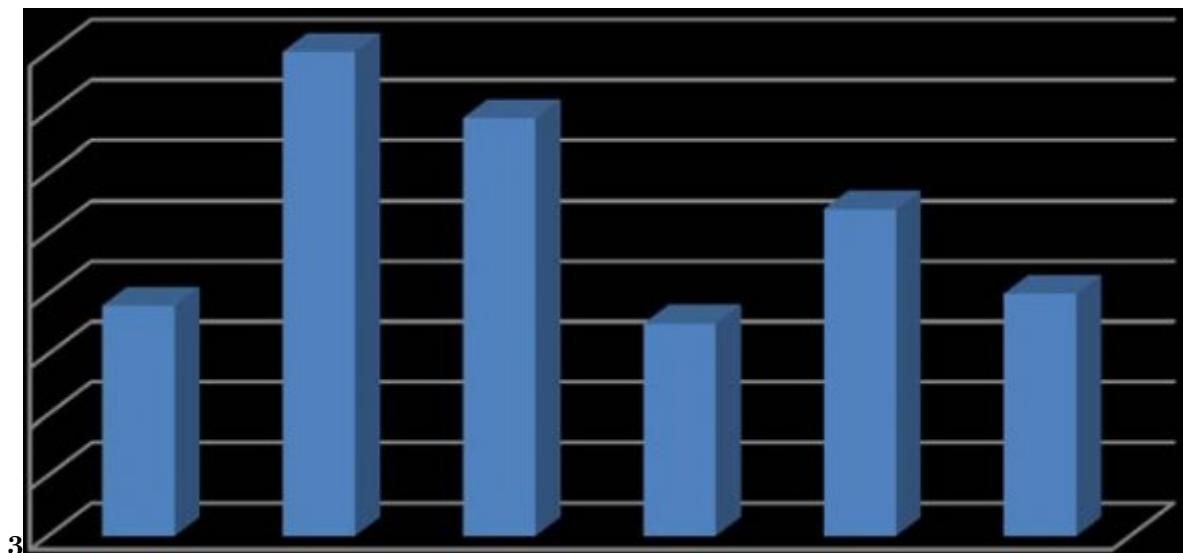


Figure 2: Figure 3 :

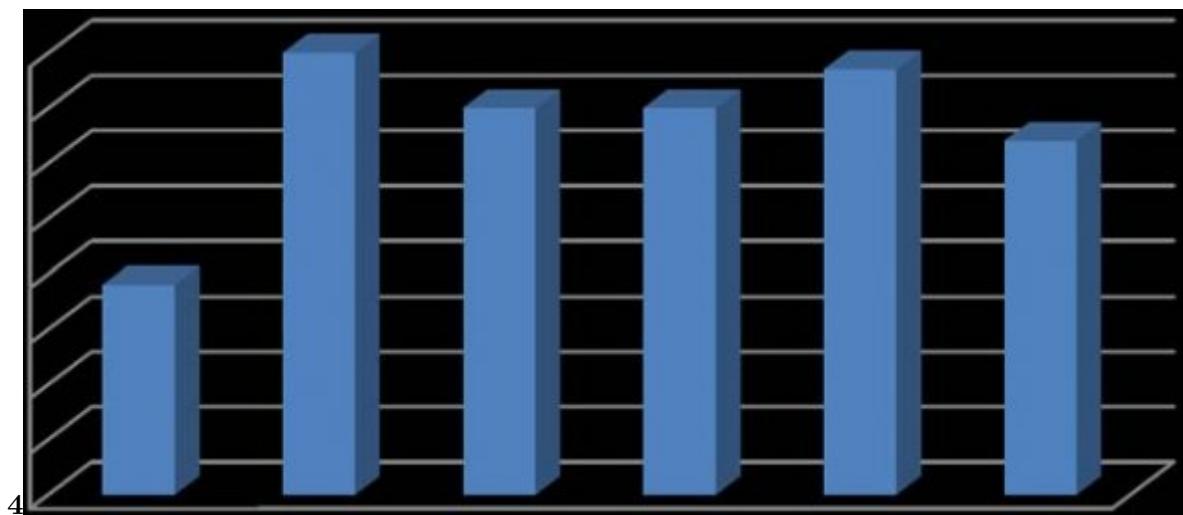


Figure 3: Figure 4 :

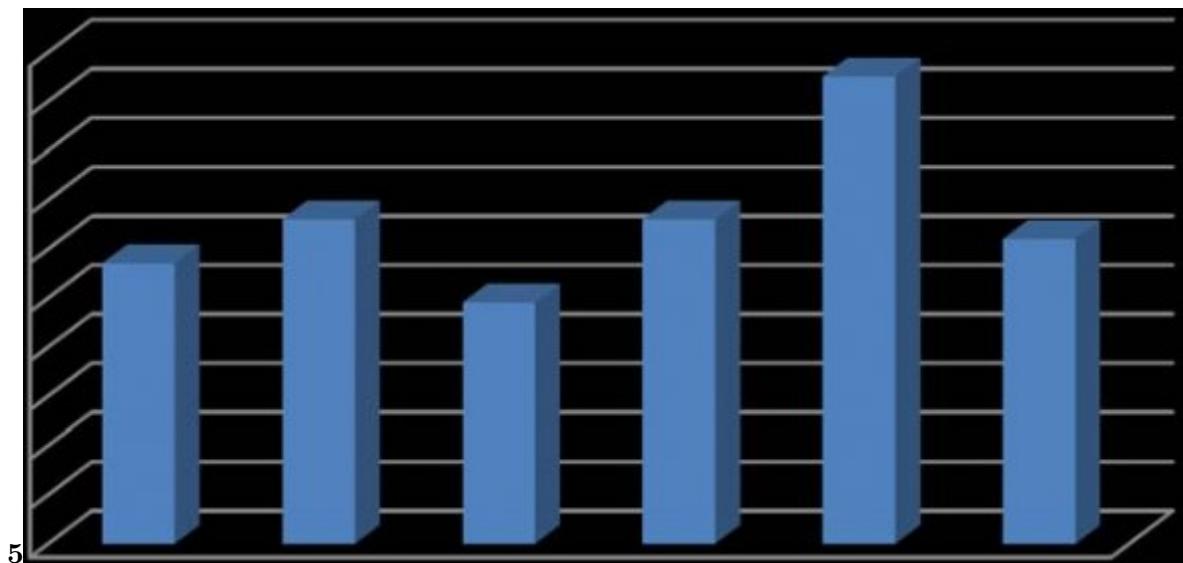


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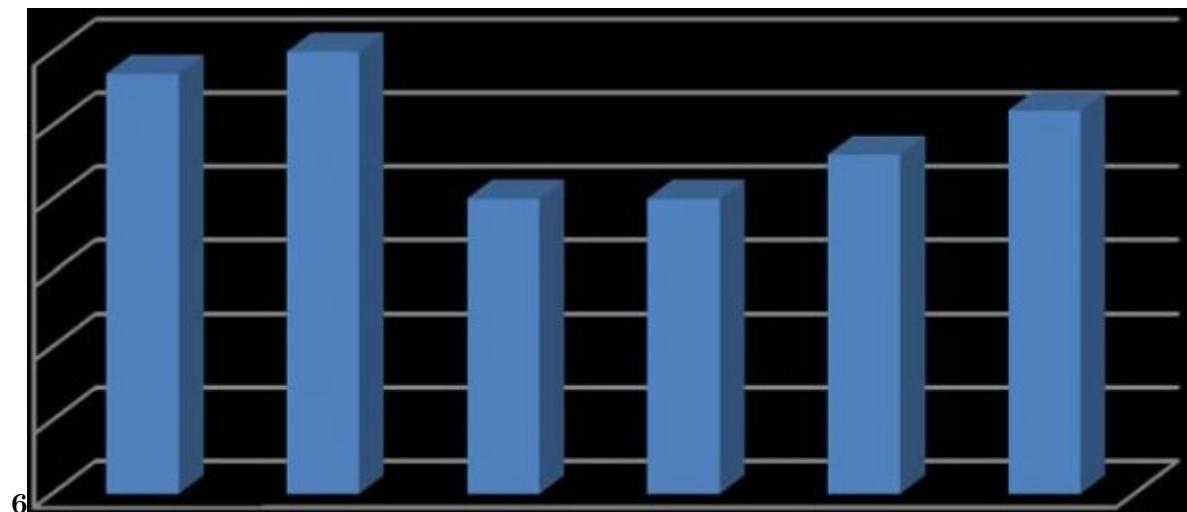


Figure 5: Figure 6 :

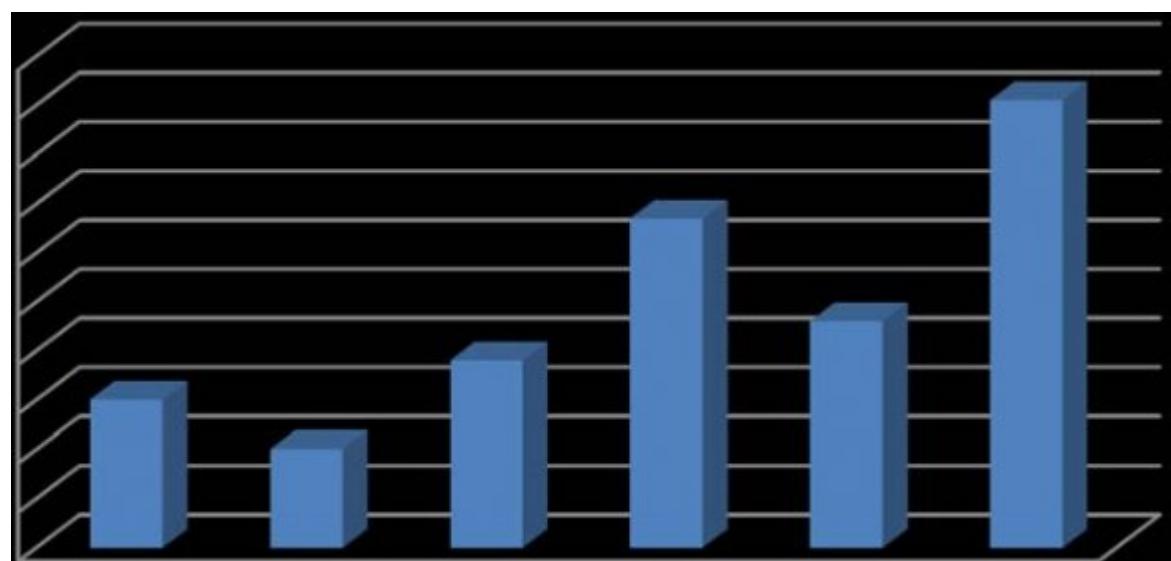


Figure 6:

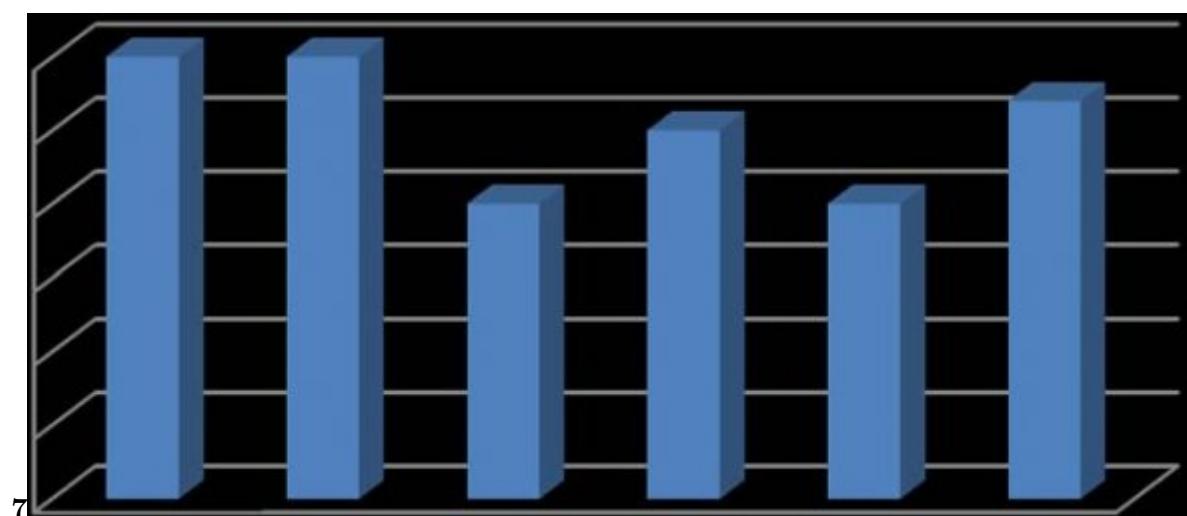


Figure 7: Figure 7 :

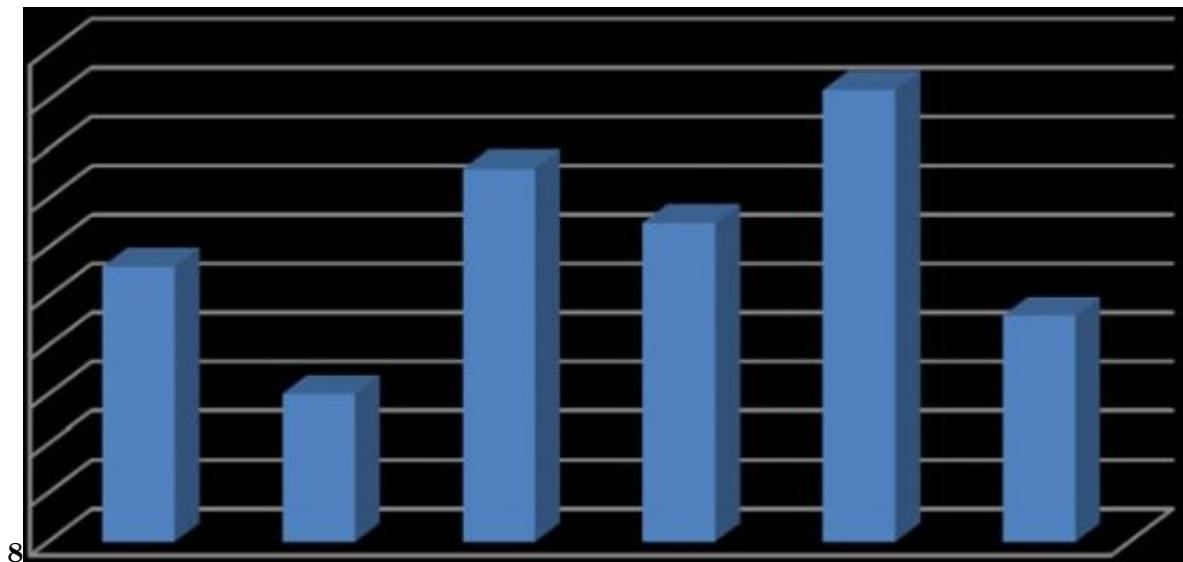


Figure 8: Figure 8 :

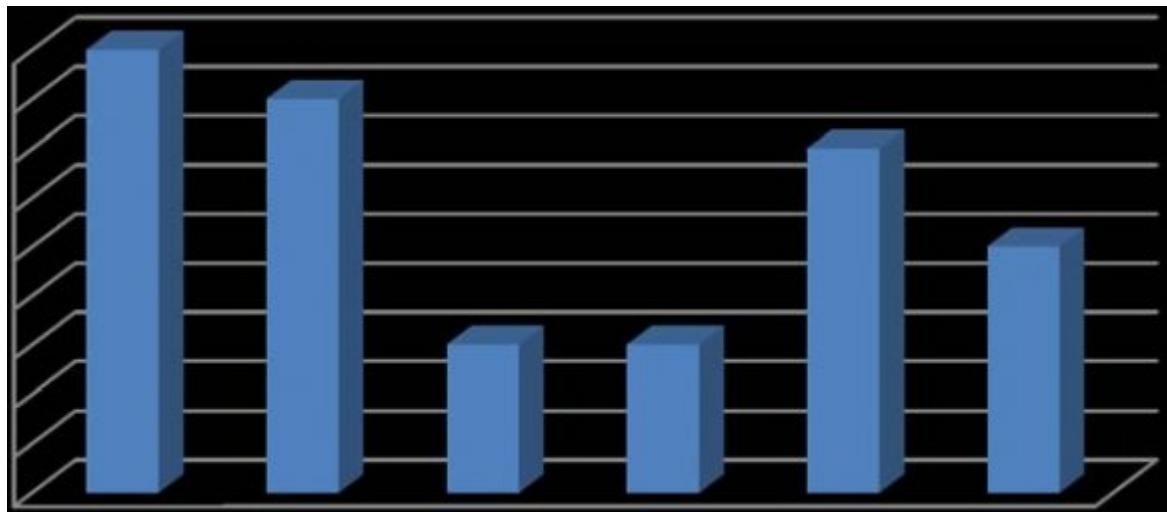


Figure 9:

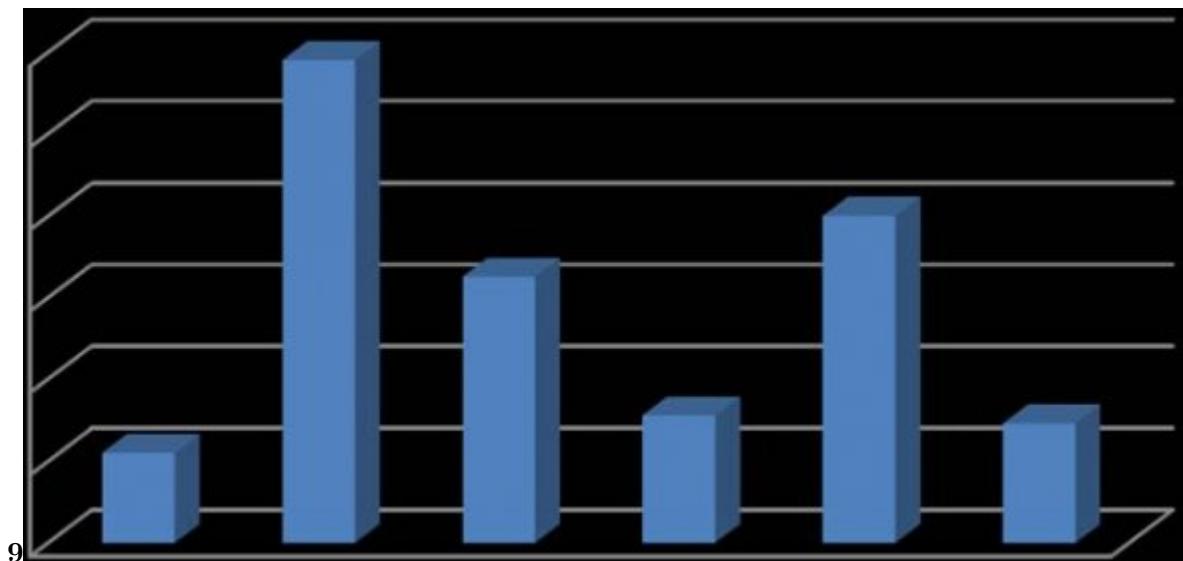


Figure 10: Figure 9 :

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