

The Consumer: Attributes

The attributes of the person refer to *what people are*. The central question is, “Who am I?” or the *self*, and in what terms people describe themselves, their personalities, traits, and identities. Related to the *who* are attitudes and lifestyles, because they are a central part of the person.

The concepts of self, personality, identity, and image are central to consumer behavior and are also used as metaphors in branding strategies. They have been derived from psychological studies in the United States and northwest Europe, so these and other psychological models presented in consumer behavior textbooks are derived from an individualistic worldview. Increasingly, other models are being developed for other groups.¹ Both attitude formation and the relationship between attitude and behavior vary across cultures. Whereas in Western models attitude is used to predict behavior, this is much less the case in other parts of the world.

Although ideally the emic approach should be followed for the study of consumer behavior in different countries, at this point in time it is more pragmatic to evaluate the cross-cultural usefulness of existing constructs. In this chapter, findings from cross-cultural psychology are presented to help understand the differences of the various aspects of the person across cultures.

THE CONCEPT OF SELF

Psychologists agree that the self-concept plays a central role in behavior and psychological processes. It consists of whatever individuals consider to be theirs, including their bodies, families, possessions, moods, emotions, conscience, attitudes, values, traits, and social positions.² The cross-cultural psychologists Markus and Kitayama state:

The self or the identity is critical because it is the psychological locus of cultural effects. It functions as a mediating, orienting and interpretative framework that will systematically bias how members of a given socio-cultural group will think, feel and act.³

The self is shaped by the cultural context, and in turn it strongly influences social behavior in various ways, including an individual's perceptions, evaluations, and values.⁴ This mediating role of the self makes it an intermediary variable for understanding behavior.

The concept of self, as used in consumer psychology, is rooted in individualism. It includes the following ideas about a person: A person is 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 of the self, persons are fundamentally interdependent with one another. The self cannot be separated from others and the surrounding social context. This concept of self is characteristic of Asia, South America, Russia, the Middle East, Africa, and the south of Europe. The interdependent view of human nature includes the following ideas about a person: A person is an *interdependent entity* who is part of an encompassing social relationship. Behavior is a consequence of being responsive to the others with whom one is interdependent, and behavior originates in relationships. Individual behavior is situational; it is sensitive to social context and varies from one situation to another and from one time to another.⁵ People follow different norms and values at different places, times and with different people. For example, the behavior norm in public space (e.g., work) is different from the norm in private space (e.g., family).⁶

In individualistic cultures focus is on individual autonomy. 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. 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 as opposed to being different.⁷

The very first words of children in China are people related, whereas children in the United States start talking about objects.⁸ 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 more related to a sense of independence, whereas in Greece, good feelings are negatively related to a sense of independence.⁹

Kagitçibasi¹⁰ distinguishes between a *relational self*, a *separated self*, and the *family model of emotional interdependence*, which is a combination of the first two. The relational self develops in collectivistic cultures in rural areas, where intergenerational interdependence functions for family livelihood. It is the family model of emotional and material interdependence. The separated self develops in the family model of independence in the urban

context of Western, individualistic cultures, where intergenerational interdependence is not required for family livelihood. The third category of self combines a relational orientation with autonomy. It develops the family model of emotional interdependence in the developed urban areas of collectivistic cultures, where material interdependency weakens, but emotional interdependence continues.

The mobile phone is the ultimate communication means to support emotional interdependence of members of collectivistic cultures in urban environments. Although in 2008 ownership of mobile phones was still related to wealth and individualism, an important motive for using it was to keep contact with family and friends. In a Eurobarometer¹¹ survey the percentage of people who strongly agreed with the statement "Use of the mobile phone helps to keep contact with family and friends" correlated negatively with individualism ($r = -.38^*$).

Although the relational self is characteristic of collectivistic cultures, a different type of relationship orientation exists in individualistic cultures that are also feminine.¹² This relationship orientation is called *horizontal individualism* by the cross-cultural psychologist Harry Triandis,¹³ who distinguishes between two types of individualism: vertical (independent and different) and horizontal (interdependent and different) individualism. What he calls horizontal interdependent is the relationship orientation of individualistic and low masculine cultures that are on the one hand characterized by self-reliance but on the other hand by interdependence, which translates to needs for consensus, low social status needs, and not wanting to "stick out." Whereas "family values" are part of the self-concept in collectivistic cultures, comparable social aspects characterize the self-concept in individualistic cultures that are also feminine.¹⁴ Both collectivism and femininity can explain variance in relationship orientation. Across seven countries in Latin America, in the more feminine cultures young people think the Internet is isolating. Low masculinity explains 59% of variance.¹⁵

A study by Yankelovich Clancy Shulman¹⁶ in the United States found that Hispanics do not believe they have to blend in with American culture at the expense of losing their own identity, which is based on a "relational self." The study found that for nearly 75% of U.S. Hispanics, personal satisfaction comes mostly from home and family, a significantly higher percentage than in the general population. Even though the percentage of working women among U.S. Hispanics is not much below general market levels, nearly 90% of Hispanic men and women believed that "a housewife's role is interesting and challenging," a view that was more than three times higher than other Americans. Nearly half the adult Hispanics said it is best to fit in rather than be different from others. They were less likely to search for new brands, try new products, or gather information on new products.

Adapting to situation suggests different self-concepts across contexts. Singh¹⁷ writes that Indians tolerate inconsistency more than Westerners, and their thinking is more contextual, which leads to contradictory self-concepts. Zhang¹⁸ suggests young Chinese, next to their local identity, may develop a global identity that allows them to communicate with people from other cultures either face to face or through interactive media. Their local identity is likely to be used most in daily interaction with family and friends and community members.

In the eyes of Westerners, behavior of Chinese or Japanese when in the West may suggest they are like Westerners because they are able to adapt so much to the situation and norms of the hosting country. This doesn't mean they share the same values, but they are much more than Westerners able to adapt to the situation.

Self-Descriptions and Self-Evaluations

In order to develop a distinctive, unique self, in individualistic cultures people learn to describe themselves in terms of psychological characteristics, but reporting one's distinctive characteristics is not a natural task in collectivistic cultures. Individualistic Westerners seem relatively more practiced in describing themselves in abstract and global ways than are members of collectivistic cultures. Individuals with interdependent selves may have difficulty describing themselves in absolute terms without any contextual or situational references. To the Japanese, abstract categorizations of the self seem unnatural or artificial because they reflect a claim of being a separate individual without the constraints of specific roles or situations.¹⁹ So collectivists are more likely to refer to social roles and present themselves as a relational part of a greater whole. Markus and Kitayama²⁰ describe studies that demonstrate that Korean and Japanese students twice as often as American students use context-specific and social self-descriptions or refer to some features of the situation or social context. People may, for example, describe themselves as "I am in the gymnastic club." This difference has consequences for opinion or attitude research. In collectivistic cultures, opinions are much less individual opinions, and references to group membership or situational aspects should be included in questions.

In particular, American descriptions of the self tend to contain almost only positive self-evaluations. Whereas American adults tend to rate themselves as more attractive and intelligent than average adults, Japanese adults rate about 50% of others as higher on a given trait or ability. In American psychology it is said that Americans display a "false uniqueness bias," whereas Japanese and Chinese tend to show a "modesty bias."²¹ Within Japanese culture, self-criticism (*hansei*) serves a functional purpose. It aids individuals in pointing at the areas in which they need to improve themselves. Self-improvement serves to aid Japanese in fulfilling their role obligations. This is in sharp contrast to North American practice, where negative self-features would symbolize lack of the ability to be self-sufficient, autonomous, and to make one's own unique mark in the world.²² The modesty bias is a reflection of collectivistic culture. A study comparing Congolese with Americans showed that, in general, fewer Congolese evaluate themselves positively than Americans. Enhancing the self is likely to be more common in the United States than in Congo.²³

IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETING, BRANDING, AND ADVERTISING

A central aspect of Western marketing is the focus on product attributes that are to distinguish the user's self from others. People will buy products that are compatible with their self-concepts or rather that enhance their "ideal self" images.

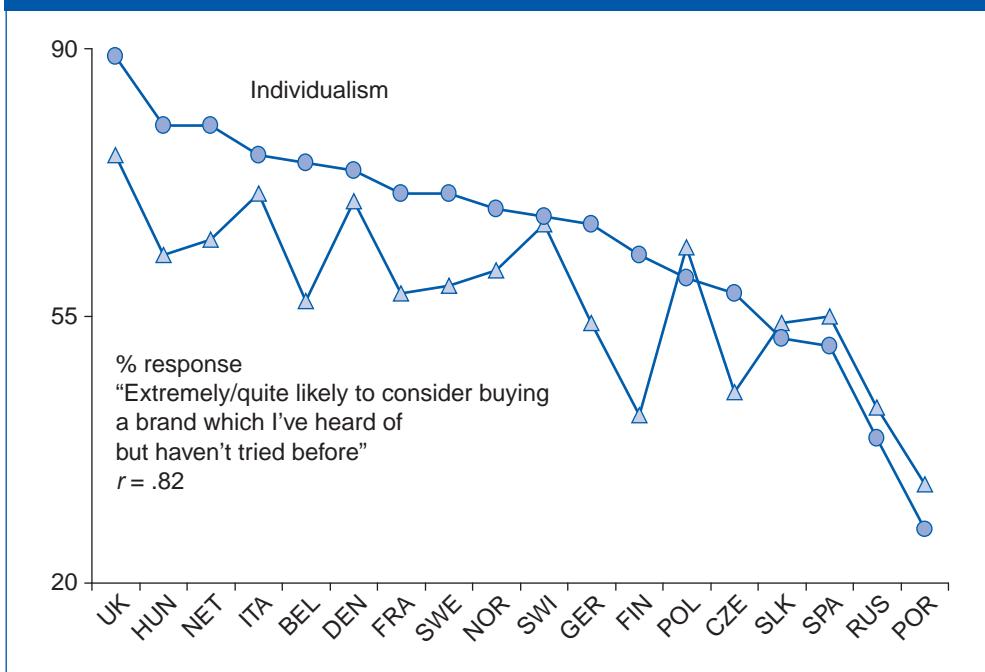
Ownership of products or brands transfers the meaning of products to consumers. By owning an item, the item can become part of the "extended self." The product's image should contribute to the consumer's self-concept.²⁴ This process is likely to vary with the different self-concepts. Whereas product ownership in individualistic cultures can express uniqueness and independence, in collectivistic cultures the extended self is the group, and product ownership may have the function of demonstrating life stage and group identity. In Japan, brands do not enhance a unique personality but confirm social status. The extreme brand-related behavior of Japanese youths is often falsely interpreted as Japanese youths becoming individualistic. It is the context that allows such behavior. When one is a student one can behave in specific autonomous ways; in other roles one cannot.

Key associations for fashion in France are individuality, symbolism, meaning, interpretation, pleasure, and seduction. In Japan, to be fashionable is to be dynamically integrated in a community that defines the self and proves that it exists by its ability to adapt to all new expressions of fashion.²⁵ To be fashionable in the United States is to demonstrate your unique individuality.

The Self-Concept and Branding

To many collectivists, abstract self-descriptions seem unnatural; characteristics can only be asked in the context of specific situations and relationships, for example, "Describe yourself at home with your family." An important lesson for branding is that if people are not able to describe *themselves* in abstract terms, they are likely not able to do so for *brands* either. For members of collectivistic cultures, the brand concept is too abstract to be discussed in a comparable manner as in individualistic cultures. The Reader's Digest Trusted Brands survey in 2002 asked people in 18 different countries²⁶ in Europe about the probability of buying a brand they had heard of but not tried before. In individualistic cultures people are more likely to buy unknown brands than in collectivistic cultures. The responses "Extremely/quite likely to consider buying a brand which I've heard of but haven't tried before" correlate significantly with individualism ($r = .82^{***}$). The relationship is illustrated in Figure 4.1. A brand out of context is less relevant to members of collectivistic cultures than to members of individualistic cultures.

Figure 4.1 The Brand Concept and Individualism



SOURCES: Hofstede et al. (2010) (see Appendix A); Reader's Digest Trusted Brands (2002) (see Appendix B)

The context specificity of the self in collectivistic cultures may imply that, in contrast to individualistic cultures, where a brand is supposed to be consistent with respect to its attributes and values, in collectivistic cultures one brand can have different attributes and/or values in different contexts. The innate need for cross-situational consistency of Western marketing managers induces them to develop consistent brand identities across countries. This is a fundamental error that may limit cross-cultural success.

In Asia, marketing managers are not inclined to develop brands or brand strategies by adding abstract characteristics to brands, the way it is done in the West. Hu²⁷ analyzed the content of 30 issues of the Chinese professional advertising magazines *Modern Advertising* and *China Advertising*, including 10,000 titles, and found zero articles including *brand* as a keyword.

Another limitation is the Western concept of creativity that is historically based on originality and uniqueness. The practices of Western branding and design are a reflection of the uniqueness concept that is seen as a precondition to differentiation. That is why marketers and designers insist that their brands should be *unique*. In Asian cultures the concept of originality does not exist as it does in the West. Instead, everything comes from somewhere else, because

everything and everybody is part of a greater whole, out of which everything can be taken, assimilated, and remade even while it retains its own cultural origins, and code.²⁸ The wish to be consistent is reflected in the ubiquitous use of standard—often English language—logos and pay-offs. What might, for example, for a Chinese consumer be the meaning of the pay-off “Wella, perfectly you” under a logo for a shampoo brand consisting of stylized waving hair?²⁹ (See Figure 4.2.)

Figure 4.2 Wella Logo



The Self-Concept and Advertising

The difference between the independent and interdependent self has its impact on advertising. In collectivistic cultures, such as China and Korea, appeals focusing on in-group benefits, harmony, and family are more effective, whereas in individualistic cultures like the United States, advertising that appeals to individual benefits and preferences, personal success, and independence is more effective.³⁰ A commercial in which a guy breaks out from a group and starts doing something on his own that the group hasn't thought of would be seen as positive in the individualistic cultures of the West but negative in collectivistic Asian cultures.³¹ For collectivists, one's identity is in the group. Depicting someone alone may imply he or she has no identity. A pan-European campaign by Vodafone depicted a lone individual, but the Vodafone brand Airtel in Spain depicted the group identity, as illustrated in Figure 4.3.

Members of individualistic and collectivistic societies will respond differently to advertisements emphasizing individualistic or collectivistic appeals. In the United States, people will be more persuaded by ads emphasizing individualistic benefits such as personal success and independence, whereas in Korea people will be more attracted to ads emphasizing collectivistic benefits, such as in-group benefits, harmony, and family.³²

Advertising appeals that present a brand in a way that matches consumers' self-concepts appear to result in more favorable brand attitudes. This was confirmed in a study by Wang et al.,³³ who use the terms *separated* versus *connected* for appeals that are attractive for people in individualistic cultures or collectivistic cultures. A connected advertising appeal stresses interdependence and togetherness. A separated advertising appeal stresses independence and autonomy.

The importance of both context and the relationship orientation of the self in collectivistic cultures can explain the frequent use of celebrities in Japanese advertising. The use of celebrities in advertising varies across cultures. There are indications that in Western societies these variations are related to the degree of masculinity (need for success), which is likely to explain why in the United States the cult of personality and obsession with celebrity and stardom is pronounced. However, in the collectivistic Japan, the use of celebrities in advertising

Figure 4.3 Vodafone and Airtel Advertisements



is even stronger than in the United States. In his description of the celebrity phenomenon in Japan, Praet³⁴ provides explanations that refer to two collectivistic aspects: the relational self and context. In Japan, unlike in most countries, celebrity appearances are not limited to famous actors, singers, sports stars, or comedians. Advertising is a stage for established celebrities to capitalize their fame; it also is the steppingstone for models and aspiring actors toward fame. In Japan, the word *talent* (*tarento*) is used to describe most celebrities in the entertainment world, and *star* is reserved for those who are seen to have long-lasting popularity. Many of these talents are selected on the basis of their cute looks. First, in the context of entertainment and advertising, this phenomenon seems not to pose problems of distinctiveness, which it might give in the context of the family or a work-related environment. Second, the function of using such *tarento* is to give the brand “face” in the world of brands with similar product attributes. Instead of adding abstract personal characteristics to the product, it is linked to concrete persons. This is also explained as part of the creative process, in which a creative team in the advertising agency prefers to explain a proposed campaign by showing the client a popular talent around whom the campaign is to be built rather than talking about an abstract creative concept. In a large study comparing 25 countries, Praet found that mainly collectivism explains differences in the use of celebrities in advertising, where the function of a celebrity is to give face to the brand in a world of brands with similar product attributes.³⁵

SELF-ENHANCEMENT AND SELF-ESTEEM

European Americans show a general sensitivity to positive self-relevant information, which is named *self-enhancement*.³⁶ To Americans, self-enhancement leads to *self-esteem*, and

self-esteem is a natural and valid barometer of human worth and psychological health, a belief that is unheard of in many other cultures. To Americans, self-esteem is important for a general sense of well-being, whereas in Japan, as well as in many other collectivistic cultures, subjective well-being depends on the appraisal of the self as actively responding to and correcting shortcomings. For collectivists, absence of negative features is more important for their well-being than presence of positive features.³⁷

How much self-esteem is integrated into the concept of self in Anglo-American culture is demonstrated by the definition of self-concept by Eysenck:

Self-concept is all the thoughts and feelings about the self; it combines self-esteem and self-image (the knowledge an individual has about himself or herself). Self-esteem is the evaluative aspect of the self-concept; it concerns how worthwhile and confident an individual feels about himself or herself.³⁸

Self-enhancement and self-esteem have been thought to be a phenomenon typical of individualistic cultures, because associated with individualism and the independent self is the tendency to maintain and enhance self-esteem through efforts to stand out or be superior to others.³⁹ Cross-cultural studies have shown that the self-enhancement tendency is indeed weaker in collectivistic cultures. Among Americans, success situations are considered to be more important than failure situations, whereas the opposite is true for Japanese. The independent self-system, typical of Western individualistic societies, stresses the uniqueness and well-being of the individual, whereas the interdependent self stresses the importance of fitting in, restraining oneself, and maintaining social harmony. Having self-attributes that are more positive (the main advantage of self-enhancement) seems to be less central to the interdependent self than to the independent self.⁴⁰

Among individualistic cultures, differences in self-enhancement are also considerable. These differences can be explained by cultural masculinity, but even better by the new long-/short-term orientation dimension. Feelings of pride and self-esteem are strong in short-term-oriented cultures. This explains the self-enhancement phenomenon in the United States, which is short-term oriented and scores high on masculinity.

Self-enhancement practices like ego boosting, performance, and showing off are integrated aspects of the North American self. American sociologist Erving Goffman saw the structure of self in terms of “how we arrange for performances in Anglo-American society.” He described the individual as “a harried fabricator of impressions involved in the all-too-human task of staging a performance.”⁴¹

Making pictures of themselves in celebrations or other self-enhancing situations is what people do more in individualistic and masculine cultures than in collectivistic and/or feminine cultures. In some countries people indeed make more photographs than in others. Usage of films (more than six used in the past 12 months) in 1995 (data EMS) correlated with masculinity, which explained 38% of variance. In 2007, 44% of variance of interest in photography was explained by short-term orientation.

Acceptance of advertisements appealing to personal status and self-enhancement differs as much between the United States and Denmark, both individualistic cultures, as between the United States and Korea. This is because self-enhancement appeals may be judged in poor taste in the self-reliant yet egalitarian societies of Scandinavia, whereas they may be rejected for being too self-focused in Korea.⁴²

Differences in how women judge their own bodies, beauty, or appearance, in an enhanced way or more critical, is related to differences in self-enhancement.

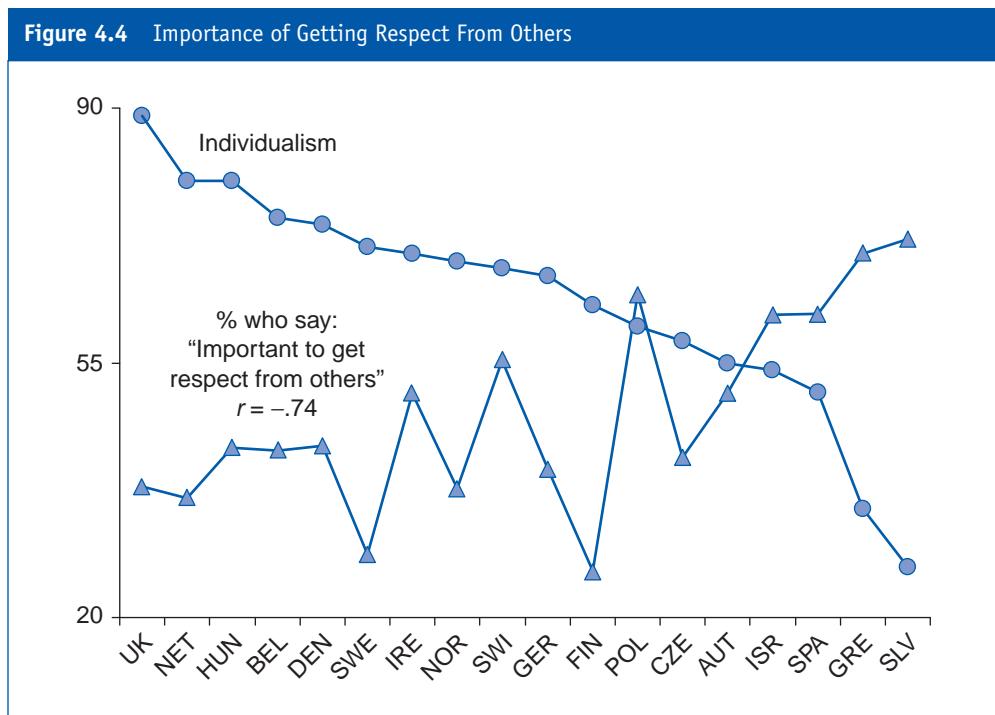
For the Dove campaign for Real Beauty, Unilever sponsored a study⁴³ on the self and beauty, asking questions to young girls about satisfaction with their own beauty and opinions on beauty in 10 different countries worldwide. Individualism and short-term orientation were the main predictors of variance. The percentage of girls who were satisfied with their beauty correlated with short-term orientation, which explained 58% of variance; short-term orientation also explained 69% of agreement with the statement "Society expects women to enhance their physical attractiveness." Agreement with the statement "It would be better if the media depicted women of different shapes" varied with individualism, explaining 53% of variance and short-term orientation explaining an additional 25%. One statement to a larger group of women (18–64 years old) was, "My mother has positively influenced my feelings about myself and beauty." Sixty-five percent of variance of the percentages who agreed was explained by short-term orientation. Self-enhancement goes from generation to generation.

Across 14 wealthy European countries, short-term orientation explains differences between countries with respect to consumers' relationships with brands, like finding that some brands are worth paying more for (42% explained) and consumers' desire to be among the first to try new brands (40% explained).⁴⁴ In short-term-oriented cultures, brands appear to be self-enhancing phenomena.

A need for self-esteem may exist across cultures, but people arrive at self-esteem in various ways. Self-esteem is not necessarily the cause of behavior; behavior can be the cause

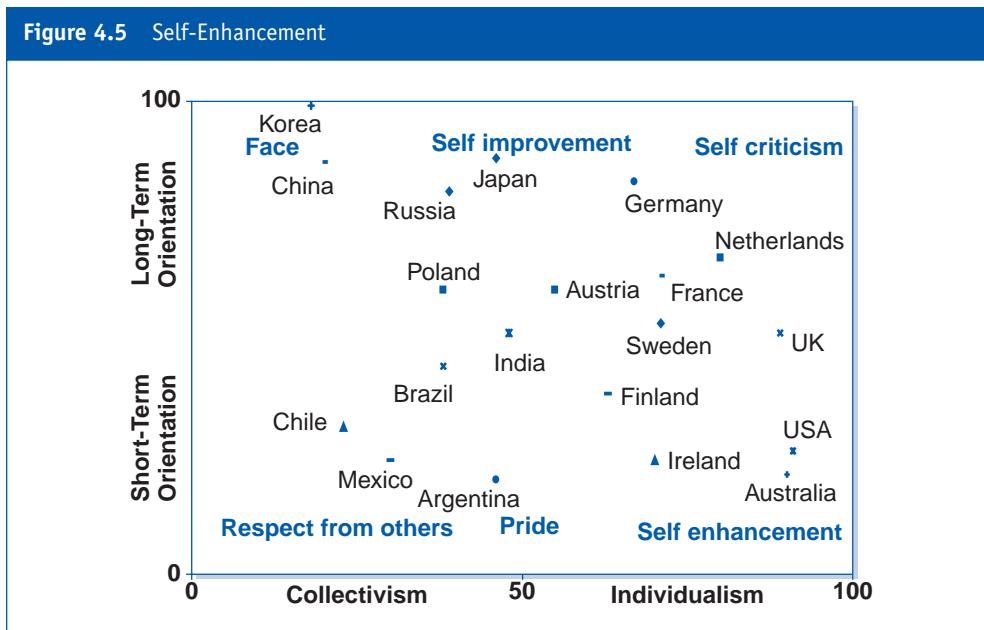
of self-esteem. Because different cultural behavioral practices lead to self-esteem, the content of self-esteem can vary across cultures. In individualistic and masculine cultures, self-esteem means being competent, talented, able to take care of oneself, and able to compete successfully. The pursuit of self-esteem is facilitated by self-enhancing motivations. In contrast, in collectivistic and high power distance cultures, in particular in East Asia, self-esteem is tied to maintaining face, implying meeting the consensual standards associated with their roles. The pursuit of face is facilitated by self-improving motivations.⁴⁵

In collectivistic cultures, respect from others is more important than self-esteem. This can be recognized in answers to a question in the European Social Survey⁴⁶ that asks respondents across western and eastern European countries to mark the importance of getting respect from others. Collectivism explains 47% of variance, and masculinity explains an additional 13% of variance. The relationship between respect from others and collectivism is illustrated in Figure 4.4, which also shows that feminine cultures like Sweden, Norway, and Finland score lower than masculine cultures like Ireland, Switzerland, and Poland.



SOURCES: Hofstede et al. (2010) (see Appendix A); European Social Survey (2002/2003) (see Appendix B)

The differences in self-enhancement are mapped in Figure 4.5. The *X*-axis contains Hofstede's country scores for individualism, and the *Y*-axis for short-/long-term orientation. In the cultures in the lower quadrants, we find need for respect from others, feelings of pride and self-enhancement. In the upper quadrants, maintaining face, self-improvement, and self-criticism are more common. Figure 4.5 shows that, although self-enhancement is often thought to be a universal human characteristic, the countries where it is strongest are the United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, and Australia, a limited number of countries.



SOURCE: Data Hofstede et al. (2010) (see Appendix A)

PERSONALITY

Broadly defined, *personality* is the sum of the qualities and characteristics of being a person. Generally, the person is defined in the European-American psychological context in which the person is viewed as an “independent self-contained, autonomous entity who comprises a unique configuration of internal attributes (e.g., traits, abilities, motives, and values) and who behaves primarily as consequence of these internal attributes.”⁴⁷ Definitions of personality in consumer behavior and marketing textbooks reflect this. Persons have distinct personalities that influence their buying behavior.

What is meant by *personality* are the person's distinguishing psychological characteristics that lead to relatively consistent and enduring responses to his or her environment. Like the self, the personality is assumed to be cross-situationally consistent. Increasingly, cultural psychologists argue that consistency is greater in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures, because in the latter behavior is more strongly influenced by contextual factors.⁴⁸

Descriptions of the concept of personality generally include three Western-based elements: (1) People should distinguish themselves from others. (2) Consistency is an integral part of the concept. (3) Personality is described in terms of abstract personal traits.

According to the Western view, the study of personality should lead to understanding, predicting, and controlling behavior. In individualistic cultures, because of consistency between personal traits and behavior, these traits are used to predict behavior. Collectivists place a higher value on situational cues and upholding "face." Emphasis on behavior that should not bring public shame to one's family and social group suggests that individuals behave irrespective of their individual characteristics. As a result the utility of personal traits may not be as strong in collectivistic cultures as it is in individualistic cultures.⁴⁹

In individualistic cultures, once people have chosen to comply with a request, they will more than will collectivists comply with subsequent, similar requests. Comparison of consistency in compliance among Americans and Asians showed some differences. Differences in compliance were measured by (a) compliance with an initial request, (b) willingness to comply with future, related requests, and (c) compliance with a larger subsequent request. Although in both cultures participants were more likely to comply with a request if they had chosen to comply with a similar request one month earlier, this tendency was more pronounced among the U.S. participants than among Asian participants. Despite their lower rate of compliance with an initial request, once committed, the U.S. respondents were more likely than the Asian respondents to agree to a larger, related request.⁵⁰

Western individualists view personal traits as fixed; they are part of the person. East Asian collectivists view traits as malleable; traits will vary with the situation. When individualists describe themselves or others, they use elements of the personal self in objective, abstract words, 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).⁵¹ Easterners believe in the continuous shaping of personality traits by situational influences.⁵²

People in Eastern cultures often use a “tree” as a metaphor for a person, which emphasizes the endless shaping of internal dispositions by the external environment. For instance, in Korea a person is believed to be like a white root that takes on the color of the soil in which it grows. If a white root is planted in red soil, it becomes red. In China a person is likened to a white silk cloth. If placed in red dye, it becomes red; if placed in green dye, it becomes green. Once the self is likened to a plant, it is evident that the environment is essential for the development, nourishment, and cultivation of the person.⁵³

THE BRAND PERSONALITY CONCEPT

The human personality is used as metaphor in branding strategies. The *brand personality* concept is rooted in Anglo-American presumptions. The core of a sophisticated advertising campaign is the brand positioning statement, including a description of the brand personality in terms of human characteristics. In international marketing, the descriptions are usually in Anglo-American terms. A brand personality that can be recognized by or is attractive to the average public of one culture will not necessarily be recognized or found attractive to the average public of another culture. As a result, advertising campaigns that are effective in one culture because they are based on a strong brand personality are not necessarily as effective in another culture. Brands acquire their personalities over time, and these are largely derived from the market context in which they develop. This context consists of a series of peculiarities that might not repeat itself in the same ways in other intended markets.⁵⁴

Whereas in individualistic cultures brands have to be unique, distinct, and contain consistent characteristics, in collectivistic cultures the brand personality should be viewed as being part of a larger whole, being a person in the world of other brands. In Asia a brand is probably better defined as being part of a *brand world* rather than being a *unique personality*.

Because of the nonexistence of the Western personality concept in Asia, Asian languages such as Japanese and Chinese do not have linguistic equivalents for the term *personality* as a person separate from the social environment. As a result the Western brand personality metaphor is not well understood in Asia, and brand personalities are more corporate personalities. This is recognized in branding practice of Asian companies. Whereas American companies have concentrated on promoting product brands, Japanese companies have generally emphasized company brands. In essence this means inspiring trust among consumers in a company and so persuading them to buy its products. Western companies that tend to insist on consistency in their uniqueness, using one logo worldwide, run the risk of being perceived as arrogant or even insulting. In line with the idea of a brand world, another option may be to use the concept of *face of the brand*, a visual representation of the company's attributes that is more like a mosaic than a logo. It consists of a unified set of visual symbols that is tailored to depict the brand. “A global ‘face of the

brand' can have the same graphic roots but appear somewhat different depending on the local markets targeted. The idea is to depict unity, without forcing sameness."⁵⁵

A study by Linda Derksen at the advertising agency PPGH/JWT Amsterdam surveyed the practice of brand personality in four countries in Europe. The JWT agencies in Germany, United Kingdom, France, and Spain were asked to what extent they worked with the brand personality concept when developing advertising campaigns. One of the questions was to select a definition of brand personality from a choice of three possible definitions: (1) the unique characteristics of a brand that distinguish it from other (competitive) brands; (2) the brand as a "human being" with human characteristics that are associated with a brand; (3) the reflection of a brand in its environment, just like people who are part of their environment, their family, and work. The British and Germans viewed the brand as a person who is characterized by unique qualities that differentiate it from other brands. The French saw the brand as a human being with human characteristics associated with the brand. The Spanish opted for the definition of brand personality as a reflection of how a brand fits in its environment, family, and work.⁵⁶

PERSONAL TRAITS

The Western habit of describing people in terms of abstract characteristics has led to the development of characterization systems of personal traits. *Traits* can be defined as "dimensions of individual differences in tendencies to show consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions."⁵⁷ Examples of traits are *altruism* (helpfulness and generosity to others), *modesty* (self-effacing attitudes and behaviors), and *trust* (beliefs about others' actions and intentions).⁵⁸ In the Western world it has been argued that there are only a relatively small number of universal trait dimensions.⁵⁹

Personality traits can be found in the natural language used when people describe themselves. Such natural language adjectives are used in questionnaire scales for developing trait dimensions. Factor analysis is used to develop trait structures. The five-factor model (FFM or "Big Five") is one of the most used models to organize personality traits. It was developed in the United States and based on analyses of the colloquial usage of the English language, on people's descriptions of themselves and others.

There are various problems when developing trait structures across cultures. Whereas American descriptions include psychological trait characteristics, self-descriptions in collectivistic cultures tend to refer to social roles. A difficulty when using scales across cultures is finding linguistic equivalents for the trait descriptions. Nevertheless, with the cooperation of psychologists of many different cultures, the FFM has developed into a universal model for measuring personality trait structure across cultures, using a scale called the NEO-PI-R facet scale. The universal five-trait factors have been named *neuroticism*, *extraversion*,

openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. These five basic trait factors are supposed to capture the many meanings of personality characteristics. Table 4.1 shows the factors and components of each factor.⁶⁰

Table 4.1 Five-Factor Model of Personality Traits

Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness to Experience	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
Anxiety	Warmth	Fantasy	Trust	Competence
Angry hostility	Gregariousness	Aesthetics	Straightforwardness	Order
Depression	Assertiveness	Feelings	Altruism	Dutifulness
Self-consciousness	Activity	Actions	Compliance	Achievement striving
Impulsiveness	Excitement seeking	Ideas	Modesty	Self-discipline
Vulnerability	Positive emotions	Values	Tender-mindedness	Deliberation

SOURCE: McCrae (2002)

Across cultures, several variations were found. There were, for example, more within-culture differences in European than in Asian cultures. A cause of this may be that in collectivistic cultures, individual differences are muted because individuals avoid emphasizing their distinctive personal attributes. Another reason can be more homogeneity of personality among Asians than among European groups.⁶¹

In particular, Asian psychologists have been eager to find whether the model applies to collectivistic cultures. Chinese psychologists Cheung et al.⁶² developed an indigenous scale for China (Chinese Personality Assessment Inventory) and merged it with the five-factor model. They found similar five factors, but the components varied across the factors. A cause can be that the trait adjectives, when translated, get different meanings. The Chinese researchers also found a sixth dimension, which they called *interpersonal relatedness*, that included the components optimism versus pessimism, *Ren Qing* (relationship orientation), flexibility, *Ah-Q* mentality (defensiveness), harmony, face, and logical versus affective orientation. The interpersonal relatedness factor addresses the interdependent aspects of personality that are important to the Chinese as well as to other collectivistic cultures. If Chinese researchers had dominated personality research, the leading theory would have excluded the openness factor, which is a decidedly non-Asian factor.⁶³ For measuring an open person in collectivistic cultures, interpersonal tolerance and social sensitivity are more relevant than the items included in the Western scales.⁶⁴ Generally, in collectivistic cultures openness may take on a different form or function. Differences may be caused by translating concepts for which there are no linguistic equivalents. Openness also is difficult to translate in African

languages, such as Shona and Xhosa, in which there is a shortage of openness-related terms. The Korean language version of the NEO-PI-R scale submitted to Korean respondents also produced differences between Korean and American respondents.⁶⁵

From longitudinal studies psychologists find increasing evidence that our personality traits are partly biologically inherited and partly shaped by the interaction of the individual with the environment, at the broadest level. One of these environments is the culture of the country where we were raised.⁶⁶ The relationship with culture was found by correlating Hofstede's cultural variables with culture-level means of individual-level scores on the NEO-PI-R factors for 36 cultures.⁶⁷ Neuroticism scores are higher in cultures of strong uncertainty avoidance and high masculinity. This fits with other findings that anxiety, stress, and expression of emotion are more found in high uncertainty avoidance cultures than in low uncertainty avoidance cultures. Masculinity stands for focus on ego and money orientation, whereas femininity stands for focus on relationships and people orientation. The latter orientation probably relates to lower neuroticism. Impulsiveness, one of the elements of this dimension, does not necessarily include impulse buying. Data by TGI⁶⁸ among consumers in seven Latin American countries show a relationship with low, not high, uncertainty avoidance, with buying on impulse ($r = -.70^*$). Extraversion score levels are higher in individualistic cultures, where autonomy, variety, and pleasure are valued over expertise, duty, and security. Furthermore, they correlate with low power distance. Openness to experience was correlated with high masculinity and low power distance. In cultures of high masculinity, people tend to overrate their own performance, and low power distance stimulates independent exploration. Agreeableness correlated with low uncertainty avoidance, so in cultures with higher tolerance, people score themselves as more agreeable. Conscientiousness correlated with high power distance, but it is even stronger related to gross national income (GNI) per capita. Hofstede concludes that "prosperity allows people to behave less conscientiously or more wasteful."⁶⁹

How consumer experiences reflect elements of personality is demonstrated by findings of a pan-European (13 countries) study of ecological awareness among drivers by the tire company Goodyear.⁷⁰ A typology of European drivers was developed from questions about attitudes toward driving and driving behavior. Respondents could categorize themselves in terms of personal driving characteristics. Considerable culture-related differences were found between countries. The percentages of respondents who considered themselves to be *responsible drivers* (= conscientiousness) correlated positively with power distance. The percentages of respondents who considered driving their car as an *adventure* (= extraversion) correlated with individualism. The percentages of respondents who considered themselves to be *social drivers*, who considered their car as a means of supporting their social life (= agreeableness), correlated with low uncertainty avoidance and low power distance. The percentages of respondents who considered their car to be a means to *show off*, a status symbol, saying something about themselves (= openness to experience), correlated with masculinity.

The problem with trait studies is that instead of factors emerging from native conceptions of personhood across cultures, findings mainly confirm that when the same set of English items that form five factors are translated into other languages, they result 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, result in similar five-dimensional structures.⁷¹

As in value studies, in addition to translation problems when measuring personal traits, there are other measurement problems. When individuals make judgments about themselves, they implicitly draw comparisons with others. These referent others, however, are different for people in different cultures. This is particularly relevant for measuring personality traits. In a large study of the geographic distribution of the "Big Five" personality traits, the researchers were surprised to find Chinese, Korean, and Japanese people in the very bottom on the conscientiousness scale. It seems unlikely that most people would think of individuals of these cultures as extremely undisciplined and weak willed—a profile indicative of low conscientiousness. However, where the standards for being punctual, strong willed, and reliable are very high, a respondent may report that he or she is less disciplined than is generally the case in the particular culture.⁷² A similar phenomenon can be recognized when measuring Spanish *simpatía* (agreeableness), which is associated with striving to promote harmony in relationships by showing respect toward others, avoiding conflict, emphasizing positive behaviors, and deemphasizing negative behaviors. However, self-report data show that Hispanics rate themselves lower on agreeableness than do European Americans. When *simpatía* is the norm, people will not score themselves high on this trait.⁷³

BRAND PERSONALITY TRAITS

Marketing people tend to develop trait dimensions for brands as if brands are human beings. Thus, brand personality is defined as a set of humanlike attributes associated with a particular brand. An example is a study by Aaker et al.⁷⁴ that developed personality dimensions in several countries by asking individuals to rate a representative set of commercial brands on a battery of personality attributes. In the United States, five dimensions were found and labeled *sincerity* (down-to-earth, real, sincere, honest); *excitement* (daring, exciting, imaginative, contemporary); *competence* (intelligent, reliable, secure, confident); *sophistication* (glamorous, upper class, good looking, charming); and *ruggedness* (tough, outdoorsy, masculine, and Western). The authors noted that three of the dimensions—sincerity, excitement, and competence—resemble personality dimensions that are also

present in human personality models such as the Big Five model, relating respectively to agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness. Sophistication captures aspirational images associated with wealth and status, and the ruggedness dimension represents typical American values such as strength, masculinity, and ruggedness. Similar studies were conducted in Japan and Spain, which resulted in two more sets of five dimensions. The five Japanese dimensions overlapped with the American ones with respect to excitement, competence, sincerity, and sophistication. One dimension, named *peacefulness*, was defined by a unique blend of attributes (e.g., shy, peaceful, naïve, dependent), which was assumed to be indigenous for Japan. Of the five dimensions found in Spain, three overlapped with the American dimensions sincerity, excitement, and sophistication. The latter included some of the competence associations. One dimension was similar to the Japanese dimension *peacefulness*, and one dimension seemed to be an indigenous Spanish one. It was named *passion* and included components like fervent, passionate, spiritual, and bohemian. The dimension *peacefulness* that Spain and Japan have in common is likely related to the collectivistic aspects they share. A Korean study of brand personalities⁷⁵ of well-known global brands like Nike, Sony, Levi's, Adidas, Volkswagen, and BMW found two specific Korean brand personalities. The first, labeled *passive likeableness*, included traits like easy, smooth, family oriented, playful, and sentimental. The second was labeled *ascendancy* and included traits like strict, heavy, intelligent, and daring. These findings suggest that, even if companies wish to be consistent, having connected one specific personality trait to a global brand, across cultures consumers attach different personalities to these brands. These are the traits that are viewed as fitting by consumers, but they can be very different from what the company wanted.

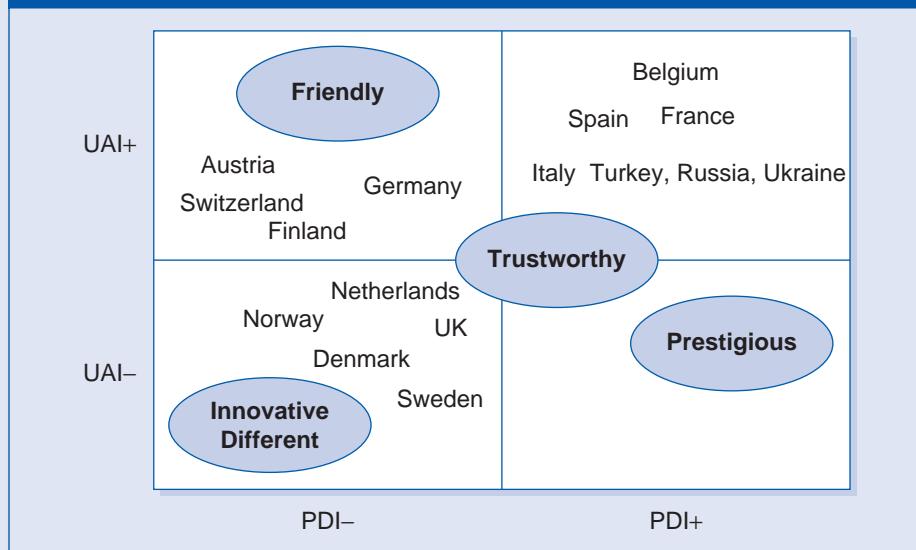
Comparison of the image of Red Bull in the United Kingdom, Singapore, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States show differences in perceptions of the Red Bull brand personality. Although the global advertising campaign pushed competence and excitement as brand characteristics, these seem mostly to appeal to the U.K. public.⁷⁶

Similar brand personality dimensions may exist across cultures, but the similarities are often based only on partial equivalents, meaning that superficially similar dimensions consist of different associations. Constructs tend to shift in meaning when examined in different cultural contexts. Excitement, for example, is associated with being young, contemporary, spirited, and daring, but in the United States and Spain it also conveys imaginativeness, uniqueness, and independence, whereas in Japan it includes talkative, funny, and optimistic. Sophistication takes on a different meaning in Spain than it does in Japan.

The previous discussion may demonstrate the difficulty in using personality descriptors for brand positioning across cultures. First, there are culture-specific personality dimensions, such as ruggedness in the United States and *peacefulness* in Japan. Brand personalities fitting in such indigenous dimensions are not likely to be as successful in

A cross-cultural brand value study⁷⁷ showed that a brand characteristic like friendly is most attributed to strong global brands in high uncertainty avoidance and low power distance cultures. This fits with findings from a Eurobarometer study asking for the importance of friends. The percentages of answers saying that friends are very important correlate with low power distance ($r = -.59^{***}$).⁷⁸ Prestigious is a characteristic attributed to global brands in high power distance, and trustworthy is most attributed to strong brands in high uncertainty avoidance cultures. In the low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance cultures, people attributed innovative and different to these brands. Figure 4.6 presents a map of different brand personalities attributed to strong global brands.

Figure 4.6 Brand Personality Traits Attributed to Strong Global Brands

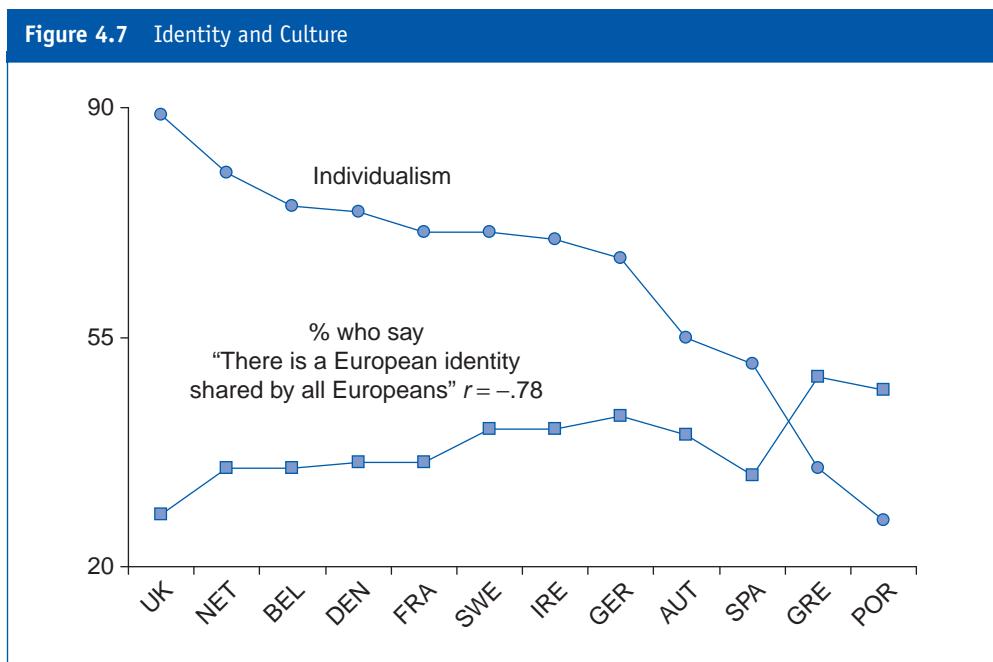


other countries as they are in the home country. Second, although some studies suggest that there are similar personality dimensions across countries, similar labels can have different associations, so the meaning of seemingly similar trait descriptions can be very different.

One reason for developing consistent brand personalities may be the need for *control*. If consumers elsewhere perceive these global brands as having different personality traits than the company intended, the process is *out of control*, and to keep control, it may be better to define specific brand personality traits for the various cultures in which the company operates.

IDENTITY AND IMAGE

Identity is 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.⁷⁹ The importance of a unique identity for individualists emerges from a Eurobarometer⁸⁰ survey asking respondents to what degree people believe in a shared cultural identity. The percentages of respondents who agreed correlated negatively with individualism, whereas the percentages disagreeing correlated positively with individualism. Figure 4.7 illustrates this relationship for 12 countries in Europe.



SOURCES: Data from Hofstede et al. (2010) (see Appendix A); Eurobarometer Report *How Europeans See Themselves* (2001) (see Appendix B)

Identity among collectivists is defined by relationships and group memberships, whereas individualists base identity on what they own and their experiences. Identity also is one's capacity to fulfill expectations. When a person is asked what her identity is, she can categorize herself in terms of desirable values ("I believe that . . ."), as a member of social groups (e.g., a mother, a student), or by personality traits (e.g., ambitious, cheerful.)⁸¹ In most Western 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.⁸²

A distinction can be made between achieved identity and ascribed identity. *Achieved identity* means one is judged by what one does, one's being: one is a "good father," a "good student." *Ascribed identity* involves fixed expectations based on non-chosen traits such as gender, age, and inherited position. The perception of people having fixed, ascribed identities is stronger in high power distance cultures, where people have more clearly defined positions in society than in cultures of low power distance. In Western societies, the possession of tangible goods provides achieved identity. Housing, transportation, and other visible consumption are assumed to reflect one's values, career success, and personality. In the United States social standing is fluid—one *buys* one's status—whereas "the French still believe that it is noble to inherit a fortune and dirty to earn one."⁸³

Individuals can be pleased with personality traits that form a part of their *real identity*, or they may want to change them, as a function of an image they would like to have. This produces an identity that reflects what psychoanalysts have termed the "ideal self." These two dimensions of identity can be close or far apart from each other. If they are far apart, efforts are usually made to reduce the gap.⁸⁴ In individualistic cultures, material possessions can serve this purpose.

The Body and Identity

In Western psychology the body is viewed as part of the identity. Body esteem is related to several constructs of the self, such as self-esteem, body consciousness, and social anxiety. One of the central terms in the field is *body image*, which is the picture of our own body that we form in our mind.⁸⁵ In Western societies, people attribute more desirable characteristics to physically attractive persons. This is called the "physical attractiveness stereotype."⁸⁶

What is considered attractive varies. The Japanese, for example, rate large eyes and small mouths and chins as attractive, whereas Koreans prefer large eyes, small and high noses, and thin and small faces.⁸⁷ 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, which leads to dissatisfaction. The typical American woman begins to voice dissatisfaction with her body early in life and continues to do so into the adult years. 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.⁸⁸ Confucian belief suggests that external physical appearance is less important than success in social role performance in the development of self-esteem and happiness.⁸⁹

Attractiveness does not result in similar conclusions about people's characteristics across cultures. In Korea, for example, attractiveness is seen as being associated with lineage: high-status families are expected to produce better-looking children because their greater financial and social resources would permit considerable selection in mating.⁹⁰

Each cultural group has its own unique definition of physical attractiveness (human beauty), and its own set of bodily ideals, that shape its collective body image.

Chinese women view Caucasian men as wealthy, and this presumed wealth makes Caucasian men attractive. Chinese women's views on what makes attractive men differ completely from the South Korean perspective that overwhelmingly prefers images of immature young men who have a "pretty face with big eyes and fair skin and a moderately masculine body." It is a criterion also shared by young Japanese women. In contrast, Chinese women are adamant in their rejection of immature males. Chinese women prefer a more serious pose associated with an integrated or well-balanced character.⁹¹

Body image concerns, weight concerns, and eating disorders are more prevalent among Western women than among non-Western women.⁹² Within the United States, disordered eating and dieting behaviors are more frequent among European Americans than among Asian and African Americans.⁹³ A study in 1995 found that 90% of white schoolgirls were dissatisfied with their weight, whereas 70% of African American teens were satisfied with their bodies.⁹⁴ Body images as displayed in the media are assumed to influence ideal body images. The continual exposure of good-looking, thin models creates pressure to have an attractive body. This thought is most pronounced in Western individualistic culture, although a relationship between TV viewing and body image dissatisfaction was also found in Hong Kong.⁹⁵ In particular in the United States, the ideal is to be thin, and advertising shows thin people. Yet, the United States also is the country with the highest percentage of obese people. Obesity is—as yet—a problem of individualistic cultures. In 1999, in 18 countries of the developed world, the differences between countries with respect to the percentage of population with a body mass index (BMI) over 30⁹⁶ correlated significantly with individualism ($r = .59***$). So, in the individualistic cultures the discrepancy between the real and ideal body image is largest.

Although both Japanese and American young adults are concerned with physical attractiveness, female body images in the Japanese media are different from those in American media. Poses of American (thin) models are rebellious or defiant, offering a sultry facial expression, to represent the individual self, independent from and equal to others, whereas poses of Japanese (also thin) models emphasize youthful "girlishness" reflecting dependence needs. The faces show happy, broad smiles reflecting nonchallenging innocence.⁹⁷ Figure 4.8 illustrates the differences. These are covers of a British magazine (*Harpers*) for adult women, an American magazine (*Cosmopolitan*) for young women, a Japanese magazine (*Madam*) for adult women, and a Chinese language magazine from Malaysia (*Nuyou*) for young women.

Figure 4.8 Magazine Covers



CORPORATE IDENTITY, BRAND IDENTITY, AND BRAND IMAGE

Like the self, identity in individualistic cultures is supposed to be unique and consistent, as opposed to a collectivist's identity, which can change according to varying social positions and situations. This is reflected in the definitions of *corporate identity* that are based on the Western identity concept. The British communication consultant Nicholas Ind defined *corporate identity* as "an organization's identity in its *sense of self*, much like our own individual sense of identity. Consequently, it is unique."⁹⁸ Corporate identity is concerned with the impressions, the image, and the personality projected by an organization.

The individualistic identity metaphor is probably not well understood in collectivistic cultures. Like the personality concept, identity doesn't have a linguistic equivalent in many Asian languages like Japanese and Chinese.

Usually the task of creating a corporate identity begins with the selection of an appropriate corporate name. Other factors that contribute to corporate identity include the logo of the organization and marketing communications. All this, including language, lettering, and associations, is logically a reflection of the home country of the organization. Western organizations in particular prefer worldwide consistency of all these elements, without realizing that this is not an equally effective approach to business in all countries.

Ideally brands have clearly defined images created by advertising, packaging, and other positioning elements, and theory says that these brand images should be congruent with consumers' self-images. The question is whether people buy brands because they are similar to the self, or whether people assume that these brands are similar to the self because they bought them. There is general agreement in (American) marketing literature that consumers tend to favor brands they perceive as similar to themselves, so self-image should match brand image, and similarity of the self-image and brand image should lead to attraction. The Dutchman Bosman,⁹⁹ however, found evidence that it works

the other way around. In his study the causal flow is not from liking brands because they are similar to the self, but liking a brand for other reasons leads to perceiving it as similar to the self. The subjects in the study were probably Dutch,¹⁰⁰ so his findings may apply to Dutch respondents, whereas the findings presented in American marketing literature may apply to American respondents. Within the Western world, the relationship between brand image and self-image may vary, and even more so between individualistic and collectivistic cultures, where the self-image is likely to be more situational.

Culture does influence how consumers organize the brand image in their minds, in particular the associations consumers have when perceiving a brand. The brand image is a set of perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in the consumers' memories. Three main types of brand associations can be distinguished: (1) the product attributes; (2) the benefits; and (3) the brand attitude, including values. Benefits and attitudes are at a higher level of abstraction than the attributes and are assumed to have a closer relationship with the consumer self than do product attributes. Culture influences how consumers perceive and organize these abstract associations. For some, "latest technology" may be associated with "prestige," for others it may be negatively related with "fuel economy."¹⁰¹

ATTITUDE

Western consumer behaviorists view *attitudes* as learned predispositions to respond to an object or class of objects in a consistently favorable or unfavorable way.¹⁰² This reflects an individualistic worldview, including the assumption that attitudes lead people to behave in a fairly consistent way. Attitudes drive behavior, but behavior also drives attitudes. In collectivistic cultures, attitudes may vary along with the context in which they operate. A more neutral definition of *attitude* is the individual predisposition to evaluate an object or an aspect of the world in a favorable or unfavorable manner. Attitudes have affective and cognitive components. The affective component includes the sensations, feelings, and emotions one experiences in response to an attitude object. The cognitive component includes various attributes and functions of the object.¹⁰³

In the Western definitions, attitudes serve as knowledge function, helping to organize and structure one's environment and to provide consistency in one's frame of reference. Individualists want consistency across their attitudes, feelings, and behaviors.¹⁰⁴ In collectivistic cultures, people are supposed to form attitudes that fulfill their social identity functions.

Western theory distinguishes three components of attitudes: cognitive, affective, and behavioral, which for attitudes toward brands translate as brand belief, brand evaluations, and intention to buy. The relationship among these three components is known as a *hierarchy of effects*, as if consumers consistently step from one component to another. The sequence varies with the degree of involvement with the product. Brand belief and brand

evaluations are knowledge and information based. The role of information in this process will vary with culture as well. (This is discussed further in Chapter 6.)

In Western theory, many attitudes are supposed to serve a utilitarian function, helping to maximize the rewards and minimize the punishments obtained from objects in the environment. An example is one's attitude toward ice cream, which serves a utilitarian function because it can be based on the rewards (enjoyment) and punishment (weight gain). The cross-cultural relevance of this functional theory has not been tested.¹⁰⁵ The reward-punishment effects are a reflection of the typical Western value of guilt.

ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR

Consistency between attitude and behavior in individualistic cultures implies that 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, people form attitudes that fulfill their social identity functions, and there is not a consistent relationship between attitude and future behavior. It may be a reverse relationship: usage comes first and defines attitude. In collectivistic cultures, shared experiences influence brand attitude positively, more than in individualistic cultures.¹⁰⁶

For measuring advertising effectiveness, the attitude to the advertisement (A_{ad}) tends to be measured, which in turn is used as an indication of buying intention. This practice is logical in individualistic cultures where individuals want consistency between their personal attitudes and behaviors. In collectivistic cultures, where situational factors can influence the various elements of attitude and behavior, the practice may not work the same way.

Behavior of Japanese youngsters is not consistent with their attitudes to life in general.

Japanese kids like to shop, they curl their hair, they wear this really outrageous clothing that's really influenced by the West, but if you talk to these girls with piercing everywhere, they say that what they really want to do is get married, have a nice house and have kids.¹⁰⁷

The most widely known model that measures the relationship between attitude and behavior is the Fishbein behavioral intentions model, also referred to as the theory of *reasoned action*. Fishbein hypothesizes that a person's behavioral intentions are determined by an *attitudinal* or *personal component* and a *normative* or *social component*. The personal attitude component, or *attitude toward the act*, refers to personal judgment of behavior, whereas

the normative or social component refers to social pressures on behavior such as expectations of others. Cross-cultural findings are that attitude toward the act is the primary determinant in the United States, whereas social norm is more important in Korea. What in Western terms is called *social pressure*, put on Korean consumers, has relatively weak influence on Americans, who refer to their own personal attitudes as having influenced their buying decisions.¹⁰⁸ What is called *social norm* in American theory has a different loading in collectivistic cultures. The social component in the theory does not capture “face.” Face motivates collectivists to act in accordance with one’s social position. If one acts contrary to expectations of one’s social position, a shadow is cast over one’s moral integrity.¹⁰⁹ Thus, in collectivistic cultures face pressure is more like a personal norm, capturing personal perceptions of living up to the standards of one’s position, whereas the social norm component included in the Fishbein model mainly measures perceptions of opinions of other persons.

Attitudes and intentions are what we feel and know and are derived from what we say. Intentions are often poor predictors of behavior, with large variance across cultures. Intentions must be measured, and differences in response styles are a cause of varying relationships between buying intention and actual buying. For example, if 55% of the people who try a new product in Italy say they will definitely buy it, the product will probably fail. If in Japan 5% say they will definitely buy it, the product is likely to succeed. If people are used to external, uncontrollable factors, such as fate or power holders interfering at any time in the realization of an expressed intention, people will more readily express positive intentions that will not transform into behavior. This difference is reflected in the way people answer in semantic scales in survey research.

Italians like extremes and mark toward the end of any semantic scale, whereas the Germans are more restrained and mark toward the middle. The effect is that a “Completely agree” answer in Italy is not worth the same as a “Completely agree” answer in Germany. This tendency to use extreme points in verbal rating scales is called Extreme Response Style (ERS). One cause of ERS is the type of Likert scale. If high-ERS participants are given a survey using a 7-point Likert-type scale, their responses tend to be either 1 (Strongly agree) or 7 (Strongly disagree). If low-ERS participants are given the same survey, their responses will tend to cluster around 4 (Neither agree nor disagree).¹¹⁰ Another difference occurs when one group systematically gives higher or lower responses than another group, resulting in a scale displacement. This is called Acquiescence Response Style (ARS). To American respondents a response of 3 on a 5-point Likert scale may mean “No opinion,” whereas it may mean “Mild agreement” to Korean respondents. As a result of this scale displacement, Korean 3s are equivalent to American 4s, and Korean 4s are equivalent to American 5s. Overall, ERS and ARS will influence most traditional quantitative marketing techniques, and a strong bias can make market researchers draw wrong conclusions. Market researchers may be erroneously reporting differences in product preferences, consumer attitudes, or perceptions across countries that are wholly or partially attributable to ERS.

When attitudes are measured and compared at national level, there are examples of congruence and incongruence of attitudes and behavior. An example of congruence of national-level attitudes, knowledge, and self-reported behavior is attitude toward the environment among drivers. The tire company Goodyear¹¹¹ measured general ecological attitude and knowledge across 13 countries in Europe by asking a number of questions about what is good or bad for the environment (e.g., burning coal, the effects of nuclear waste, human-made chemicals, and the greenhouse effect). The percentages of respondents who answered all questions correctly correlated positively ($r = .61^*$) with questions about attitudes to environmental developments (e.g., worry about the destruction of the rain forest, global warming, and environmental pollution). So knowledge and attitudes matched. There was also a significant positive correlation between attitudes and self-reported behavior ($r = .53^*$) from questions about how people handle their cars (e.g., rapid acceleration, proper maintenance of their cars, or avoiding use of their cars for short distances).

An example of incongruence of attitudes and behavior is with respect to the euro, the European currency. Whereas the collectivistic and high uncertainty avoidance cultures have shown positive attitudes toward the euro¹¹² during the years before its introduction in January 2002, after introduction these were the cultures where people still calculated more in their own currencies than in the euro. In some restaurants in Spain, in 2003, the bills were still written in pesetas.

Analysis of differences in attitudes can help explain differences in consumer behavior across cultures. Different attitudes toward the press explain differences in press readership. Attitudes toward technology and information explain differences in acceptance of computers and related technology. In the mid-1990s in Germany, consumers had lots of reservations against the computer. In contrast, U.S. consumers saw the computer mainly as a means to success and prestige.¹¹³ These differences reflected actual penetration differences of computers. Differences in confidence in specific food categories parallel consumption differences. In the following sections of the chapter, several examples of specific culture-bound attitudes are discussed. These are attitudes toward food, health, the media, materialism, national pride, environmentalism, country of origin, and love-related attitudes.

Attitudes Toward Food

Attitudes toward food vary across cultures. There are important differences in the degree to which food is considered to be safe. In 1998 Eurobarometer asked the inhabitants of the European Union (EU) member countries to which degree they had confidence in food. The question asked was, "For each of the following food products, please tell me if you think it is safe or not safe." Products were bread and bakery products, fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, fresh fish, fresh meat, fresh milk, cheese, eggs, canned foods, frozen foods, precooked meals and other prepacked food. Variance among the 13 countries of the European Union was considerable. A number of responses to confidence in food products correlate with actual consumption. Confidence in fresh milk is significantly, positively, correlated with actual

consumption of fresh milk, so in countries where people drink more fresh milk, they also have more confidence in fresh milk. There is also a positive relationship between confidence in frozen food and consumption of frozen food. The common explaining factor is uncertainty avoidance. Whereas low confidence in several processed food categories correlates with high uncertainty avoidance, consumption of processed food products correlates with low uncertainty avoidance. Table 4.2 shows the relationships with three cultural variables for the answers “Not safe” for five food products and for consumption data of related products.

Low trust in processed food explains the aversion to genetically modified food (GMF) that is stronger in high than in low uncertainty avoidance cultures. The strong protests against genetically modified food in Europe originated in France, a culture of high uncertainty avoidance.

Table 4.2 Confidence in Food and Consumption of Processed Food

	PDI	IDV	UAI	Predictor	R ²
Not Safe (13 countries)					
Fresh milk	.72***	-.31	.71***	PDI	.51
Cheese	.58*	-.34	.64**	UAI	.42
Frozen foods	.54*	-.60*	.75***	UAI	.56
Precooked meals	.43	-.50*	.67**	UAI	.45
Other prepacked	.49*	-.45	.64**	UAI	.40
Consumption, Liters or Kilograms per Capita (15 countries)					
Milk	-.65*	.11	-.79***	UAI (-)	.63
Ice-cream	-.57*	.45*	-.76***	UAI (-)	.57
Frozen food	-.33	.45*	-.69***	UAI (-)	.48
Frozen ready meals	-.31	.41	-.62**	UAI (-)	.57

SOURCES: Hofstede et al. (2010) (see Appendix A); EBS 120 (1998); Euromonitor (1997) (see Appendix B)

Attitudes Toward Health

People’s attitudes toward their health are related to behavior. People’s concern for health can be recognized in consumption patterns, in expenditures on health, and in the variations of fitness practice across countries. In Chapter 3 (section on stability), we mentioned the consistent relationship between mineral water consumption and uncertainty avoidance. Whereas in Europe people of high uncertainty avoidance cultures search for health in the

purity and quality of their food, in low uncertainty avoidance cultures people's attitudes toward health make them pursue fitness activities. People's positive perception of their health is related to being actively involved in sports. The 1990 World Values Survey asked people to describe their health and also asked questions about membership in sports organizations. There is a significant correlation between the percentages of respondents who describe their health as good or very good and membership in a sports organization. The common explaining variable is uncertainty avoidance. All sorts of data measuring an active attitude toward health, such as involvement in sports, correlate negatively with uncertainty avoidance, whereas all sorts of data relating to a passive orientation, such as use of antibiotics¹¹⁴ and numbers of physicians per 100,000 people, correlate positively with uncertainty avoidance. An inventory of the results is provided in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Attitudes Toward Health: Active and Passive

	Uncertainty Avoidance (<i>r</i>)
1990: Health very good (worldwide, 26 countries)	-.74***
1990: Member sports organization (worldwide, 26 countries)	-.68***
2000: Member sports organization (Europe, 18 countries)	-.56**
1999: Expenditures on recreational & sports services (Europe, 12 countries)	-.71***
2001: Play sports as leisure activity (Europe, 13 countries)	-.47*
2001: Member sports organization (Europe, 13 countries)	-.71***
2007: % active in sports club (Europe, 24 countries)	-.63***
1990: % who neither sport nor exercise (Europe, 15 countries)	+.69***
2004: % who never play sports (Europe, 21 countries)	+.68***
2008: % who say health most important in connection with idea of happiness (Europe, 26 countries)	+.48**
2008: % of household consumption spent on health (Europe, 25 countries)	+.48**
2006: Number of physicians per 10,000 people (worldwide 18 countries GNI/cap US\$17,000+)	+.38*

SOURCES: 1990 data: Inglehart et al. (1998); 1999 data: Eurostat (2001); 2000 data: EB 151 *Young Europeans* (2001); 2007 data: EBS 273 (2007); 1990 data: Reader's Digest Eurodata (1991); 2004 data: EBS 213 (2004); 2008 data: Standard EB 69 (2008); 2008 data: Eurostat (2008); 2006 data: World Health Organization (2002/2009) (see Appendix B)

Attitudes Toward Consumption: Materialism

Materialism is described as an attitude toward consumption, an enduring belief in the desirability of acquiring and possessing things. Materialism can also be viewed as a function of one's personality, reflecting traits of possessiveness, envy, nongenerosity, and preservation. Another approach is to view materialism as a value, as a desirable goal in life. It can also be viewed as part of a self-concept, when people use material possessions to construct personal identities. More often than not materialists tend to judge their own and others' success by the number and quality of possessions accumulated. The value of possessions stems not only from their ability to confer status but from their ability to project a desired self-image and identify one as a participant in an imagined perfect life.¹¹⁵

As a consumption orientation,¹¹⁶ materialism is the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions. Materialism is also a competitive striving to have more than others. Possessions make people happy and things are more valued than people. Materialistic people display an excessive desire to acquire and keep possessions, including objects, people, and memories (photographs). Materialism consists of three belief domains.

1. Acquisition centrality: Materialism brings meaning to life and provides an aim for daily endeavors.
2. Acquisition as the pursuit of happiness: Materialists view their possessions and their acquisitions as essential to their satisfaction and well-being in life.
3. Possession-defined success: The number and quality of possessions accumulated form a basis for judgment of the materialist's own and others' success.¹¹⁷

Attitudes toward materialism vary across cultures. A study among American, British, German, and Austrian students showed that *success* played a vital role in attitudes toward materialism, but also differences in associations with materialism were found, related to job matters, personal development, health, and happiness. For the Germans and Austrians, for example, happiness was more related to stability and social security than to materialism. Because all four groups score high on cultural masculinity, the similar associations with success are understandable. The differences are likely related to the differences in uncertainty avoidance.

Chiagouris and Mitchell describe how much materialism is ingrained in American society:

Materialism is the foundation of an inherently competitive humanity. A philosophy ingrained in the history of the United States of America and the capitalist society we hold so dear. We strive to accumulate goods, products, things that carry with them the external status symbolism that fosters perceived power and influence. It is the core of consumer behavior that has, throughout time, evolved through numerous phases of development.¹¹⁸

With increased wealth, materialism should increase. Inglehart,¹¹⁹ however, assumes that after a certain level of affluence is reached, materialism declines as consumers turn to higher-order needs, and so-called postmaterialist values become more important. He defines *materialist* values as emphasizing economic and physical security above all, whereas *postmaterialist* priorities include emphasis on the quality of life. If this assumption were true, there would be evidence of ownership of expensive luxury articles becoming less important with increased wealth. This cannot be demonstrated at the national level. Inglehart's country scores for postmaterialist values do not show any significant correlations with data on ownership of luxury articles, such as watches, PCs, cars (three or four owned), expensive clothes, shoes, and handbags, and spending on cosmetics, skin care, and perfume.¹²⁰ In Europe, Inglehart's postmaterialist country scores are correlated with individualism ($r = .47^*$). In sum, at the culture level there is no relationship between Inglehart's postmaterialist values and ownership of luxury articles. Instead, the relationship between individualism and postmaterialist values leads us to conclude that Inglehart's definitions of postmaterialism and materialism are mainly reflections of values of individualistic cultures.

Analysis of other data supports this conclusion. Ger and Belk¹²¹ developed scales to measure various aspects of materialism across nations, which were labeled *nongenerosity*, *possessiveness*, *envy*, and *preservation* (the conservation of events, experiences, and memories in material form). The four together were thought to be the underlying views of materialism. When the country scores of the four scales (factors) were correlated with the cultural variables,¹²² nongenerosity correlated with individualism ($r = .60^*$), and envy correlated with power distance ($r = .53^*$). Preservation correlated with GNI per capita ($r = .69^{**}$), small power distance ($r = -.72^{***}$), and individualism ($r = .67^{**}$), a configuration of dimensions that fits the Western world. From the various studies, it looks like materialism is a specific Western concept, although the various separate elements of materialism are related to different cultural dimensions.

Findings from another study, comparing Australia, France, Mexico, and the United States, suggest that materialism is indeed less strong in collectivistic than in individualistic cultures. Across cultures, the values associated with materialism also vary. For example, security is a value more related to materialism in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures.¹²³

National Pride and Consumer Ethnocentrism

Countries vary with respect to the importance people attribute to their own national identities, their attitudes toward their nations. National identity is the extent to which a given culture recognizes and identifies with its unique characteristics. "National pride designates the positive affective bond to specific national achievements and symbols."¹²⁴ According to the World Values Survey data from the years 1995–2004, Venezuelans are the most patriotic people in the world: 92% say they are very proud of their country. Americans and Australians also score high, with respectively 72% and 73%. In Asia, the Philippines score

high with 87%. In Europe, feelings of national pride are strong in Portugal and Ireland. In Portugal, 80% said that they were very proud to be Portuguese, and in Ireland 73% of respondents said they were proud to be Irish. National pride is weakest in Germany, where only 14% said they were proud to be German, and in Belgium, where 23% said they were proud to be Belgians. Feelings of national pride are not strong in Japan (23%) and Korea (17%) but are high in Thailand (85%). There is a strong relationship between national pride and short-term orientation, which explains 82% of variance. In short-term-oriented cultures, self-enhancement is strong, and so are feelings of pride that obviously are associated with the country one belongs to.

When consumers prefer products or brands from their own country to products or brands from other countries, this is called consumer *ethnocentrism*. Generally, in developed countries preferences for domestic products are stronger than in developing countries.¹²⁵ The inclination to favor in-groups over out-groups in collectivistic cultures would suggest a relationship with collectivism,¹²⁶ but among consumers in developing countries that are usually also collectivistic—for reasons that go beyond quality assessments—nondomestic brands are attitudinally preferred to brands viewed as local. Brands from other countries, especially from the West, are seen as endowing prestige and cosmopolitanism and thus enhancing the buyer's social identity.¹²⁷ Status seeking by buying international brands is also a phenomenon of collectivistic cultures.

Consumer ethnocentrism is related to the degree of national pride. Across Latin America, where feelings of national pride generally are strong, 67% agree with the statement "I prefer to buy products manufactured in my own country."¹²⁸ Thai consumers have an overall preference for national brands, and they are willing to pay a premium for brands with strong reputations.¹²⁹

Feelings of national pride can be reinforced after political turbulence. In 1995, a study of consumer patriotism and attitudes toward purchasing in Eastern Europe found that Czech, Slovakian, and Polish consumers considered their goods to be better value for money than those of Western countries. Hungarian consumers had the best opinion of their own food production, closely followed by consumers in the Czech Republic and Poland. Domestic brands had more loyal buyers than foreign brands.¹³⁰ Over time, preferences for domestic products had become stronger. By 1998, local brands had gained significant share from international brands. In Poland, when asked, "If you have two similar products at the same price which one do you prefer: a local one or a foreign one?" the majority (77%) of adults said they would prefer the local product.¹³¹

In the year 2000, in the European car market, national brands dominated. The top three brands in the United Kingdom were Ford, Vauxhall, and Rover, all three British made. In Germany the top five car brands were Volkswagen, Ford (German made), Opel, BMW, and Audi. In France, the top three brands were Renault, Peugeot, and Citroën, all three of French heritage. In Spain, the third brand was Seat, the Spanish-made Volkswagen brand.¹³² The extreme patriotism that motivates Americans to support national business and to continue buying in difficult economic or political times does not exist in Europe.

Attitudes Toward Country of Origin

Consumers are sensitive to the country of origin of products and brands. Country of origin of products or brands or foreign-sounding brand names influence consumer perceptions.¹³³ Consumers use country of origin as stereotypical information in making evaluations of products.¹³⁴ Consumers who have positive or negative attitudes toward a particular country will show favorable or unfavorable responses to country-related advertisements.¹³⁵

Attitudes toward foreign products vary by country of origin of the product. Whereas Japan is judged best for technologically advanced and attractively priced products, Germany is the home of reliable, solid products. France and Italy share the preeminence for style, design, and refinement.¹³⁶

Attitudes are related to the combination of the product category and country of origin. “Fashionable” for clothes will relate to French origin, whereas “quality” for cars will relate to Germany. A positive product-country match exists when a country is perceived as very strong in an area (e.g., design or technology), which is also an important feature for a product category (e.g., furniture, cars). Such product-country match is called *prototypicality*. Views of what product categories are prototypical for which countries vary. The role of the country image acts differently in different target countries.¹³⁷ Whereas, for example, in Korea refrigerators are viewed as prototypical for the United States,¹³⁸ this is not the case in Europe.

Country of origin can reflect on specific product categories or on a variety of products when a country represents a *way of life*. Both effects can change over time. In the past, Japan stood for shoddy, cheap products, but that image has changed into one of quality and technology. For Asian youth, “American” has long represented an aspirational lifestyle. It used to offer freedom, independence, and opportunity, but in 2000, this attitude was changing, and European goods became more popular. Europe represents a more understated style, compared with the brashness of America.¹³⁹

Attitudes toward developed countries are more favorable than attitudes toward developing countries, although in some cultures people tend to prefer anything from outside to domestic products. In the eyes of Nigerian consumers, for example, mere foreignness is a reason for product preferences. Even products from Ghana, which is economically and technologically not superior to Nigeria, are preferred to Nigerian products.¹⁴⁰

Attitudes Toward the Environment

Across countries, people vary with respect to their attitudes toward the environment. Only in the past decades have environmental problems become widespread matters of concern among the general publics. But attitudes to the environment vary. In the less wealthy countries, economic development has higher priority than the environment. In 2008, the percentage of inhabitants of European Union countries who said that “economic growth must be a priority for our country, even if it affects the environment” correlated with low GNI per capita and high power distance.¹⁴¹

The associations people have with the concept of the environment vary. The word *environment* is associated with a wide variety of thoughts that, in equal measure, suggest negative images (pollution, disasters) and positive ideas (pleasant landscapes, protecting the natural world). German consumers tend to adopt a holistic perspective (i.e., humans are seen very much as a part of the ecological system). In Britain, environmentalism is very much about the destruction of the inner cities, the preservation of the fabled English countryside, and the war on waste. In France, environmentalism is mostly about the depletion of the rain forests or problems stemming from the use of harmful products like aerosols.¹⁴² Differences in associations are culture bound.¹⁴³ Whereas in high power distance cultures people think first of pollution in towns and cities, in low power distance cultures a first association is with climate change. Loss in biodiversity, depletion of natural resources, and consumption habits are worries of rich countries. Air pollution and noise pollution are worries of the poorer countries that also score high on power distance. Variance of air pollution worries is explained by high power distance (31%). Variance of natural disasters worries is explained by low individualism (36%) and masculinity (additional 26%).

In high uncertainty avoidance cultures, larger percentages of people agree with the statement that environmental problems have a direct effect on their daily life, but in the countries that score low people do more about it. In low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance cultures, more people say they intend to buy and also actually buy environmentally friendly products. In all countries the differences between intention to buy environmentally friendly products and actual buying are large. In Greece, for example the percentage difference between intention and buying was 75%, in Portugal 68%, in Sweden 46%, and in Denmark 45%. The higher countries score on uncertainty avoidance, the larger the gap between intention and actual behavior. In the individualistic countries of Europe people feel well informed about the environment ($r = .70^{***}$), which fits the general pattern of variance of information behavior (discussed in Chapter 6).

Whether people take responsibility for the environment themselves or expect their governments to take responsibility varies by culture. The World Values Survey of 1990 asked questions to find whether people refer to the government as the responsible institution for caring for the environment or whether they want to pay for the environment themselves and accept higher taxes for this purpose. Viewing the environment as a government responsibility was significantly correlated with high uncertainty avoidance, both for 25 countries worldwide ($r = .61^{***}$) and for Europe ($r = .75^{***}$). In the low masculine cultures, people think they should pay for the environment themselves (worldwide $r = -.61^{***}$, in Europe $r = -.71^{***}$).

Sex- and Love-Related Attitudes

Although love often is mentioned as a universal value, attitudes toward romantic love vary widely across cultures. Generally, romantic love is valued highly in individualistic cultures and is less valued in collectivistic cultures where strong family ties reinforce the

relationship between marriage partners. Asians are more friendship oriented in their love relationships than are Americans.¹⁴⁴ Japanese value romantic love less than do Germans. Comparative research on intimacy shows that Americans conceptualize intimacy more concretely than do Japanese, especially in ways that are associated with direct behavioral manifestations. Americans also prefer to express intimacy through a greater variety of means and channels than do Japanese, who prefer high-contextual interaction in intimate relationships.¹⁴⁵ Compared with Swedish young adults, American young adults differentiate love and sex more strongly.¹⁴⁶ In feminine cultures the distinction between love and sex is less rigid than in masculine cultures. In spite of the sexual revolution of the 1950s, culturally masculine countries continue to manifest a stronger taboo on addressing sexual issues openly than do culturally feminine ones.¹⁴⁷

In some cultures nudity is related to sex, whereas in others nudity symbolizes purity or beauty. Whereas nudism is popular in Germany, it is unthinkable in the United States, where people are extremely sensitive to nudity, which tends to be confused with sex. In Sweden and Finland, on the other hand, people do not confuse nakedness with sexiness. That is why schoolchildren can see a naked boy or say “penis” without collapsing into giggles. The fact that the Swedes tend to be matter-of-fact about both nudity and sex does not mean they are sexually more promiscuous than people elsewhere in Europe or America.¹⁴⁸ In Scandinavia and in the Netherlands, in the sauna one is nude. In Britain, a bathing costume is obligatory. While “streaking” was trendy in several countries in Europe in the 1970s, it still is done in the United Kingdom because it shocks. In countries where nudity is not viewed as shocking, there is no fun in streaking. In Europe, toddlers commonly run around naked on the beach and nobody pays attention, whereas in the United States, people are easily shocked, and parents are told to cover the kids up. Americans tend to categorize nudity in advertising as sex appeal and may hypothesize a relationship with cultural masculinity, but such a relationship is not found.¹⁴⁹

Likewise, the use of nudity in advertising varies across countries. Germans don’t perceive female nudity in advertising as an affront or as sexist exploitation. They might see it as nothing more than a cheap advertising trick. In France naked women are more or less acceptable icons of the advertising language. The female body is used as a metaphor for beauty. The British, on the other hand, think it is sexist and exploitative first, and bad advertising second. Italy is probably the closest to Britain. Although on TV images of scantily clad women are commonplace, full nudity is rare.¹⁵⁰

LIFESTYLE

Lifestyle is described in terms of shared values or tastes as reflected in consumption patterns. Personal characteristics are viewed as the “raw” ingredients to develop a unique lifestyle. In an economic sense, one’s lifestyle represents the way one allocates income, but lifestyle is more viewed as a mental construct that explains but is not identical with behavior.¹⁵¹

A comprehensive definition by Dutch consumer psychologists Antonides and Van Raaij shows how the lifestyle concept is embedded in culture: “Lifestyle is the entire set of values, interests, opinions and behavior of consumers.”¹⁵² Lifestyle descriptions tend to include attitudes, values, and behavioral elements that often are a reflection of culture. Lifestyles transcend individual brands or products but can be specific to a product class. Thus, it makes sense to talk about a food-related lifestyle, or a housing-related lifestyle.

An example of an American lifestyle description is one of the “new materialists” from a study by Backer Spielvogel Bates as described by Chiagouris and Mitchell.

The youthful materialists referred to as “New Materialists” are financially independent, have acquired “spending ability” and have compulsion toward its exercise. As the children of the decade of greed, they have grown accustomed to immediate gratification. They are not conscious of the ethics of saving. They want to consume as much as they can, even if it is sometimes beyond their means. Possession is the central concern of proving one’s independence and success. . . . They view themselves as opinion leaders and trendsetters. It is ingrained in their quest to make an impression in society. They have an unbridled desire to be the first to discover, purchase, and possess the newest in material goods. Material goods comprise a central and defining part of their identity.¹⁵³

In the professional world, lifestyle research originated from what is called *psychographic* research, as a response to the decreased usefulness of *sociodemographic* and *economic* variables to explain differences in behavior. Classical psychographic segment descriptions could be in terms of behavior and attitudes or could relate to a particular consumer activity. An early example of five motorist segments in terms of attitudes and behavior by Esso was (1) the uninvolved, (2) the enthusiast, (3) the professional or business driver, (4) the tinkerer, and (5) the collector.¹⁵⁴ Generally lifestyle studies search for attitudes, interests, and opinions (AIOs) that do not relate directly to specific product characteristics. Examples of such AIOs are “sense of fashion,” attitude toward money, or opinions on roles of males and females.¹⁵⁵ Working with AIO variables, segments were identified such as “the happy housewife,” “the affluent consumer,” or “the price-conscious consumer.”¹⁵⁶

Today many lifestyle studies and systems exist across countries. (A few examples were given in Chapter 2.) In academia, the lifestyle research instruments developed and used by most of the larger market research firms are criticized on several grounds; we mention five.

1. There is no agreement on what lifestyle actually means.
2. The methods used are purely inductive and not guided by theory. Lifestyle types come about based on dimensions derived by exploratory data analysis techniques like factor analysis or correspondence analysis.

3. The derivation of the underlying dimensions is unclear and unsatisfactory. Because commercially marketed instruments are proprietary, the information necessary to evaluate statistical soundness of the derived dimensional solutions is often missing.
4. The explanatory value of lifestyle types or dimensions with regard to consumer choice behavior is low and not well documented.
5. The cross-cultural validity of the international lifestyle instruments remains to be demonstrated.¹⁵⁷

Lifestyles Across Cultures

Lifestyle may be a useful within-country criterion; it is less useful for defining segments across cultures because lifestyles are country specific. No one has ever produced an empirical base to support the argument that lifestyle similarities are stronger than cultural differences. In contrast, increasingly evidence is found that culture overrides lifestyle.

An early example of a cross-cultural lifestyle study is by Douglas and Urban,¹⁵⁸ who compared lifestyles of women in the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. They found similarities in the degree to which women accepted or rejected their traditional homemaking job. They also found large differences in underlying values of lifestyle elements. French women identified their own self-concepts relative to those around them, suggesting less self-reliance than found among U.S. and U.K. women. Whereas in the United Kingdom and United States innovativeness primarily took the form of willingness to experiment and try new things, in France innovativeness and interest in buying new products was strongly associated with interest in fashion and in being well dressed.

In a comparative study in France, Brazil, Japan, and the United States, Eshgi and Sheth,¹⁵⁹ using the modern/traditional dichotomy as a lifestyle variable, demonstrated that more than lifestyle, national, and cultural influences determine consumption patterns of stereo equipment, soft drinks, fruit juices, alcoholic beverages, automobiles, and deodorants.

Studies among consumers in different countries in Asia also demonstrate the continuing impact of culture on lifestyle. When comparing, for example, Singapore and Hong Kong lifestyles that are superficially similar, Singaporeans are more home oriented and place a higher value on family relationships and education, whereas Hong Kong consumers are more fashion conscious and concerned about their personal appearance, but they also adhere strongly to specific traditional cultural values.¹⁶⁰

Although lifestyle studies are popular among advertising agencies, they are very general, which is their major weakness. To understand consumer behavior across cultures it is necessary to go beyond lifestyle and distinguish value variations by product category. Even if across cultures certain groups of people can be identified with respect to ownership of specific products, the motives for buying these products vary so strongly that, for developing advertising, these lifestyle groups are not useful.

Global Communities?

Pan-European or global lifestyle studies aim at identifying similar lifestyle segments across borders, assuming that national and cultural influences on consumption patterns are less significant than modern lifestyle patterns. Certain lifestyle groups are assumed to be so similar between countries that their behavior is more similar to the same group across borders than to other groups within borders. Ownership of similar products or brands across countries would create consumption communities that, like neighborhoods, provide a sense of community with other people who own the same products. Even though there is some evidence for psychological feelings of community in relation to people engaging in common consumption behaviors, the individuals sharing these feelings do not constitute a community.¹⁶¹ Usually groups that are given one label across countries are very different as to content. The British TGI (Target Group Index),¹⁶² for example, categorizes age categories of women and labels the 15- to 24-year-old group as the “@ generation.” What members of this group have in common is that they are mostly single women. However, young Italian and Spanish women mostly live at home with their parents, whereas young Germans start to live as a couple early on. All spend money on pleasure articles: CDs, makeup, sportswear, or snack products. However, Italians and Spaniards—probably because they live at home and have more spending power—spend more on personal and luxury goods and going out. They live in larger households and share products and brands, so brands must address the collective, not individual. Italian and British women are more involved in appearance. Snack consumption is high among this age group, but snacks are consumed in different situations. In Britain potato chips are an around-the-clock, individual snack product, but in Spain they are used as *tapas*, when people are socializing.

The difference between Western and Asian lifestyles of young people is even more pronounced. The image of a fun-loving, brand-conscious, and free spending Western-type teenager is a myth in many countries in Asia, including Singapore. Whereas in Europe most youth live for the moment and are hedonistic, youth in Singapore are more idealistic in their expectations than hedonistic. Next to being happy and healthy, doing well in school is an important goal. Teenagers of different countries live in different social and cultural environments with shared historical events that shape their lives. The promotion of products based on the typical youth themes of rebellion, individuality, freedom, confidence, sexiness, and even Americanness, as typified by brands such as Levi's, may communicate very little to teenagers in Asia.¹⁶³

Studies among parents and students in the United States, Japan, New Zealand, France, Germany, and Denmark demonstrate the strong influence of culture on the values of both parents and students. The values of parents and students within a culture are relatively similar, with the greatest similarity between Japanese students and parents.¹⁶⁴ Jones¹⁶⁵ presents major differences in attitudes and behavior of young people across four European countries.

Asked for what was really important in life, young people show unanimity only in placing friendship, health, and love as the top three items. There are considerable differences with respect to the other 23 items.

CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the relationship among values, culture, and personal attributes: personality, the self, attitude, and lifestyle. Personality and trait structure are Western concepts. For marketing and branding, understanding these cultural variations is necessary because the concepts are used as metaphors for brand personality. Similarly, the concepts of self and identity vary across cultures. The most pronounced difference is between individualistic and collectivistic cultures, where the self is independent or interdependent. The Western approach is that the self and personality are consistent and unchangeable. Because the self is a relational self in collectivistic cultures, it varies along with the context and situation. Similarly, attitudes vary across cultures. Several examples of culture-related attitudes were given in this chapter. Finally, the concept of lifestyle was discussed as a not-so-well-defined concept that is used worldwide to find and describe similar segments. These are pseudo-similarities. There is little evidence that there are culture-free lifestyle groups that can be targeted in similar ways. On the contrary, there is evidence that cultural differences override lifestyle similarities.

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