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### **Cultural Influences on International Marketing and Advertising**

*Extract from a full text first written by Roger Fulford in 2001. Copyright Roger Fulford.*

#### **Introduction**

Culture has far flung consequences for marketers involved in formulating an effective marketing message in any cross-cultural scenario. Given that the world has become a "global economy" an accurate understanding of culture and its influences is therefore vital for marketers to be able to gain a greater cross-cultural understanding of buyer behaviour in international marketing.

The effect culture has on an individual's perception and beliefs when analysing and deciding on purchase options and decisions as part of consumer buyer behaviour is an important one and often overlooked by many marketers now pursuing a "one size fits all" global marketing strategy.

#### **Cultural Influences**

Hofstede's fields of culture:

uncertainty avoidance  
power distance  
masculinity-femininity  
individualism-collectivism  
long term - short term orientation

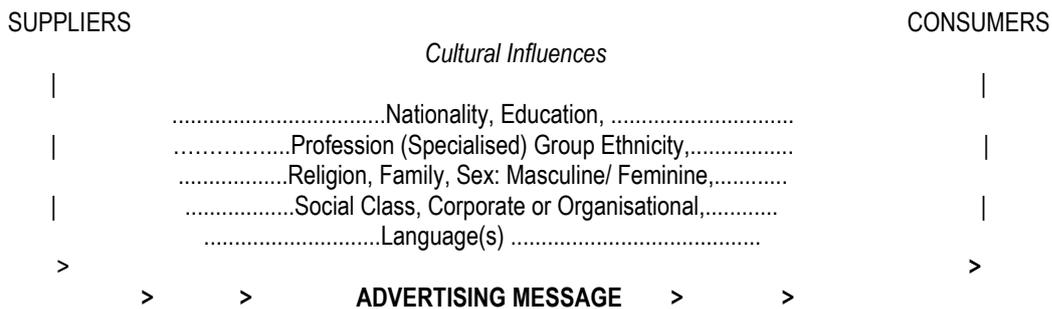
Individuals show different responses as to which is the dominant factor, however it is true to say each will have one or more important in terms of the background culture present in their make up. The sources of culture Usunier has identified are:

- Language(s)
- Nationality
- Education (general)
- Profession (specialized education)
- Group (ethnicity)
- Religion
- Family
- Sex (masculine or feminine culture)
- Social class
- Corporate or organizational culture

For example in Switzerland language is a dominant factor; German is spoken by 75%, French 20%, Italian 3-4% of the population. In India there are diverse ethnic religious groups; Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs.

**Cultural Influences in International Marketing**

Adapted from Usunier (2000)



**Geert Hofstede**

Hofstede (1980) in conducting a worldwide study of IBM employees came to the conclusion that five distinct types of culture are prevalent and differ between continents. His work is now widely respected and used within the social sciences and also the marketing community. His five fields are: power distance; uncertainty avoidance; individualism-collectivism; masculinity-femininity; long term - short term orientation.

Having been hired by IBM in 1965 as their first personnel researcher for the European Office to lead a team exploring issues surrounding staff morale and engaged in collecting data from 72 countries as part of IBM's ongoing employee attitude surveys consisting of 183 standardised items used by management for organisational development he realised from the accumulation of data that comparisons of value systems between individuals of differing nationalities within IBM could be identified empirically from the raw data collected. This formed the basis of his main research question that was to occupy him from 1973 until his publication of "Culture's Consequences" in 1980 and his proving empirically that the dimensions of power distance; uncertainty avoidance; individualism-collectivism; masculinity-femininity existed:

*"Power Distance - the extent to which the less powerful members of the organisations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. The basic problem involved is the degree of human inequality that underlies the functioning of each particular society.*

*Uncertainty Avoidance - the extent to which a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are novel, unknown, surprising, different from usual. The basic problem involved is the degree to which a society tries to control the uncontrollable.*

*Individualism on the one side versus its opposite, collectivism, is the degree to which individuals are supposed to look after themselves or remain integrated into groups, usually around the family. Positioning itself between these poles is a very basic problem all societies face.*

*Masculinity versus its opposite, femininity, refers to the distribution of emotional roles between the genders, which is another fundamental problem for any society to which a range of solutions are found; it opposes "tough" masculine to "tender" feminine societies.*

*Long-term versus short-term orientation refers to the extent to which a culture programs its members to accept delayed gratification of their material, social and emotional needs."*

Hofstede, G (2001) *Culture's Consequences*, Second Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp ix-xx.

Yet Hofstede commenting on international marketing , advertising and consumer behaviour in the second edition of 'Culture's Consequences' states that "culture is present in the design and quality of many products and in the presentation of many services" and also that " the persistent influence of national culture on consumer behaviour affects the validity of theories and practices in both marketing and advertising."

Hofstede's message which was first promulgated in 1980 has gained increasing prominence and may be one reason why Levitt's (1983) 'The Globalisation of Markets' in which standardisation of products and the associated marketing message were predicted to become the norm are now being overshadowed by the "think global, act local approach." However, Hofstede believes this is also a nonsense and should be "think local, act global." Hofstede commenting on international marketing, advertising and consumer behaviour in "Culture's Consequences" states that "*culture is present in the design and quality of many products and in the presentation of many services*" and also that " *the persistent influence of national culture on consumer behaviour affects the validity of theories and practices in both marketing and advertising.*"

Why was Hofstede's such a significant and worthwhile project that now twenty or more years have passed can be seen as a well defined, executable and beneficial piece of work and therefore an example of how to commence a research project? Especially since what had in effect started out as an "in-house" study soon became of use to the wider community both in the social sciences and marketing sphere.

Firstly the thrust of his work was based on investigating a theory already promulgated, where he had the data available to analysis and determine if such similarities existed. His research, although large and diverse, nevertheless grew out of manageable and meaningful research ideals and has become a benchmark in being able to understand, plan and act on the different characteristics between the populations of nations where five characteristics have been measured to draw comparisons.

Secondly, it has had a much greater effect on matters than simply within the research community. Various companies offer training and advice on managing cross-cultural scenarios based on the work of Hofstede, both in terms of organizational behaviour within multi-nationals and client relationships such as Trompenaars and De Mooij. The marketing fraternity is also becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of a truly local approach to consumer in the every day fight for the last customer. Something that is replacing the one global message in many companies as a result of the realization that Hofstede's findings lead to a need for a greater understanding of local preferences in terms of the marketing message being used.

Therefore, the influence of national culture on consumer buyer behaviour in relation to advertising; in particular the effect culture has on an individual's perception and beliefs when analysing and deciding on purchase options and decisions as part of consumer buyer behaviour is an important one and often overlooked by many marketers now pursuing a "one size fits all" global marketing strategy.

This is but one reason why the work of Hofstede will continue to be referred to and refined as the competition for the global customer becomes more intense. The reason for this being that at the outset Hofstede had a clear idea of what he was actually researching, why, what theory had been promulgated before and had ready and immediate access to data that was freely available in his chosen field. These factors no doubt helped him to carry out his research in a manner which permitted him to obtain the widest possible promulgation within the wider community once his landmark, although to him common sense, discovery was proved empirically.

His research has been both acknowledged and used as the basis of further research by many other leading academics and practitioners in the field of cultural studies; particularly within the organisational and marketing context. Much recent attention has been given to the marketing message being portrayed in the global and international context and in addressing cultural research it is evident it has extremely important consequences for marketers involved in formulating an effective marketing message in any cross-cultural scenario. Given that the world has become a "global economy" an accurate understanding of culture and its influences is therefore vital for marketers to be able to gain a greater cross-cultural understanding of buyer behaviour in international marketing. In a nutshell these are therefore the very reasons why Hofstede's work is so beneficial to the marketing community.

Much is common sense, but it is useful to have it in a cohesive structure referring to Hofstede's landmark research and also later research projects undertaken using his cultural dimensions as a basis. These include Beaton (1998), Cavusgil and Das (1997), De Mooij (1998, 2000, 2001), Trompenaars (1973), Zandpour (1994) and Zhang and Gelb (1996).

Hofstede was working with an accumulated set of data which was obtained on a massive scale due to the world domination of IBM at the time and which he was allowed to analyse freely. In formulating his research questions Hofstede was aware of the work of Inkeles and Levinson (1954/1969) who had proposed that in theory dimensions of culture may exist between nations. Hofstede had the necessary data available to address this research question empirically using qualitative methods.

In Hofstede's own words:

*"The existing literature about dimensions of culture, both theory based and empirically derived, contains predictions and validations of these dimensions. In a 1954 review article, Inkeles and Levinson (1954/1969) predicted the first four of these dimensions long before I identified them empirically."*

Source: Hofstede, G (2001) Culture's Consequences, Second Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, p1.

The research area that Hofstede focused on and came to identify empirically in terms of; power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity and long-term versus short-term was therefore as he readily admits based on earlier theories that were ripe for testing.

De Mooij's (2000 p105) research in developing practical applications for the marketing community of Hofstede's cultural values is such an example where she set out to "*demonstrate that a model which distinguishes values of national culture, developed by Geert Hofstede (1991) for the purposes of intercultural management, can also be used to understand differences in consumption and consumer behaviour.*" Her work is now widely respected, Hofstede (2001 p 448-451) himself pays tribute to De Mooij's research when commenting briefly on international marketing, advertising and consumer behaviour in "Culture's Consequences."

Hofstede's project relied on statistical data accumulated during the period 1968 to 1972 where surveys were collected from "matched" marketing and service personnel from the 72 countries IBM operated within using locally employed staff and resulted in more than 116,000 questionnaires being completed with respondents matched by occupation, age and gender. Having access to this data collected internally by IBM as part of their commitment to employee satisfaction monitoring Hofstede's study drew on reliable and accurate information whose source could be verified. The use of a pseudonym "Hermes" to describe the corporation avoided any possible hint of bias when the results were promulgated in his book "Culture's Consequences." Overall the legitimacy of the research project could not be called into question given the scale of data available for analysis and the distinct lack of any furtherance of IBM in the actual research question being explored, namely national culture variance between employees of a large multinational.

Following his initial research cross-cultural studies focusing on the effects of advertising have been carried out to form a comparison between developed western countries and also the Middle and Far East. Such examples include Beaton (1998), De Mooij (1998, 2000, 2001), Zandpour (1994) and Zhang and Gelb (1996) who have all used Hofstede's five dimensions as their basis.

The methodology adopted by Hofstede was to study and make alternate use of the existing data generated from employee surveys by IBM, one of the world's largest multinationals at the time that was directly relevant to his research. In doing so it is apparent that he had already decided on the research goal, i.e. could the theory proposed by Inkeles and Levinson be proved in practice and he had the necessary data available to embark on the research. Two important steps towards the successful completion of any research project.

Similarly De Mooij (1998) in seeking to test whether culture, as defined by Hofstede, could be linked to advertising styles and consumer perception carried out an analysis of the print advertisements that appeared in twenty countries:

Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Egypt, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Mexico, Peru, Chile, United States, South Africa

by making use of a revision of Franzen's (1994) model developed to analyse the characteristics of advertising that influence effectiveness to observe whether a relationship with Hofstede's cultural dimensions could be established.

In doing so again a clear methodology is apparent from the start; i.e. to test whether there is a correlation between Hofstede's categories and Franzen's advertising forms.

The eight basic advertising forms used by De Mooij were:

1. Announcement
2. Display

3. Association Transfer
4. Lesson
5. Drama
6. Entertainment
7. Imagination
8. Special Effects

This research led De Mooij to the conclusion that such a relationship does exist in certain conditions and is analysed in-depth in her book "Global Marketing and Advertising: Understanding Cultural Paradoxes"

Cavusgil and Das (1997) carried out a thorough analysis of the methodology used in cross-cultural research in an attempt to draw together a framework for use by all researchers looking at cross-cultural issues be they concerned with organisational or marketing issues etc. In addition Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) have successfully placed at the centre of user groups within commerce and industry Hofstede's five dimensions making the research readily available to the business community. This research being highly valid to the business world and Trompenaars is widely published in professional magazines addressing the issues of culture in a business environment.

Zhang and Gelb (1996) in comparing advertising appeals carried out in the US, which Hofstede highlights as individualist, to that of China, the direct opposite collectivist, came to the conclusion that *matching advertising appeals to culture is advisable for advertisers*, as a consequence of their comparison of the sharply contrasting cultures of the US and China. Their study was conducted within a clearly defined timescale, as comparisons were being made between both American and Chinese students. Given the nature of the study, the reaction of respondees to the product was required as simultaneously as possible from the two audiences where the products were new to the market and affected how consumers viewed the product.

Hofstede has also collated the key differences in three of the categories with relation to consumer behaviour:

Key Differences Between Low and High Uncertainty Avoidance Societies In Consumer Behaviour (Culture's Consequences p180)

LOW UAI:

*Consumption of convenience products.*  
*Reading books and newspapers.*  
*Use Internet and teletext.*  
*Main car bought secondhand.*  
*"Do it yourself" in home.*  
*Investment in stocks.*  
*Short payment terms for bills.*

HIGH UAI:

*Consumption of "purity" products: mineral water, fresh fruits, sugar, textile washing powders.*  
*Less reading books and newspapers.*  
*Less use of Internet and teletext.*  
*Main car bought new.*  
*Use specialists in home.*

*Investment in precious metals and gems.  
Long payment terms for bills.*

Key Differences Between Collectivist and Individualist Societies In Consumer Behaviour  
(Culture's Consequences p244)

LOW IDV:

*Live in apartment or flats.  
Live with human companions.  
Security by social network.  
Ask friends for jobs around the house.  
Other-dependent lifestyles.  
Read fewer books, use fewer home computers, enjoy TV more.  
Social network main source of information.*

HIGH IDV:

*Live in detached houses with private gardens; own motor homes.  
Live with cats and or/dogs.  
Security by home and life insurance.  
Do-it-yourself for jobs around the house.  
Self-supporting lifestyles.  
More books, use computer, use answering machine.  
Media main source of information.*

Key Differences Between Feminine and Masculine Societies In Consumer Behaviour (Culture's  
Consequences p312)

LOW MAS:

*Buying decisions and shopping shared between partners.  
Coffeemakers for coziness.  
Homemade products popular.  
Purchases for use.  
Less appeal of foreign goods.  
Engine power of cars irrelevant.  
Motor homes: vacations in home on wheels.  
Reading: more fiction.  
Less confidence in advertising.*

HIGH MAS:

*Men make main buying decisions, women shop for food.  
Fewer filter coffeemakers.  
Fewer products homemade.  
Purchases for showing off.  
More appeal of foreign goods.  
Engine power of cars important.  
Vacations include business-class flights.  
Reading: more nonfiction.  
More confidence in advertising.*

Smith, P.B and Bond, M.H (1993) in *Social Psychology Across Cultures* demonstrate that empirical research findings from well known studies highlight that significant differences occur between individualistic as opposed to collectivistic societies that affect the decision making processes as well as self-perception, communication, conformity and leadership values. These are vital elements that marketers need to appreciate in order to understand more fully the cultural and communication issues between nations that marketing messages seek to address.

#### OTHER DEFINITIONS OF CULTURE

De Mooij (1998) has assessed that "What motivates people to buy and use certain products is largely a matter of culture. Culture influences how people relate to each other in the buying process, whether decisions are made by individuals or groups, and what motivates someone to buy specific products."

In order to define the cultural aspects pertaining to marketing, it is first necessary to define the various ideas that surround the term culture and to analyse which are relevant to the study.

In drawing on Hofstede's five points for measuring cross-cultural differences it must be remembered there are numerous definitions of culture put forward by commentators amongst them Adler (1991), Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1963), Kluckholm (1951), Triandis (1972) whilst other commentators have looked at key cultural differences such as Schwartz (1992), Parsons and Shils (1951), Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), Rokeach (1973), Trompenaars (1993), Hall (1976), and Triandis and associates (1972).

Indeed Usunier (2000) quotes Kroeber and Kluckholm (1952) who in attempting to define culture listed 164 definitions as well as making their own.

#### INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

Various commentators, amongst them Beaton (1998), Douglas and Craig (1997), Rabin (1994), Reynolds and Simitiras (2000) and Usunier (2000) have looked at the issues of culture when engaging in international marketing to important western, Middle East and Latin American markets.

#### ADVERTISING

Cross-cultural studies concerning the effects of advertising have been carried out to form a comparison between developed western countries and also the Middle and Far East. Such examples include Lin (1993), Zandpour (1994) and Zhang and Gelb (1996). Rosen and Boddewyn (1989) have looked at the branding of US brands abroad.

De Mooij (1998) carried out an analysis of the print advertisements that appeared in twenty countries:

Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Egypt, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Mexico, Peru, Chile, United States, South Africa

by making use of a revision of Franzen's (1994) model developed to analyse the characteristics of advertising that influence effectiveness to observe whether a relationship with Hofstede's cultural dimensions could be established.

The eight basic advertising forms used by De Mooij were:

Basic Forms	Subcategories
1. Announcement	1.1 Pure presentation 1.2 Factual explanation 1.3 Product message 1.4 Corporate presentation, documentary
2. Display	
3. Association Transfer	3.1 Lifestyle 3.2 Metaphor 3.3 Metonymy 3.4 Celebrity transfer
4. Lesson	4.1 Presenter 4.2 Testimonial/endorsement 4.3 Demonstration 4.4 Comparison 4.5 Analogy 4.6 "How to" 4.7 Dramatized lesson
5. Drama	5.1 Slice-of-life 5.2 Problem-solution 5.3 Vignettes 5.4 Theater
6. Entertainment	6.1 Humor 6.2 Play or act around product
7. Imagination	7.1 Cartoons 7.2 Film properties in action 7.3 Other, unrealistic acts
8. Special Effects	8.1 Product in action, animation 8.2 Film, video techniques, artistic stimuli

Franzen (1994) focused on advertising effectiveness, McCracken (1986,1991) has studied the structure, movement and cultural meaning of consumer goods whereas Zandpour (1994) has used regression analysis successfully in analysing cultural fitness in TV advertising. Cavusgil and Das (1997) carried out a thorough analysis of the methodology used in cross-cultural research.

Since Levitt (1983) made his prediction that global marketing with one distinct message was the way forward many companies have followed this strategy. Recently however there has been a resurgence of a more local approach and appreciation which has a systematic approach to cater to the local needs; "Act global think local."

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