

Cross-Cultural Consumer Behavior: A Review of Research Findings

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ABSTRACT. Most aspects of consumer behavior are culture-bound. This article reviews the cultural relationships with the self, personality, and attitude, which are the basis of consumer behavior models and branding and advertising strategies. The Hofstede model is used to explain variance. Other consumer behavior aspects reviewed are motivation and emotions, cognitive processes such as abstract versus concrete thinking, categorization and information processing, as well as consumer behavior domains such as product ownership, decision making, and adoption and diffusion of innovations. Implications for global branding and advertising are included.

KEYWORDS. Culture, dimensions, personality, self, emotion, global branding, communication

INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen increased interest in the influence of culture on consumer behavior as well as increased research. In this article we review studies of the influence of culture that are relevant to international marketing. We discuss the various areas of research following the components of human behavior as structured in our Cross-Cultural Consumer Behavior Framework (figure 1), which was inspired by a conceptual model by Manrai and Manrai (1996). In this framework we structure the cultural components of the person in terms of consumer attributes and processes, and the cultural components of behavior in terms of consumer behavior domains. Income interferes. If there is no income, there is little or no consumption, so income is placed in a separate box. The *attributes* of

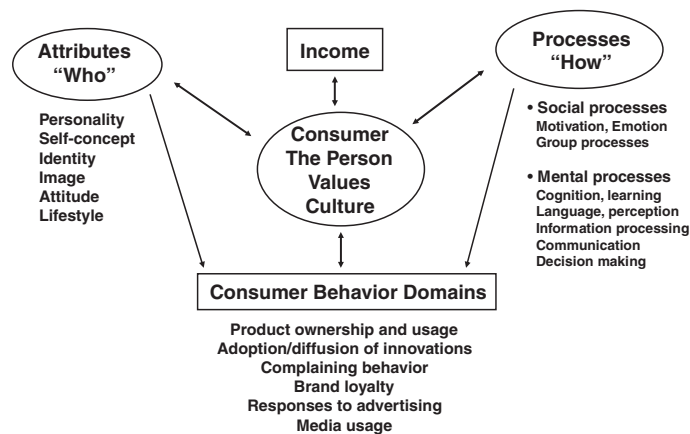
the person refer to what people are (the who) and the *processes* refer to what moves people (the how). The central question is “Who am I?” and in what terms people describe themselves and others—their personality traits and identity. Related to the who are attitudes and lifestyle because they are a central part of the person. How people think, perceive, and what motivates them—how the aspects of “me” process into behavior—are viewed as processes.

Much research on cross-cultural consumer behavior has used the Hofstede dimensional model of national culture. Although the country scores originally were produced in the early 1970s, many replications of Hofstede’s study on different samples have proved that the country ranking in his data is still valid. In the second edition of his book *Culture’s Consequences* (2001), Hofstede shows more than 400

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FIGURE 1. Cross-Cultural Consumer Behavior Framework (Adapted from Manrai and Manrai 1996)



significant correlations between his index scores and data from other sources that validate them. Many data on product ownership and related behavior (De Mooij 2004, 2010; Hofstede 2001) appear to correlate with Hofstede's dimensions. Sometimes a configuration of two dimensions explains differences in product usage or other consumption-related phenomena even better.

HOFSTEDE'S FIVE DIMENSIONS OF NATIONAL CULTURE

Hofstede found five dimensions of national culture labeled Power Distance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Long-/Short-Term Orientation. In the description of the dimensions we include items that are most relevant to consumer behavior.

The power distance dimension can be defined as the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. In large power distance cultures, everyone has his or her rightful place in a social hierarchy. The rightful place concept is important for understanding the role of global brands. In large power distance cultures, one's social status must be clear so that others can show proper respect. Global brands serve that purpose.

The contrast individualism/collectivism can be defined as people looking after themselves and their immediate family only versus people belonging to in-groups that look after them in exchange for loyalty. In individualistic cultures, one's identity is in the person. People are "I"-conscious, and self-actualization is important. Individualistic cultures are universalistic, assuming their values are valid for the whole world. Universalism may explain why generally individualistic U.S. marketing managers focus more on standardizing global marketing strategy than for example collectivistic Japanese do (Taylor and Okazaki 2006). Individualistic cultures are also low-context communication cultures with explicit verbal communication. In collectivistic cultures, people are "we"-conscious. Their identity is based on the social system to which they belong, and preserving harmony and avoiding loss of face are important. Collectivistic cultures are high-context communication cultures, with an indirect style of communication. In the sales process in individualistic cultures, parties want to get to the point fast, whereas in collectivistic cultures it is necessary to first build a relationship and trust between parties. This difference is reflected in the different roles of advertising: persuasion versus creating trust.

The masculinity/femininity dimension can be defined as follows: The dominant values in a masculine society are achievement and

success; the dominant values in a feminine society are caring for others and quality of life. In masculine societies, performance and achievement are highly valued; and achievement must be demonstrated, so status brands or products such as jewelry are important to show one's success (De Mooij 2004, 247). In masculine cultures male and female roles are differentiated, whereas in feminine cultures roles overlap. In masculine cultures, household work is less shared between husband and wife than in feminine cultures. Men also do more household shopping in the feminine cultures. Data from Eurostat (2002) show that low masculinity explains 52% of variance¹ of the proportion of men "who spend any time on shopping activities."

Uncertainty avoidance can be defined as the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid these situations. In cultures of strong uncertainty avoidance, there is a need for rules and formality to structure life. This translates into the search for truth and a belief in experts. People are less open to change and innovation than people of low uncertainty avoidance cultures. Members of high uncertainty avoidance cultures express in their behavior a need for purity related to several product categories. Members of low uncertainty avoidance cultures have a more active attitude to life and play more active sports.

Long- versus Short-Term Orientation is the extent to which a society exhibits a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historic or short-term point of view. Values included in long-term orientation are perseverance, ordering relationships by status and observing this order, thrift, and having a sense of shame. The opposite is short-term orientation, which includes personal steadiness and stability, respect for tradition, and the pursuit of happiness rather than pursuit of peace of mind. Long-term orientation (LTO) implies investment in the future. An example is the relationship between LTO and broadband penetration (De Mooij 2010). Broadband asks for large investments by business or governments.

CONSUMER ATTRIBUTES: THE SELF CONCEPT, PERSONALITY, IDENTITY AND IMAGE

Brands are augmented products. Values or personal traits are added through communication strategy. This is a practice developed in the Western world. Differences in values and personal traits are found both at the company's side and the consumers' side. If they do so at all, consumers tend to attribute different personalities to one and the same brand. A host of knowledge from cross-cultural psychology is now available that helps understand the differences between the concepts of self and personality across countries that lie at the basis of many consumer behavior differences.

The Concept of Self

The concepts of self and personality as developed in the individualistic Western world include the person as an autonomous entity with a distinctive set of attributes, qualities, or processes. The configuration of these internal attributes or processes causes behavior. People's attributes and processes should be expressed consistently in behavior across situations. Behavior that changes with the situation is viewed as hypocritical or pathological.

In the collectivistic model the self cannot be separated from others and the surrounding social context, so the self is an interdependent entity who is part of an encompassing social relationship. Individual behavior is situational; it varies from one situation to another and from one time to another (Markus and Kitayama 1991). For members of collectivistic cultures self-esteem is not linked to the individual but to relationships with others. The very first words of little children in China are people-related, whereas children in the United States start talking about objects (Tardiff et al. 2008). In Japan, feeling good is more associated with interpersonal situations such as feeling friendly, whereas in the United States feeling good is more frequently associated with interpersonal distance, such as feeling superior or proud. In the United Kingdom feelings of happiness are

positively related to a sense of independence, whereas in Greece good feelings are negatively related to a sense of independence (Nezlek, Kafetsios, and Smith 2008).

Next to individualism, masculinity explains variation of the self-concept. Whereas in feminine cultures modesty and relations are important personal characteristics, in masculine cultures self-enhancement leads to self-esteem. A relationship orientation, including family values, not only is specific to collectivistic cultures but also is found in individualistic cultures that are also feminine (Watkins et al. 1998). The European Social Survey (Jowell and the Central Co-ordinating Team 2003) asks respondents across Western and Eastern European countries to mark the importance of getting respect from others. Collectivism explains 47% of variance, and high masculinity explains an additional 13% of variance.

Youths worldwide are not the same either. In individualistic cultures, a youth has to develop an identity that enables him or her to function independently in a variety of social groups apart from the family. Failing to do so can cause an identity crisis. In collectivistic cultures, youth development is based on encouragement of dependency needs in complex familial hierarchical relationships, and the group ideal is being like others, not being different (Triandis 1995).

Personality

Personality generally is defined as unique and cross-situationally consistent and is usually described in terms of traits such as autonomy or sociability. Western individualists view traits as fixed; they are part of the person. In collectivistic cultures, people's ideal characteristics vary by social role, and behavior is influenced by contextual factors (Church et al. 2006). Easterners believe in the continuous shaping of personality traits by situational influences (Norenzayan, Choi, and Nisbett 2002). When individualists describe themselves or others, they use elements of the personal self in objective, abstract terms, out of context (*I am kind, she is nice*). People from collectivistic cultures tend to use mostly elements of the collective self or describe actions of people in context (*My family thinks I am kind,*

She brings cake to my family) (Kashima et al. 2005). The Western habit of describing oneself and others in terms of abstract characteristics has led to the development of characterization systems of personal traits. The most used set of personality traits is the Five-Factor Model (McCrae 2002). Although these five factors are found in many different cultures, they vary in weight across cultures, and these variations relate to Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede and McCrae 2004). Although research using the same set of questions has resulted in similar five-factor structures across cultures, this doesn't imply that these are the only existing conceptions of personhood. It merely shows that a set of English-language questions, when translated, results in similar five-dimensional structures (Schmitt et al. 2007). Personality research in East Asia suggests that the "Big Five" in Asia should be extended with a Big Sixth: dependence on others (Hofstede 2007). Even if a similar factor structure is found, the facets that compose the factors may contain culture-specific elements (Cheung et al. 2008).

Several studies have found brand personality factors that are culture specific (Aaker, Benet-Martínez, and Garolera 2001). Specific factors are, for the United States "Ruggedness," for Japan and Spain "Peacefulness," and a specific Spanish dimension, labeled "Passion." A study of Korean brand personalities of well-known global brands like Nike, Sony, Levi's, Adidas, Volkswagen, and BMW found two specific Korean brand personalities, labeled "Passive Likeableness" and "Ascendancy" (Sung and Tinkham 2005).

Consumers across cultures attribute different brand personalities to one and the same global brand. The Red Bull brand has been marketed with a consistent brand identity, but consumers attribute different personalities to the brand (Foscht et al. 2008). A commercial cross-cultural brand value study (Crocus 2004,² in De Mooij 2010) that compared personalities attributed to highly valued global brands across cultures showed that a brand characteristic like "friendly" is most attributed to strong global brands in high uncertainty avoidance and low power distance cultures. "Prestigious" is a characteristic attributed to global brands in high power distance

cultures, and “trustworthy” is most attributed to strong brands in high uncertainty avoidance cultures. In cultures of the configuration low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance people attributed “innovative” and “different” to these brands. So consumers project their own personality preferences onto global brands. These findings have consequences for global brand positioning. Global companies of Western origin want to be consistent in their messages worldwide. They carefully formulate brand-positioning statements, including brand personalities, as a guideline for global communications, but consumers attribute personalities to brands that fit their own cultural values, not the values of the producer of the brand.

Identity and Image

We define *identity* as the idea one has about oneself, one’s characteristic properties, one’s own body, and the values one considers important. *Image* is how others see and judge a person. As identity and image are part of the self, in individualistic cultures identity and image are and should be the reflection of a unique self. The importance of a unique identity for individualists emerges from a Eurobarometer (2000) survey asking respondents to what degree people believe in a shared cultural identity. The percentages of respondents who agreed correlated negatively with individualism. In most Western—individualistic—cultures, people tend to assess the identity of self and others based on personality traits, on other individual characteristics such as age and occupation, and on material symbols (Belk 1984). Across cultures components of materialism, such as nongenerosity and preservation (Ger and Belk 1996) correlate with individualism (De Mooij 2004, 118–119). In collectivistic cultures, people will assess themselves in terms of their ability to maintain harmonious relationships with others. One’s identity is the group: the family, neighborhood, school, or the company where one works (De Mooij 2010).

Words for the concepts *identity* and *personality* in terms of a person separate from the context do not even exist in the Chinese and Japanese languages. There is a Japanese translation of

the English word *identity*—“to be aware of one-self as oneself”—but its significance lies in the suggestion that this awareness of self is based on connections with others. The *katakana* (the Japanese language system that uses foreign words) word for *identity* is used. But using the word does not necessarily imply conceptual equivalence.

In Western psychology the body is viewed as part of the identity. Body esteem is related to self-esteem, and people attribute more desirable characteristics to physically attractive persons. The vast majority of research on what constitutes physical attractiveness has been conducted in Western societies, but mostly in the United States, where physical attractiveness of women is judged according to strict criteria. The general idea is that a desirable appearance leads to greater self-esteem. In Japan, where people attribute success more to external than to internal sources, there is less emphasis on the body as a source of esteem (Kowner 2002). Confucian philosophy suggests that in the development of self-esteem and happiness, external physical appearance is less important than success in social role performance (Prendergast, Leung, and West 2002). From a Western worldview, Unilever developed a worldwide “Campaign for Real Beauty” for its personal care brand Dove, showing ordinary women and saying that real beauty can be found only on the inside; that every woman deserves to feel beautiful. Unilever published a study of women’s self-descriptions and statements about physical attractiveness in different countries (Etcoff et al. 2006). Across 10 countries (U.S., Canada, UK, Italy, France, Netherlands, Portugal, Brazil, Argentina, and Japan) the percentages of women who find themselves attractive correlate with individualism, low power distance, and low uncertainty avoidance. The latter explains 78% of variance. This is the configuration of the Western world where people are more preoccupied with the self. The opinion that the media better depict women of different shapes correlates with individualism, explaining 53% of variance. This reflects individualistic values of uniqueness and variety. In collectivistic cultures people prefer to conform to others. This demonstrates that opinions of female beauty and the importance

of female attractiveness vary across cultures and in particular between East and West.

The consequences for the brand identity concept are that in individualistic cultures, brands have to be unique and distinct with consistent characteristics, whereas in collectivistic cultures the brand should be viewed as being part of a larger whole, a product of a trusted company. Whereas American companies have developed product brands with unique characteristics, Japanese companies have generally emphasized the corporate brand. In essence, this means inspiring trust among consumers in a company and so persuading them to buy its products. Japanese and Korean companies, in their television advertisements, display corporate identity logos more frequently than U.S. and German companies do (Souiden, Kassim, and Hong 2006).

Attitude

Western consumer behaviorists tend to view an attitude as a lasting, general evaluation of people (including oneself), objects, advertisements, or issues. In the Western definitions, attitudes help to organize and structure one's environment and to provide consistency in one's frame of reference. Individualists want consistency among their attitudes, feelings, and behaviors. As a result, under certain conditions, the behavior of consumers can be predicted from their attitudes toward products, services, and brands, and a purchase prediction is derived from a positive attitude. In collectivistic cultures, however, there is not a consistent relationship between attitude and future behavior. It may even be a reverse relationship: Behavior (product usage) comes first and defines attitude (Chang and Chieng 2006). This implies that measurement of attitude toward the advertisement (A_{ad}) for measuring advertising effectiveness will not work the same way in collectivistic cultures as it does in individualistic cultures.

SOCIAL PROCESSES: MOTIVATION AND EMOTION

Assumed universal emotions and consumer motives are fundamental to standardization deci-

sions, but both motives and emotions are culture bound. Understanding the variations of what motivates people is important for positioning brands in different markets. Many motives are category bound, such as purity as a motive for food and drink and status motives for luxury brands, but the strength of such motives will vary across cultures (De Mooij 2004, 2010). Theories like those by Maslow or Freud reflect the culture of origin of the designers of these theories (Hofstede 2001). More research should be done to find different category motives and the relationship with culture.

Emotion psychologists have argued that emotions are universal. An argument in favor of universal basic emotions is that most languages possess limited sets of central emotion-labeling words, such as *anger*, *fear*, *sadness*, and *joy*. However, display and recognition of facial expressions and intensity and meaning of emotions vary and are culturally defined. Emotions are, for example, more subdued in high power distance, and collectivistic cultures (Kagitçibasi 1997). East Asian collectivists try to display only positive emotions and tend to control negative emotions. Probably this is the reason why, in emotion-recognition studies, Chinese people are less able to identify expressions of fear and disgust (Wang et al. 2006). A comparison of emotion expression across 32 countries showed a significant correlation with individualism for overall emotion expressivity and in particular expressing happiness and surprise (Matsumoto, Yoo, and Fontaine 2008). People also weigh facial cues differently. When interpreting emotions of others, the Japanese focus more on the eyes, whereas Americans focus on the mouth. This difference may explain why emoticons differ between Japan and the United States (Yuki, Maddux, and Masuda 2007). Researchers using emoticons—assumed to be more neutral than faces of real people—should be aware of these differences.

MENTAL PROCESSES

How people see, what they see and do not see, how they think, how language structures their thinking, how they learn, and how

people communicate are mental or cognitive processes. Several of these processes are important for advertising research. We discuss cross-cultural studies of four cognitive processes: abstract versus concrete thinking, categorization, information processing, and decision making.

Abstract versus Concrete Thinking

Whereas in individualistic cultures brands are made by adding values or abstract personality traits to products, members of collectivistic cultures are more interested in concrete product features than in abstract brands because they are less used to conceptual thinking. For members of collectivistic cultures, the brand concept is too abstract to be discussed the way members of individualistic cultures do. The Reader's Digest Trusted Brands survey of 2002 asked people in 18 different countries in Europe about the probability of buying unknown brands. The responses "extremely/quite likely to consider buying a brand which I've heard of but haven't tried before" correlated significantly with individualism ($r = .82^{***}$). Instead of adding abstract personal characteristics to the product, in collectivistic cultures the brand is linked to concrete persons, in Japan called *talents* (Praet 2008).

The unfamiliarity with abstract brand associations leads to different results when measuring brand equity of global brands across cultures. An important element of brand equity is consumer equity, which is measured in part by brand associations. Many of these associations are abstract. In this respect, Western measurement systems are not adequate to measure global brand equity. Hsieh (2004) demonstrated that the brand value calculated based on brand associations for 19 car brands in 16 countries varied significantly. In Europe, the average brand value of the 19 brands was higher than in Asian countries. These differences appear to correlate with individualism ($r = .68^{***}$). Other studies confirm that different cultural conditions lead consumers to different brand evaluations (Koçak, Abimbola, and Özer 2007).

Categorization

How people categorize other people and objects varies with individualism/collectivism. Collectivists tend to pay attention to relationships between objects, whereas individualists categorize objects according to rules and properties (Choi, Nisbett, and Smith 1997). Chinese children will group items together that share a relationship, whereas Canadian children will group items together that share a category (Unsworth, Sears, and Pexman 2005). Such findings explain variation of acceptance of brand extensions. American consumers view a brand extension of a different product category as not fitting with the parent brand. However, collectivists view the parent brand in terms of the overall reputation of or trust in the company. So they perceive a higher degree of brand extension fit also for extensions in product categories far from those associated with the parent brand than individualists would (Monga and Roedder John 2007). Differences in categorization also influence retail design, e.g., how the merchandise is displayed (De Mooij 2010).

Information Processing

How people acquire, organize, and utilize information is related to how they have learned to process information. People of collectivistic high-context cultures, used to symbols, signs, and indirect communication, will process information in a different way than people of individualistic, low-context cultures, who are more verbally oriented and used to explanations, persuasive copy, and rhetoric. Members of individualistic, low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance cultures are verbal oriented; they read more books and newspapers. In 2007, strong uncertainty avoidance explained 63% of variance of Europeans of 24 different countries who said they had never read a book in the past 12 months. Weak uncertainty avoidance explained 63% of variance of those saying they had read five books in the last 12 months (Eurobarometer 2007). During the past half century circulation and readership of newspapers have been negatively correlated with

power distance and uncertainty avoidance (De Mooij 2010). Whereas in individualistic cultures of low power distance, people will actively acquire information via the media and friends to prepare for purchases, in collectivistic and/or high power distance cultures, people will acquire information more via implicit, interpersonal communication and base their buying decisions on feelings and trust in the company. Frequent social interaction causes an automatic flow of communication between people, who as a result acquire knowledge unconsciously (De Mooij 2010). Information is like air: It is there; you don't search for it. A consumer survey by Eurobarometer (2002) asked people to what degree they viewed themselves as well-informed consumers. The answers "well-informed" correlate with low power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, and individualism, which explains 53% of variance (De Mooij 2010). Cho and others (1999) state that in China consumers rely on word of mouth communication because of the high contact rate among group members. Also the effect of online research on the brand chosen correlates with low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance (Mediascope Europe 2008). Answers to questions about how well people think they are informed about all sorts of issues follow this pattern. For example, the percentages of respondents who feel well informed about environmental issues across 23 countries in Europe correlate with low power distance, individualism, and low uncertainty avoidance (Eurobarometer 2008). The percentages agree with the statement "I feel well informed about what is going on in politics and current affairs" are correlated with low power distance ($r = -.57^{***}$) and low uncertainty avoidance ($r = -.51^{***}$) (Eurobarometer 2005). So it basically is the cultural configuration of individualism, low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance, which is the North-West of Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world where people consciously search for information.

Models of how advertising works are based on the assumption that information gathering is an important aspect that often comes first. The FCB planning model suggests four sequences in the process by which advertising influences consumers: (1) learn-feel-do, (2) feel-learn-do,

(3) do-learn-feel, and (4) do-feel-learn. The first two sequences are related to high involvement; the third and fourth sequences are low involvement. In none of these sequences "feel" comes first. Miracle (1987) argued that for the Japanese consumer, another sequence is valid: "feel-do-learn." Japanese advertising is based on building a relationship between the company and the consumer. The purpose of Japanese advertising is to please the consumer and to build *amae* ("dependency"), and this is done by the indirect approach. As a result, "feel" is the initial response of the Japanese consumer, after which action is taken: a visit to the shop to purchase the product. Only after this comes knowledge.

Consumer Decision Making

The underlying thought of most Western consumer decision-making models is that all consumers engage in shopping with certain fundamental decision-making modes or styles, including rational shopping and consciousness regarding brand, price, and quality. The search for a universal instrument that can describe consumers' decision-making styles across cultures seems to be problematic. An approach that focuses on consumers' orientations in making decisions is the consumer characteristics approach by Sproles and Kendall (1986), who developed an instrument to measure consumer decision-making styles analogous to the personality traits concept, called the Consumer Style Inventory (CSI). This approach has been applied to different cultures with varying results. For example, among Koreans (Hafstrom, Jung, and Young 1992), the brand-conscious, perfectionist style was found most, and price-consciousness and value for money were not found in Greece and India (Lysonski, Durvasula, and Zotos 1996).

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR DOMAINS

Several consumer behavior domains can be distinguished. We cover some of the research for the following domains: product ownership and usage, adoption and diffusion of innovations, and complaining behavior.

Product Ownership and Usage

Differences in consumption across countries are quite stable. When measured across a mix of wealthy and poor countries often GNI/capita is an explaining variable, but when countries converge with respect to GNI/capita, consumption differences often can only be explained by cultural variables. Examples of culture-related differences are for mineral water consumption, PC ownership, Internet access, ownership of luxury goods, cars, and financial products.

From the early 1970s onward there has been a constant correlation between mineral water consumption and high uncertainty avoidance (De Mooij 2000, 2003, 2004; De Mooij and Hofstede 2002). In Europe, with increased wealth and improved quality of the tap water, the correlation has become more significant over time. The relationship reflects a passive attitude to health by focusing on purity in food and drink, less physical exercise, higher expenditures on medical care, higher numbers of physicians and pharmacies per 10,000 people, and more doses of antibiotics consumed. Low uncertainty avoidance cultures have a more active attitude to health by focusing on fitness and sports. When asked about their health they consider their health to be very good, there are more members of sports organizations, people spend more on sports services and play more sports as leisure activity (De Mooij 2004, 117). Worldwide, PC ownership is a matter of wealth, but across wealthy countries it is related to low uncertainty avoidance (World Bank 2008). From the start, access to the Internet has been related to low uncertainty avoidance, and there is little change. Data of 2007 (Eurobarometer) still show this relationship. However, several data show that heavy usage of the Internet and usage for leisure purposes are explained by low masculinity (De Mooij 2010). Ownership of luxury goods like expensive watches and jewelry is related to masculinity, and this relationship is stable over time. In 2007 (Synovate 2008) the percentage of business people who reported the main watch they owned cost more than €750 correlated with masculinity, and so did the percentage of those who bought jewelry over €1,500 in the past year. Similar correlations were found 10 years earlier

(De Mooij 2010). Car ownership is related to wealth, but across wealthy countries the number of passenger cars per 1000 people (World Bank 2006) is related to individualism. For 48 countries worldwide GNI/capita explains 72% of variance, but for 25 countries with GNI/capita over U.S. \$20,000, individualism explains 37% of variance. Also financial products vary by culture. More life insurance policies, for example, are sold in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures. In the former, should one die early, one cannot count on family to support one's dependents (Chui and Kwok 2008). There is no relationship with uncertainty avoidance, which confirms that uncertainty avoidance is not the same as risk avoidance.

Adoption and Diffusion of Innovations

Uncertainty avoidance explains differences in the adoption of innovations (Tellis, Stremersch and Yin 2003; Yeniurt and Townsend 2003). Rogers (1983) identified five categories of consumers according to the degree of acceptance of new products. The combined percentages of Innovators and Early Adopters represented 16% of the American population. Steenkamp (2002) found data for Europe that showed that this group in the United Kingdom represented 23.8%, in France 15.1%, in Germany 16.8%, in Spain 8.9%, and in Italy 13.4%. These percentages correlate negatively with uncertainty avoidance and positively with individualism.

Complaining Behavior

Because of harmony needs, collectivistic consumers are relatively loyal and are less likely to voice complaints when they experience postpurchase problems, but they do engage in negative word of mouth to in-group members. There is evidence that compared with Australians, the Chinese are less likely to lodge a formal complaint for a faulty product (Lowe, Chun-Tung, and Corkindale 1998). When collectivists do exit, it is particularly difficult for the offending supplier to regain them as customers (Watkins and Liu 1996).

CONCLUSION

An increasing body of knowledge is available that helps explain differences in consumer behavior across culture. This article reviewed a number of studies of basic cross-cultural differences. When designing global marketing, branding, and advertising strategies companies ignore these at their peril. Cultural models have been developed that explain differences and help develop strategies that target consumers across cultures more effectively. This article demonstrated how the Hofstede model can be used for this purpose.

NOTES

1. Regression analysis is stepwise. The coefficient of determination or R^2 is the indicator of the percentage of variance explained. For correlation analysis, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is used. Correlation analysis is one-tailed. Significance levels are indicated by * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; and *** $p < .005$.

2. Crocus (Cross-Cultural Solutions) 2004 refers to an unpublished cross-cultural study that measured brand value (called "brand pull") and provided a cultural explanation of strong or weak brand value in different countries. It was conducted by the research agency chain Euronet, in cooperation with the advertising agency chain Interpartners.

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