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Benoliel, editor, Singapore Scientific Publishing, 2011, 474

pages, ISBN 13 978-981-4343-16-9. List price $ 58 , Hardcover.

*Reviewed by Claude Cellich*

***EDITORIAL***

The first paper by Gelbrich et al. compares the cross-cultural effectiveness of anthropomorphism and allegory in advertising. We conducted a between-subjects cross-cultural online experiment among 158 students from four countries. The study yielded two major results. First, the effect of anthropomorphism and allegory on memory (i.e., recall) is culturally invariant. Second, the effect on persuasion (i.e., attitude toward the ad) is contingent on the recipients’ cultural orientation. Our findings imply that both anthropomorphic and allegorical ads can be used to overcome selective perception. Their incongruous juxtaposition of pictures helps them stand out of the plethora of regular ads and reflexively draw recipients’ attention. As this effect is culturally invariant, marketers who primarily strive to foster memory in highly competitive environments may use anthropomorphism and allegory for ads in any international market. Moreover, advertisers may choose freely between anthropomorphism and allegory because both increase recall across cultures. With respect to persuasion, this research indicates that visual metaphors will be more successful in influencing recipients’ attitude toward the ad in specific cultural environments. In particular, anthropomorphism is best suited for cultural contexts with a strong masculine value orientation whereas an allegory is best suited for cultural contexts with strong masculine and collectivistic value orientations. This means that anthropomorphism is less culture-bound and may therefore be more appropriate for international standardisation of advertisement than allegory.

The concept of value and the determination and delivery of value to the consumer have become driving objectives for businesses and organizations today. However, there has been little empirical consideration to date as to how the consumption context *interacts* with culture to influence consumer value perceptions. The objective of this manuscript is to empirically examine the interaction of culture and the consumption context upon consumer perceptions of value.

Fifty in-depth laddering interviews were conducted with moderate to heavy wine users in the United States and France. Four independent coders analyzed and coded interview transcripts for specific attributes, consequences, end-states, and consumption contexts utilizing a qualitative coding procedure. This analysis resulted in the construction of ladders and culture-specific consumer value hierarchies for further analysis.

The findings provide evidence that culture differentially affects consumer perceptions within the confines of the consumption context. Evidence is especially strong that culture actually interacts with context to invoke cultural norms. The findings also reveal that specific elements of the consumption context (i.e., occasion, temporal, location, antecedent state, social) evoke certain cultural values and norms and, in turn, these values and norms influence customer value. Some of the specific findings are highlighted below:

* *Occasion.* The occasion dictated the price (attribute) and quality (attribute) of the wine desired. For both samples, the price of the wine should match the price of the meal resulting in a nice complement (consequence). However, only the French linked quality and price to conviviality (benefit) for a special occasion meal, and waiter recommendation to conviviality (benefit) for an ordinary meal.
* *Temporal.* The temporal situation appeared to be much more influential among the French sample. The most obvious temporal aspect is time of day and/or year.
* *Antecedent State.* Mood emerged only among the American sample. A number of respondents discussed being in a “red wine mood,” a “white wine mood,” and a “celebrating mood.” The color (attribute) of the wine chosen affects the overall enjoyment (consequence) of the meal.
* *Location.*The class of restaurant influenced the importance of price (attribute) for the French and the Americans. Additionally, the French sample desired that the price of the wine match the class of restaurant in order to ensure a sense of conviviality (consequence), and the French sample repeatedly emphasized the importance of ordering a wine from the same origin (attribute) as the ethnic origin of the restaurant in order to better complement the meal (consequence).
* *Social.* When dining with others, both samples linked quality (attribute) and color/variety (attribute) to complementing the meal (consequence) and honoring/pleasing others (consequence). The French ordered better quality, higher price wine when dining with important others, and they deferred the choice of color/variety to their guests in order to honor and please others. The American respondents ordered better quality and higher price wine when dining with important others in order to impress them.

These tentative findings indicate that there is less cultural variation in consumer perceptions at the product attribute level than at the consequence (i.e., benefit) level. Thus, marketing managers should pay much closer attention to the differences between cultures of desired consequences, as this has implications not only for tactical decisions such as advertising and product design but also for strategic decisions such as segmentation and positioning. The findings also reveal that when cultural values produce conflicting priorities for members of a culture, the consumption context may dictate which cultural value or end-state prevails. Thus, marketing managers need to better understand which cultural norms are most relevant for specific consumption contexts (i.e., celebrations, upscale restaurants, business dinner).Finally, the findings indicate that certain contexts, especially public consumption contexts, may cause a person to behave more culturally appropriately than other contexts. This might indicate greater opportunities for cross-cultural standardization of the marketing mix for privately consumed products than for publicly consumed products.

In March, 2005, Japan attempted to bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations (UN) Security Council. Millions of Chinese protested strongly against it. The goal of this study is to test the impact of animosity escalated by a short-term political event on the COO effect and to explore whether such impact persists over time. More specifically, the same survey was conducted twice from two compatible groups of subjects—the first time was in March 2005, which is the time when the political event was ongoing; and the second time was two years after the event in March 2007. Through the comparison of Chinese consumers’ attitudes toward Japanese product, we attempted to explore the relationship between consumer animosity and the COO effect and whether and how they work differently toward purchase intention and likelihood of purchase in different social situations.

COO can be defined as an extrinsic product attribute indicating the country where a product was made, assembled, or both, from which the consumer makes inferences about value or quality. Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994) integrated the previous studies and identified six dimensions of the COO effect. Five dimensions were based on initial research by Parameswaran and Yaprak (1987), which proposed general country attribute (GCA) and general product attribute (GPA) dimensions of the COO effect. Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994) then divided GCA into two dimensions, the people facet (GCA1) and the interaction facet (GCA2), and GPA into three dimensions, negative (or undesirable) attributes (GPA1), positive (or desirable) attributes relating to promotional/distributional image (GPA2), and positive (or desirable) attributes relating to product image (GPA3). A sixth dimension called specific product attribute (SPA) was based on Bilkey and Nes’s (1982) research.

The COO effect was measured using the abovementioned six dimensions, and a series of t-tests and regressions were conducted. The findings of this study have implications for developing international marketing strategies, especially in dealing with the impact of short-term political events on home consumers’ behaviors. More specifically, marketers should first realize that political events do have significant effects on consumers’ COO perception, although not on every dimension of COO, and they especially have direct influence on consumers’ intention and likelihood of purchase.

Second, marketers should also aware that short-term political events impact some COO dimensions, such as GCA2 immediately, while they impact other dimensions, such as GPA2, GPA3, and SPA, with a time lag. Finally, although COO has significant influence on both purchase intention and likelihood of purchase regardless of political events, it is obvious that the COO effect has much stronger power in predicting the intention and likelihood of purchase.

Understanding how political events work on consumers’ attitude and buying behavior will help marketers develop appropriate marketing strategies in a timely manner. It can further help marketers avoid more loss and recover earlier and easier from animosity caused by a political event.

Enjoy reading the journal!

Erdener Kaynak

Editor-in-Chief

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