

China Compared with the US: Cultural Differences and the Impacts on Advertising Appeals

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An important first step to successful global marketing is to understand the similarities and dissimilarities of values between cultures. This task is particularly daunting for companies trying to do business with China because of the scarcity of research-based information. This study uses updated values of Hofstede's (1980) cultural model to compare the effectiveness of Pollay's advertising appeals between the U.S. and China. Nine of the twenty hypotheses predicting effective appeals based on cultural dimensions were supported. An additional hypothesis was significant, but in the opposite direction as predicted. These findings suggest that it would be unwise to use Hofstede's cultural dimensions as a sole predictor for effective advertising appeals. The Hofstede dimensions may lack the currency and fine grain necessary to effectively predict the success of the various advertising appeals. Further, the effectiveness of advertising appeals may be moderated by other factors, such as age, societal trends, political-legal environment and product usage.

INTRODUCTION

Previous research indicates that the effectiveness of advertising is highly dependent on cultural variations (Cheng and Schweitzer, 1996; Culter and Rajshekhar, 1992; Monga and John, 2007; Shavitt and Zhang, 2004). Scholars have studied whether advertisements with appeals adapted to the audience's important cultural values (e.g., individualism for North Americans and collectivism for Chinese) tend to be more persuasive and better liked than appeals unadapted to such values (Zhang, 2004). More recently, Hornikx and O'Keefe (2009) conducted a meta-analytic review of the research and found that adapted ads are somewhat slightly more persuasive and better liked than unadapted ads.

Generally, researchers have paired countries to test for differences in several values portrayed in advertising to determine the most effective methods. Albers-Miller and Gelb (1996) conducted the largest and most widely recognized study of this nature using Hofstede's (1980) four cultural dimensions and Pollay's (1983) list of common advertising appeals. Unfortunately, they did not

compare the value systems and perceptions of effective advertising of the Mainland Chinese with those of the United States. As such, smaller marketing firms are forced to develop advertising programs based on data extrapolated from research on Korean and Taiwanese value systems (Emery and Tian 2003).

China's gross domestic product is reported to be \$1.335 trillion by the middle of 2010, surpassing Japan's GDP of \$1.286 trillion, making China the second largest economy in the world (Gustin 2010). Accordingly, the Chinese consumer market is the second largest in the world in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) and is growing at a double-digit pace since 1990s (Sun 2007, Fraser and Raynor 1996). As early as in 2001 it was predicted that the Peoples Republic of China would be the second largest Internet user and that the Chinese language will be the most used language on the Internet by 2005 (Rodrigues, 2001). This prediction was witnessed to be true in the end. As of June 2010, the population of China's Internet users climbed to 420 million, 36 million more than at the end of 2009 (Gao, 2010). The fast growth of the economy, coupled with China's enormous population of over 1.4 billion people, has made China attractive for global marketers. It was reported that multinational agencies mostly headquartered in the United States have been seeking markets in China and bringing their offices to China. At the same time along with their increased incomes, the Chinese people have started to demand a wider choice of products and services. Chinese consumers have become more used to employing advertising as their information source to make purchasing decisions, and in addition, more and more companies use advertising as the means to promote their products and services (Chang and Chang, 2005; Gustin, 2010).

Advertising has become one of China's fastest-growing industries. According to Nielsen Media Research, the United States ranked first in advertising in 2005, and China ranked third, after only the United States and Japan (China Advertising Yearbook, 2006). At the current annual advertising spending growth rate, China is expected to become one of the world's top five advertising markets within a few years (China Association of Advertising, 2009). All this equates to tremendous opportunities for international advertising firms to help their present clients expand into China or to assist the Chinese with marketing their products abroad.

This task, however, is particularly daunting for companies trying to do business with China because of the scarcity of empirical research. Cultural differences serve as the hardest barrier to overcome as they have been deeply ingrained in the Chinese citizens over thousands of years. In fact, as some American firms have learned advertising that are effective in other markets may not work at all in the China market; more interestingly, that some advertisements which are effective in certain areas of China may not work in other areas in the same country (Kurlantzick, 2002, Tian, 2000). Meanwhile the cross-cultural pragmatic failure in English advertisements translated from Chinese has been identified as a significant issue for Chinese marketers to consider when launching advertising campaigns in the Western country markets (Sun, 2007).

A review of cross-cultural advertising studies published in 18 major periodicals between 1980s and earlier 1990s found that only one study pertained to China and none compared China with the United States (Samiee and Jeong, 1994). Emery and Tian (2002a, 2002b) updated this study between 1992 and 2001 and found three studies pertaining to China and only one that compared China with the United States. Since then although no systematic study has been done on this subject scholars have started to pay attention to it. For instance in her recent new book Brand New China Wang (2008) offers us a unique perspective on the advertising and marketing culture of China, demonstrates the influence of U. S. branding theories and models on

advertising in China. The purpose of this study is to partially address this movement by comparing effective advertising appeals between China and the United States.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Cultural Values

The first step to successful cross-cultural marketing is to understand cultural differences (Briley and Aaker, 2006; Lillis and Tian, 2010). The reasoning is that consumers grow up in a particular culture and become accustomed to that culture's value systems, beliefs, and perception processes. Consequently, they respond to advertising messages that are congruent with their culture, rewarding advertisers who understand that culture and tailor ads to reflect its values (Cheng and Schweitzer, 1996; Culter and Javalgi, 1992, Desmarais, 2007). Albers-Miller's (1996) study of 55 country pairs indicates that similar cultures have similar advertising content and dissimilar societies have dissimilar advertising content. Hofstede's (1980) seminal study regarding the relationship between national culture and work-related values is the most frequently cited benchmark for cross-cultural understanding (Tian, 2000). Hofstede considered that a country's value system could be depicted along four dimensions: individualism (IDV), power distance (PDI), uncertainty avoidance (UAI), and masculinity (MAS).

Hofstede explained that the dimension of individualism was the degree to which individual decision-making and actions are encouraged by society. This dimension reflects the way people live together. In a collectivistic society, at the lower end of the individualism-collectivism continuum, individualistic behavior may be seen as selfish.

The power distance dimension indicates the degree to which power differences are accepted and sanctioned by society. In other words, it indicates how different societies have addressed basic human inequalities in social status and prestige, wealth, and sources of power. The societal norm in a country with a high score on the PD dimension is for powerful people to look as powerful as possible. People with power are considered to be right and good. Powerful people are expected to have privileges. In countries with large power distance, the exercise of power gives satisfaction and powerful people try to maintain and increase power differences (Hofstede 1980).

The uncertainty avoidance dimension represents the degree to which society is unwilling to accept and cope with uncertainty. People use law, religion, and technology to address uncertainty. This dimension is related to anxiety, need for security, dependence on experts, and the application of information (Hofstede, 1980).

The masculinity dimension indicates the degree to which traditional male values (*assertiveness, performance, ambition, achievement, and materialism*) are important to a society. The opposite end of this continuum has been labeled femininity. The societal norm in a country with a high score on the MAS dimension is to try to be the best while valuing achievement, productivity and "machismo". In these countries, big and fast are considered beautiful (Hofstede 1980).

Hofstede's research has been instrumental in furthering an understanding of cross-cultural consumerism and is often used as the basis for selecting between customized and global approaches to marketing (Tian, 2000). Unfortunately, Hofstede was not able to map the Mainland Chinese culture at the time of his 1980 study. Later Hofstede explained that his 1980 study used the cultural values of IBM employees in offices around the world. At that time China did not have IBM offices and access to comparable employees was denied (Hofstede, 1993).

Fernandez, et al. (1997), however, updated the original Hofstede study and for the first time included dimensional values for Mainland China. It is important to note, however, that Fernandez, et al. used undergraduate and graduate students in their study. The relationship between China and the U.S. in that study is presented as a standardized score in Table 1.

TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF HOFSTEDE DIMENSIONS (STANDARD SCORES)

Dimension	China	U.S.
MAS	2.20	-.58
UAI	.31	.59
IDV	-.96	1.52
PDI	1.05	-.01

Note: 1990 data excepted from Fernandez, Carlson, Stepina, & Nicholson (1997)

Advertising Appeals

The second step to successful cross-cultural marketing is to understand a society's sensitivity to advertising appeals. Advertising appeals are the specific approaches advertisers use to communicate how their products will satisfy customer needs by embedding a culture's values, norms, and characteristics (Arens and Bovee, 1994; Hornikx and O'Keefe, 2009). The appeals are typically carried in the illustration and headlines of the ad and are supported and reinforced by the ad copy. Researchers have argued that cultural values are the core of advertising messages and typical advertisements endorse, glamorize, and inevitably reinforce cultural values (Desmarais, 2007; Pollay and Gallagher, 1990).

Advertising has been long viewed as a mirror to reflect the values of certain cultures and previous studies have reported that advertising content differs across cultures (Cheng and Schweitzer, 1996; Nelson and Paek, 2005). Evidence indicates that different cultures seem to emphasize different advertising appeals. For example, Japanese ads have been found to contain more emotional and fewer comparative appeals than American ads (Hong, Muderrisoglu and Zinkhan, 1987). Advertising in China has been found to contain more utilitarian appeals that focus on state of being and promise a better life (Chan and Cheng, 2002).

Combining Cultural Values and Advertising Appeals

Although sparse, research on cross-cultural advertising appeals is generally conducted by pairing countries to test for differences in several values portrayed in advertising to determine the most effective methods (Zinkhan, 1994). Albers-Miller and Gelb (1996) conducted, perhaps, the largest and most referenced test of cross-cultural advertising appeals using Hofstede's (1980) four cultural dimensions and Pollay's (1983) list of common advertising appeals in eleven countries. Pollay developed a list of 42 common appeals by drawing on previous advertising literature and values research in other disciplines. Albers-Miller and Gelb, however, did not examine China because of the lack of Hofstede dimensional measures.

Albers-Miller and Gelb (1996) used six coders from various countries (i.e., Taiwan, India, France, Mexico, and two from the United States) to relate Pollay's appeals to Hofstede's

dimensions. The coders were instructed to relate each appeal to one end of a single cultural dimension or to indicate that the appeal related to none of the dimensions. Appeals retained for their research were ones for which at least four of the six coders indicated the same hypothesized relationship. Twelve of the 42 appeals were eliminated because of the lack of agreement about a hypothesized relationship or because the appeal did not relate to any of the dimensions. Additionally, 10 of the remaining 30 appeals failed to support the hypothesized dimensional values at $p < .10$. The relationships between the dimensions and the 20 significant appeals are summarized in Table 2.

TABLE 2
RELATIONSHIPS OF APPEALS TO HOSTEDE'S DIMENSIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Appeals	MAS	UAI	IDV	PDI	Hp
Effective	+				C>US
Convenient	+				C>US
Natural	-				C<US
Innocence	-				C<US
Tamed		+			C=US
Adventure		-			C=US
Untamed		-			C=US
Magic		-			C=US
Youth		-			C=US
Independence			+		C<US
Distinctive			+		C<US
Family			+		C<US
Popular			-		C>US
Succorance			-		C>US
Ornamental				+	C=US
Vain				+	C=US
Dear				+	C=US
Status				+	C=US
Cheap				-	C=US
Humility				-	C=US

Note: Plus and minus symbols indicate convergence or divergence between Pollay's appeals and Hofstede's dimensions.

Advertising Appeals in the Chinese Context

Advertising as a means of marketing has been widely accepted by Chinese society after Deng Xiaoping launched his reform and open-door policy. Advertising in China has riveted the attention of scholars not only within China but also scholars from the West. In the earlier stage of the market economy oriented reforms, Chinese consumers were suspicious of advertised products, because they perceived that only bad products needed to be advertised. This phenomenon is perhaps a reaction to the fact that early Chinese advertisements often used exaggerated claims, destroying all credibility for their so-called miracle products (Liang and Jacobs, 1994; Zhang, 2004; Sun, 2007). It has been discovered, however, that Chinese consumers generally indicate foreign advertisements are attractive and trustworthy. This makes

Western advertisers have an advantage over their local counterparts, since Chinese consumers have a high regard for products imported from the West (Ha, 1996; Zhang and Shavitt, 2003; Yan, 1994; Wang, 2008).

Zhang and Neelankavil (1997) conducted an empirical study by investigating the effects of different advertising appeals used across cultures; their findings indicated that cultural differences along the individualism-collectivism dimension affect people's reactions to certain advertising appeals. It was suggested that appeals that emphasize individualistic benefits are more effective in the USA than in China. When appeals emphasizing collectivistic benefits are employed, they are generally more effective in China. However, such effects can be moderated by product characteristics. Different product types may serve to influence the effectiveness of culturally congruent advertising appeals (cf. Zhang and Shavitt, 2003). In the study done by Zhao and Shen (1995) the findings clearly demonstrate that most of the respondents use mass advertising as their chief source of information about products.

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the Chinese market, in particular the use of social networks in China for business purposes. This type of social network or personal connection has been termed as *Guanxi* in Chinese. It is suggested that *Guanxi* can be classified into three categories, namely 1) expressive ties for family members, 2) instrumental ties for strangers, and 3) mixed ties for familiar people. Lee and Dawes limit their study to *guanxi* of the mixed-tie type because most business situations fit this type (Lee and Dawes, 2006).

Because of its relational nature, some have identified *Guanxi* with a traditional form of relationship marketing. Understanding and managing *Guanxi* is not only useful in the development of partnerships under the current economic situation in China, but also is necessary for access to the Chinese market in terms of advertising and promotion (Tomás and Arias, 1998). *Guanxi* is the foundation of Chinese business negotiations; the meaning of *Guanxi* and using it can also be applied in advertising to differentiate between the characteristics of Chinese and Western negotiations in the marketing context. *Guanxi* is a characteristic of Chinese culture and provides a starting point for understanding Chinese consumer behaviors. Western cultures have inherently different characteristics. As culture is so important in the marketing process, it is necessary to apply the five dimensions of culture as outlined by Hofstede (1991) and to place these in the Chinese context (Buttery and Leung, 1998).

METHOD

The Design of the Study

This study uses the 20 advertising appeals employed in the Albers-Miller and Gelb study (1996) that were found to be the most highly correlated with the Hofstede dimensions (coder inter-rater reliabilities $>.77$ and correlation values above $.40$ at $p < .10$). Using Pollay's list (1983) of appeals and synonyms, the Chinese and American researchers selected several descriptive words from each of the 20 appeal categories that were most likely to have the same meaning within each culture. For example, the terms beautiful and detailed are often used cross-culturally to represent ornamental appeal. In turn, these descriptors were refined by a focus group of five English-speaking Chinese students and five U.S. students until there was an agreement on which descriptor would be used to represent a particular appeal. Each descriptor was translated into the Chinese language and dialect of the participating university students and placed on questionnaires administered by the U.S. and Chinese researchers.

All items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) “extremely important” to (4) “important” to (7) “not important”. The scale descriptions were translated into Chinese and then back-translated into English by different bilingual translators. Again, scale variances were subsequently resolved by the focus group of students to ensure equivalency between versions. The country scores were calculated by summing the responses for each appeal across the individuals within a given country and then calculating the means of those individuals’ scores. The significance of differences between the means of the appeals was determined by a t-test. The probability, however, of finding a significant difference by chance alone increases rapidly with the number of tests. One solution to this multiple testing problem is to make a Bonferroni correction to the probability associated with each test by multiplying it by the number of tests executed (SPSS Applications Guide 2001). We considered only those values less than $p=.002$ to be supportive.

The study used undergraduate college students in an attempt to capture the perceptions of new consumers as they begin to integrate their view of appeals with their value system. Although this group did not have years of purchasing experience, it was hoped that their perceptions might be predictive of future trends. Further, students and young adults have an inordinate influence on purchasing in China because of the deference families give to their only children. Lastly, we believed it was important to use of young adults in this study in order to parallel the Fernandez, et al. (1996) reference study.

Data from a randomized (gender, age, socio-economic class, martial and minority status) sample consisting of 300 undergraduate college students at three state universities in metropolitan cities in northeastern and northwestern China and 300 undergraduate students at two state universities and one private college in the southeastern United States was collected. While neither China nor the United States is a culturally homogeneous society, we believe that our sample groups adequately represent the young, college age population. Lastly, using a selection of ads the students were given 15 minutes of training on advertising appeals. They were also trained on the questionnaire’s scale. Ninety-Eight percent of all the questionnaires received had useable data.

Hypotheses

Directional hypotheses were created for each of the 30 appeals based on the notion that a country’s value system (Hofstede dimensions) would be reflected by the importance their citizens placed on the appeals (Table 2). For example, the Mainland Chinese culture is considered very masculine (Fernandez et al., 1997). As such, one would expect the Chinese to rate the masculine appeal of effectiveness as very important. Conversely, one would expect that they would rate feminine appeals as not very important.

For the purpose of developing comparative hypotheses, the value systems were considered significantly different, if the cultural dimensions between countries differed by more than 1.64 standard deviations ($p < .05$). For example, the difference between China and the U.S. on the MAS dimension is 2.78 standard deviations or a significance of $p<.01$. As such, we hypothesize that Chinese consumers would consider appeals associated with masculinity (e.g., effectiveness, convenience, success) to be significantly more important than U.S. consumers (i.e., $C>US$). Additionally, because the Chinese and U.S. differed by 2.48 standard deviations, we posited that U.S. consumers would consider appeals associated with individualism (e.g., independence, distinctiveness, self-respect) to be significantly more important than Chinese consumers (i.e., $C<US$). Lastly, because the differences between the Chinese and U.S. consumers on the

importance of appeals associated with uncertainty avoidance and power distance dimensions were less than 1.64 standard deviations, we hypothesized that the differences between the two cultures would be indistinguishable or non-significant (i.e., C=US).

RESULTS

The results of the hypothesis testing are summarized in Table 3. A Levene's test indicated that equal variances could be assumed for each of the appeal items. Overall, the findings appear to suggest that the Hofstede dimensions offer only moderate value in predicting the importance of various advertising appeals in China. The results failed to support each of the four hypotheses developed from the masculinity dimension; in fact, one was supported in the opposite direction. Specifically, the appeal of "natural" which was thought to be more important to U.S. consumers was, in fact, more important to Chinese consumers. This non-support of the appeals is particularly noteworthy, since the Chinese culture was the most masculine of all 15 countries in the Fernandez et al. (1997) study by more than one standard deviation and significantly ($p < .001$) more masculine than the U.S. Interestingly, both the U.S. and Chinese consumers rated "effectiveness" as the most important of the 30 appeals. Surprisingly, however, the Chinese consumers gave high rating to the appeals of "innocence" and "natural", which are generally considered more feminine.

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE DATA AND HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Dimension	Appeal	Mean		SD		P-Val.	Hp
		China	USA	China	USA		
Masculinity	Effective	2.02	2.26	1.41	1.46	.221	NS
	Convenient	3.31	2.89	1.40	1.30	.029	NS
	Natural	2.64	3.17	1.21	1.30	.002	S-O
	Innocence	3.35	3.87	1.43	1.61	.013	NS
Uncertainty Avoidance	Tamed	2.45	3.31	1.52	1.40	.001	NS
	Adventure	4.73	2.73	1.63	1.91	.001	NS
	Untamed	4.54	4.45	1.96	2.06	.729	S
	Magic	4.44	5.05	1.93	2.04	.030	S
	Youth	3.98	4.24	1.78	1.70	.288	S
Individualism	Independence	3.74	3.21	1.66	1.41	.014	NS
	Distinctive	4.83	3.91	1.76	1.77	.001	S
	Popular	4.31	3.63	1.61	1.82	.002	S
	Family	4.56	3.65	1.92	1.62	.001	S
	Succorance	2.96	4.12	1.54	1.65	.001	S
Power Distance	Ornamental	3.92	3.52	1.71	1.62	.087	S
	Vain	3.93	3.98	1.87	1.76	.823	S
	Dear	4.66	3.67	1.77	1.61	.001	NS
	Status	4.82	3.57	1.81	1.47	.001	NS
	Cheap	3.27	3.19	1.58	1.62	.714	S
	Humility	4.73	3.76	1.61	1.74	.001	NS

Note: S=support, NS=nonsupport, and S-O=support in the opposite direction

Support was relatively strong for the hypotheses suggesting that there would be significant differences in appeals associated with individualism. Four of the five hypotheses were significantly supported at $p < .001$. Appeals, such as distinctiveness, family and popular were predictably important to U.S. consumers. Similarly, *succorance* (e.g., expressions of gratitude and pats on the back) which is normally associated with a collective society was predictably high for Chinese consumers ($p < .002$). Although the appeal of *independence* was indicated as much more important by U.S. consumers, it was only significant at $p < .014$. Additionally, it is interesting to note that the appeal of “family” was significantly supported as an individual appeal and not as a collective appeal. This was the same result as the Albers-Miller and Gelb (1996) study in examination of collective and individualistic societies. The fact that 80 percent of the hypotheses in this dimension were supported is particularly noteworthy, since the U.S. has been considered in past studies (e.g., Fernandez et al., 1996; Hofstede, 1980) as the most individualistic country in the world.

Support was moderate for the proposition that the U.S. and Chinese consumers would react similarly to appeals associated with uncertainty avoidance. Three of the five hypotheses were supported as the two non-supported hypotheses were significantly different at $p < .001$. Interestingly, the two non-supported appeals indicated that China might be slightly higher in uncertainty avoidance than the United States. The fact that the Chinese students considered the “tame” appeal particularly important and the “adventure” appeal as particular unimportant is a key indicator of a society high in uncertainty avoidance. This seems to be in keeping with most studies of Asian cultures, but is different from the findings presented by Fernandez et al (1996).

Support was mixed for the notion that the U.S. and Chinese consumer would view the appeals associated with power distance in a similar manner. Three of the six hypotheses supported this proposition. While the three non-supported appeals are significant at the $p < .001$ level, they seem to send a mixed message. For example, the U.S. consumer considers the appeals of dear (e.g., expensive), status and humility to be significantly more important than the Chinese. The first two of these would normally be associated with a high power distance country and the third would be associated with a low power distance country. Further, the Chinese consumers indicated that the appeals of dear and status were less than important (i.e., mean score more than 4). This is particularly surprising for a country with a non-representative style government and a small middle class. Lastly, an examination of demographical differences (i.e., age, marital status, gender and minority status) within the groups of the Chinese and U.S. indicated that there was no significant difference in their ratings.

DISCUSSION

Anthropologist Hall categorizes cultures into high context cultures and low context cultures. According to him the cultural context has certain impacts on the effectiveness of advertising. In “high context” cultures, such as the collectivist Asian cultures of Japan and China, the context in which information is embedded is as important as what is said. In low context cultures, such as the individualistic oriented North American cultures of USA and Canada, the information is contained in the verbal messages; in these cultures, it is important to provide adequate information relating to the product or service in order to satisfy their need for content. Conversely, people in high context cultures are often more effectively reached by image or mood appeals, and rely on personal networks for information and content (Hall, 1976; Lillis and Tian, 2010; Tian, 2002).

It has been widely accepted that Hofstede's cultural dimensions could be accurately used as predictors of appeal effectiveness; the study by Albers-Miller and Gelb (1996) has reinforced this acceptance by providing an enlarged content and scope. However, the results of this study tend not to fully support the above notion when applying the Hofstede's instrument as well as the improved format of the instrument by Albers-Miller and Gelb from a cross-cultural perspective, particularly within the cultural content of modern Chinese society. There could be several explanations for difference in predictability beyond the validity and translation of the instrument.

First, the eleven countries (e.g., Japan, Taiwan, India, South Africa, Israel, France, Finland, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, U.S.) used in the previous study by Albers-Miller and Gelb (1996) have significantly different market economies, political-legal and advertising systems than that in modern China. As such, the significance of individual appeals might vary considerably due to these differences. Second, Hofstede's dimensions although with updated values (1990) might be somewhat too old to be used in predicting the effectiveness of appeals as the business environment in terms of social-economical-cultural-technological structure has experienced tremendous changes all over the world. Third, the appeals may have significantly different values from one age group to the others given changes stated above, and moreover, given the fact that the Albers-Miller and Gelb (1996) study was conducted by using an adult population. Fourth, the product usage visualized by the respondents may have moderated the effect on the importance of appeals. Fifth, cultural dimensions may not be fine grained enough to predict the effectiveness of appeals. In other words, changes in the perceived importance of advertising appeals may take place much more quickly than changes in cultural values; in fact, changes in the importance of advertising appeals may mimic current societal trends and may be precursors to cultural changes.

China as the largest developing country in the world has many special characteristics that differ from the United States, the largest developed country in the world, in terms of social system, economic development level, and cultural values. For example, the higher than predicted values of uncertainty avoidance for the Chinese consumers might be based on the lack of a well established legal system to protect consumers as well as the large amount of poor quality and counterfeit products. Therefore, American marketers should try to use appeals of caution, security and stability and seek endorsements from recognizable and trusted figures. A possible explanation for the appearance of a consumer power distance index lower than the U.S. might be that appeals such as ornamental, dear, status, and lack of humility are avoided because they are symbols of luxury which are widely viewed by normal consumers as appeals to the *fubai fenzi* (corrupt officials) only.

Although the economy of China has enjoyed a great progress in the last two decades, compared with Americans the great majority of Chinese people still have low incomes. The Chinese official statistics in 2008 indicated that China's annual per capita income was less than 16,000 *yuan rmb* (about \$2400 USD). Households with the highest incomes accounted for 10 percent of the total population, with these annual disposable incomes averaging less than 44,000 *yuan rmb* (about \$6500 USD). American advertisers should stress appeals such as economical, inexpensive, simplicity and humility to draw the Mainland Chinese consumers' attention. Awareness of these differences in terms of business communication is essential to ensure effective advertising. According to Zhao and Shen (1995), the foreign advertisements that are the biggest hit with Chinese consumers are those for popular products that they can afford to buy, that they use often or plan to buy. The same study shows that there are ways of generating a positive attitude towards an advertisement and a brand image. One is to come up with a creative

and entertaining advertisement by using innovative images; another one is to make the advertisement captivating and lively by using dynamic scenes with lots of action. It is interesting that Chinese consumers are very skeptical with regard to advertisement endorsed by celebrities; they believe the testimonials are false as actors are paid to say good sides about the products.

Here again, pitfalls could arise due to differences in color association or perception. For instance, in many tropical countries, green is associated with danger and has negative connotations. Red, on the other hand, is associated with weddings and happiness in China. Moreover, appeals to humor or sex also need to be treated with considerable care as their expression and effectiveness might be simply opposite from what the American advertisers perceive in the Chinese context. The dry American sense of humor does not always translate effectively into Chinese language.

The fact that China scored lower than the United States on uncertainty avoidance represents a cultural reversal and is a particular indicator that China has experience a remarkable transformation from a socialism system (i.e., a low risk taking philosophy) to a market oriented socialist-capitalism system (i.e., a mixed opportunist risk taking philosophy). This major change in ideology, however, might have been a catalyst of social value changes. The Chinese might be more curious of different ideas and more willing to take risks as their society moves more toward a market economy. On the other hand, the possibility exists that the relative change between the two countries is the result of the U.S. becoming more resistant to uncertainty. The shift made by the United States from being a weak uncertainty avoidance country in Hofstede's study to one of strong uncertainty avoidance seems reasonable in light of the political, economic, and social changes the United States over the past two decades. In particular, the increased uncertainty about the economic power of the United States may be a factor in the change.

Gender should be an important indicator for cultural difference, it is widely accepted that gender identity may have various functions cross-culturally in ways of social activities, including consumption behaviors. However, the result from this study indicates that in terms of masculinity appeal in advertising there seems to be no difference between American respondents and Chinese respondents, a rational possible explanation for the lack of a difference in masculinity between the two groups could be simply because of their age. There is a strong and universal relationship between masculinity and age; as the hormones associated with sexual productivity decrease, there is a corresponding increase in feminine values (Hofstede 1991). As such, both groups indicated a relatively high importance to those appeals associated with masculinity. Therefore, American marketers may be successful in using the same masculine appeals in the Chinese youth market as they do in the U.S. market. Similarly, age may have had a powerful affect on the differentiation between the U.S. and Chinese students on the dimension of individualism/collectivism. Youth are at a stage in their life cycle where they are trying to be more independent and as such, may reflect more independent appeals. Additionally, the transition of China to a market economy coupled with increasing wealth and purchasing power may suggest more interest in appeals of independence and less on community.

CONCLUSIONS

The significance of cross-cultural differences in advertising has become even clearer as we continue to move toward a globalized marketplace. As such, it is important that marketing personnel not let old stereotypes drive their advertising strategies; this is particularly important in the Asian market, as China and Taiwan become formal members of the WTO. Our findings

indicate that heuristics such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions may be too broad to capture the detailed differences required in launching an effective advertising campaign. A possible explanation is that cultural values change much more slowly than consumer values and therefore cannot be used to effectively predict consumer behavior. While the continued development of advertising heuristics is important, marketing personnel must continue to use the tried and true method of the focus group. This prevents the mistake of assuming that you know what the consumer thinks is important. In fact, the results of this might be considered as coming from a mini-focus group.

While the findings do not provide unequivocal recommendations for developing advertising, they do provide some general information for marketing practitioners seeking to do business in China. For example, one should consider the seven appeals (i.e., effectiveness, safety, tamed, durable, natural, nurturance and succorance, in descending order of importance) whose means were less than 3 to be very important to selling a product. Conversely, those ten appeals (i.e., casual, distinctiveness, community, status, adventure, dear, family, untamed, magic and popular, in descending order of least important) whose means were more than 4 should be avoided. In any case, the findings strongly suggest the need to consider market segmentation and to consult with an expert in Chinese consumer behavior before developing ads for their market. Lastly, the results suggest the need for future research on factors that may moderate an appeal within a culture (e.g., age, socioeconomic status, significant event).

Finally, it is necessary to indicate that this study has several limitations. While our study intentionally used college students to get a "heads-up" on future consumer behavior, their perceptions may be significantly different from national perceptions. This is true particularly in the case of Chinese college students who are often the only child in the family and therefore might have limited purchasing experience. In addition the small sample size (numerical and geographic) prevents generalization and the differences in their college environments and socioeconomic status may be significantly moderating perceptions. It is recommended that future studies should focus on a large scope in terms of geographic coverage and wrap a more complicated cultural content with a particular attention to the tremendous transformation in business world to a cross-cultural perspective.

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